

Bobb to Close 41 More Schools

As a reward for making Adequate Yearly Progress and creating centers of excellence, Emergency Financial Manager Robert Bobb named several of these high-performing schools to be among 41 to close.

Carstens Elementary School in 2009 was named one of the top five Title I schools in the state for making significant growth.

Carstens raised its language proficiency scores by 59 percent and its math scores by 80 percent since 2005.

Still, it's slated to close.

Parents and teachers around the district called impromptu meet-

ings to discuss how to save their school – and often – their community. Parents at the Detroit Day School for the Deaf, met March 22 to discuss closing a school that is a lifeline to children and families.

“To Bobb it's not a matter of the school, it's a matter of the dollars,” said Pamela Hankerson, a member of the deaf community.

“Bobb is not interested in Detroit Public Schools,” said Niaomi Edmunds, who attended the meeting. “He's interested in closing public schools and opening charter schools.”

Closing DDS is a terrible idea, says retired DDS teacher Peggy Collrin. Not only should it not close, it needs much more support. Deaf and hard of hearing students have been siphoned off to be mainstreamed at other schools. That's something not in the best interest of many deaf stu-

dents, she says.

“This building is very, very important,” Collrin said. “This needs to be the hub, the heartbeat, for the deaf and hard of hearing community.”

According to Collrin, the district has decimated a program that needs to be world-class for deaf students to succeed in the outside

world. The school has operated all year short 1.6 teachers. At one time the school bulged with 350 students. Today it has 56. But decisions by a series of revolving-door administrators damaged the program and moved kids out.

“Deafness is the only disability with a language attached to it,” said DDS Principal Candace

Apple. “When you have a language, you have a culture.”

Teachers said Detroit has all-boys and all-girls schools, yet it won't have a school for the deaf.

“Detroit is big enough,” said Nan Asher, executive director of the Michigan Association for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, “to be able to give you choices.”

Dr. Seuss Party Held at Garvey Academy



GREEN EGGS AND HAM

—Teachers at Marcus Garvey Academy held a birthday party for Dr. Seuss creator Theodor Seuss Geisel, who died in 1991 but whose legendary characters endure. Garvey Principal James Hearn read Green Eggs and Ham to students while the Cat in the Hat made a surprise appearance on a scooter. Shown above are teachers who organized the event: Joi Anderson, Wakieta Winston, Lentawn Knight, and Wendy Newberry.

SCHOOL CLOSURE PLAN COULD BE BOBB'S FOLLY

Emergency Financial Manager Robert Bobb's school closure plan, announced on March 17, has disaster written all over it. On top of proposing the closure of 45 schools, more than 25 percent of the district's facilities, Mr. Bobb has pinned an in-

input, and omnipotent persona. High performing schools such as McColl, CMA, and Bagley are scheduled for closure.

High schools with deeply rooted neighborhood rivalries and loosely knit gang affiliations would have their student bodies integrated, (Osborn to Pershing or Denby). Kettering students would be sent to either Southeastern (which is already bursting at the seams) or Pershing, which is miles away from the Kettering neighborhood.

Elementary students from McKenney and Holcomb would have to cross major thoroughfares Seven Mile and Lahser to get to the nearest elementary school (Charles Wright). Wright, by the way, would lose its successful program and assume the program of Langston Hughes.

In addition, Mr. Bobb reneged on an assurance that the DFT would be involved in the discussions as schools were considered for closure. Instead Mr. Bobb relied heavily upon the direction of demographers and dismissed the human, student element of consideration in this plan.

You cannot cut your way to prosperity when educating children. While we understand that the declining enrollment necessitates the closure and consolidation of some schools, the magnitude of this plan will devastate DPS. Human Resources will be overloaded

would never have entered my second-grade class under the current ban on social promotions. In September she was reading at a 0.3 grade level, meaning she was not even ready for first grade, let alone second grade. I was tempted to immediately return her to first grade. However, through research I had done in getting my master's degree, I knew that repeating a grade cuts a student's chance of graduating from high school in half. Those who repeat two grades have virtually no chance of graduating.

Her poor performance in first grade may have been due to a problems in the home, excessive absences from illness, a change in family situation, or (if she was in a charter school the previous year) she may have had a bad teacher in first grade.



DFT President Keith Johnson joined others concerned about public education in Lansing on March 17 for Lobby Day.

with placement issues (remember how this school year started with so many teachers having no place to report when school opened?) that the quality of education

"You cannot cut your way to prosperity when educating children."

—DFT President Keith Johnson

I can't help but believe that the drastic measures taken by Mr. Bobb will do nothing to enhance the faith of this community in DPS. Parents are not inclined to send their children an additional two to seven miles to attend school when there is a neighboring charter closer to home.

I have never subscribed to the con-

spiracy theory many have adopted that Mr. Bobb's hidden mission was to dismantle DPS. But the lack of logic and consideration for the welfare of our

children in this school closure plan has admittedly second-guessed my position, particularly since he did not include DFT in the discussions.

Hinging the future of DPS on the if/come of a future bond passing will leave this community in a state of suspended animation. Unfortunately, by the time we wake up, Robert Bobb will be gone and so possibly may be Detroit Public Schools.

President's Report



Keith Johnson

dinate amount of the district's long-term future on another bond proposal that (1) hasn't even been introduced yet, and (2) may have little (if any) chance of passing.

It is totally irresponsible for Mr. Bobb to even consider asking Detroit voters to consider the approval of another bond series when they have not seen the first shovel in the ground for a new school under the existing \$500.5 million bond that was passed in November.

Mr. Bobb's plan will likely accelerate the exodus of students from DPS as parents become increasingly fed up with his rhetoric, lack of community

Should We Ban Social Promotion?

By Mark O'Keefe
DFT Executive Vice President

The district recently announced a ban on social promotions. From a distance, this sounds like a good idea. If a student has not learned the content in one grade, he or she should not be promoted to the next grade. When you look at individual cases, however, it quickly becomes clear that many decisions should be

left to the professional judgment of the teacher.

One of my most successful students



Mark O'Keefe

THE DETROIT
teacher

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Updates...

2010 Volunteer of the Year

Richard Berlin, secretary of the DFT Retirees Chapter, is being honored April 17 by the Michigan



Richard Berlin

Democratic Party as the 2010 Volunteer of the Year. Berlin, a retired Detroit teacher, will be honored at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner at Cobo Hall. Berlin, 66, is chairman of the Membership

Committee for the 14th Congressional District.

He also served 18 years on the Michigan Democratic Party's State Central Committee. "I'm shocked because I used to do a lot more," Berlin said.

African Centered Education Chapter Forms

Teachers from schools with African Centered Education curricula have formed a DFT chapter. The African Centered Education Chapter will meet on the third Thursdays of the month, with the exception of April. The next three meetings are set for April 22, May 20 and June 17 at 4:30 p.m. at the DFT hall.

Looking for a Teacher

Jewel Gines, chair of the DFT Retirees Chapter, says a former DPS student is looking for a science teacher he had at Weatherby School in the mid 1960s. The teacher's name, he believes, is Anderson (Andy) Gilmore or Gilmour. The student — Robert (Bob) Jury — is a physician at Beaumont Hospital and would like him to know the tremendous impact this teacher had on his life.

Retirements Announced

The following teachers have announced their retirement: Annie Q. Jacobs and James A. DelVero. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

Retired Guyton Teacher Dies

The dynamic hearse-driving Detroit teacher Willard (Bill) Weitschat passed away March 1. He was 77. Weitschat purchased the used hearse to be able to take his students on weekly field trips and other adventures in the 1970s. He



Bill Weitschat

was known as an extraordinary fifth-grade teacher at Guyton Elementary School on Detroit's east side.

Weitschat attended Guyton Elementary School, Jackson

Intermediate and Southeastern High. He graduated from Wayne University with a degree in education and served in the U.S. Army. He was known for his bingo game using spelling words called Whiz Roll. Students who got a correct word, instead of saying bingo, would shout, "I'm a whiz." Winners got to take as much candy as they could dig with one hand out of a bag. His former students said he would buy two big bags of candy every Friday morning.

"Everyone loved Mr. Weitschat," said a former student, Tasso Teftsis. "We were immigrants and my older brother was having a hard time adjusting. He helped him so much. He treated everyone the same."

Weitschat passed away at an assisted living residence in Traverse City. He is survived by a brother, nieces and a nephew. A memorial service will be held at a future date.



FREEP EDITOR REMEMBERS CARSTENS

For the past three years, Peter Gavrilovich (above right), former Carstens student and current Nation/World Editor at the Detroit Free Press, has visited the fifth-graders at Carstens Elementary School to teach about Detroit history. This year he invited Paul Anger, Publisher and Editor of the Free Press, to join him and on Feb. 1. Mr. Anger came to school and observed the first-graders in Kevin Stafford's class learning about action verbs before visiting the fifth-graders in Elbert Bennett's class.

Tools to Help You Decide When to Retire

By Rufus Gaston

These days, everyone is taking a new look at their finances — and no one is looking more closely than the millions of baby boomers who are nearing retirement age. While some boomers expected to retire at one of the traditional milestones, such as age 62, the current economy is forcing many of them to re-evaluate their plans. Many are wondering if they should work longer, or how their Social Security benefit — or their spouse's benefit — would be affected if they continued working.

To help them find answers, Social Security has published a fact sheet called When To Start Receiving Retirement Benefits. You can read it online at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10147.html.

As most workers know, your choice of a retirement age — from 62 to 70 — can dramatically affect your monthly Social Security benefit amount.

If you choose to start receiving benefits early, the monthly payments will be reduced based on the number of months you receive benefits before you reach your full retirement age. The rate of reduction will depend on the year you were born. The maximum reduction at age 62 will be:

- 25 percent for people born between 1943 and 1954.

• 30 percent for people born after 1959. If you wait until your full retirement age, your benefits will not be reduced. And if you should choose to delay retirement, your benefit will increase up to eight percent a year from your full retirement age until age 70. However, there is no additional benefit increase after you reach age 70, even if you continue to delay taking benefits.

Social Security also has created several retirement planners to help you make an informed decision. Social Security has an online calculator that can provide immediate retirement benefit estimates to help you plan for your retirement. The online Retirement Estimator uses information from your own earnings record, and lets you create "what if" scenarios. You can, for example, change your "stop work" date or expected future earnings to create & compare different retirement options.

To use the Retirement Estimator, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator. And for general information about Social Security, visit www.socialsecurity.gov.

Retirement decisions are unique to everyone. Make sure you are up to date with the important information you will need to make the choice that's right for you.

Rufus Gaston is a public affairs specialist with the Social Security office.

Visit the New
DFT Web site
www.DFT231.com

Children Helping Children at Harding

By Leslie P. Smith

On Jan. 12, our country felt the devastating pain and heartache from the impact of the largest earthquake in Haiti. While others gave resources and manpower to aide the survivors of Haiti, Harding Elementary School rallied together for a school wide fundraiser to help the children who have lost their homes and families.

Even though Detroit has financial woes that affect families in the Brightmoor community, the students empathized with the children in Haiti. This brought about an awareness and appreciation for our country and education. The Harding student council proposed a penny drive to contribute to the children in dire need of food and water. The students embraced the idea under the guidance of counselor Wanda Hudson and pre-school teacher Sherry Zeiger.

The "Children Helping Children" penny drive materialized and engulfed the hearts of everyone at Harding. Everyday a few students would roll the huge container room to room collecting pennies. The penny drive ran from Feb. 8-12.

Helping the children of Haiti triggered the fourth- and fifth-grade classes to sell homemade cupcakes pre-

pared and donated by the teachers. The "Hopes and Dreams" cupcake drive was facilitated by fourth-grade teacher Towana Colvin. For just a dollar, students were raising new hopes and dreams for families in Haiti.

"Parents would leave coins with me to ensure their students contributed," said Principal DeSheil Echols. "Our students succeeded by helping Haiti's children willingly and unselfishly."

Recently, Harding opened its hearts and doors to Yasmine Joachim, a 26-year-old survivor of the Haiti earthquake. She described how her life changed as she watched her country crumble right before her eyes.

"I was going to the market for my nephew and I had just left out of the market with my goods as the ground shook and before I knew it the market had completely collapsed to the ground...I had survived by the grace of God," Joachim said.

Her story brought tears to some, as she graciously continued to speak of the devastation in Haiti. Students were enthralled by this Haitian woman and asked questions in concern and empathy. The students presented Joachim a large facsimile of the check that will be presented to the American Red Cross in the amount of \$485.



Harding Elementary School Principal DeSheil Echols with students who raised money for Haiti.



DFT Heads to Lansing on Lobby Day

DFT officials and more than 50 members spent a day in Lansing March 17 lobbying state legislators on issues important to Detroit teachers.

Reform is in the air. As well as dwindling revenue for schools. That combination spells anxiety for everyone in public education. Teachers are trying to do the hard work of educating children with fewer resources.

In addition, several bills directed at cutting teachers' health care and retirement benefits were being considered that week.

AFT Michigan President David Hecker said it is utterly important for legislators to hear from teachers.

"In this city, reform means coming after you," Hecker said. That means coming after teachers' paychecks, health care benefits and retirement. Reform in Lansing doesn't mean finding better revenue sources for education. It means privatizing almost every aspect of public education.

"Elected officials don't mind trashing educators claiming you are not doing your jobs, while the same elected officials are not doing their jobs of building a bright future for



our state and that means raising revenues," Hecker said.

DFT members heard presentations by lobbyists before speaking directly to legislators in their offices. More than 300 teachers from the Detroit metropolitan area visited Lansing on Lobby Day.

"The economy in Michigan has changed," Mike Keller, legislative director for the Michigan AFL-CIO, told a group of teachers. "A lot of our tax policies are pointed in the wrong direction. They need to be shifted."

An Important Question: Can the Child Hear?

There's a whole lot of expertise in the eight people at the DPS Speech and Hearing Center, on Canfield and the Lodge Freeway. And a whole lot of traffic.

Here's where parents can have their children aged zero to 26 diagnosed with a complete hearing evaluation. And if they suspect something's just not right — and don't know what it is — they should come here first. For students, 45 percent of the day is spent listening.

"Anyone who is being tested for special ed should be ruled out for hearing loss," says Sheryll Bonness, a DPS audiologist at the center. Often times, hearing problems mimic other learning issues.

"This building and this program is what I consider a hidden gem," says Dr. Renee Dalecki, an audiologist. The building is new and teams with sound suites and high-tech instruments to test hearing.

"Any parent can bring their child here," says audiologist Sonya Ellis. "Hearing loss can mimic many other disorders so it always has to be ruled out."

The real issue is mild hearing loss. "If the severity is not very profound, it can appear that the person is having difficulty for other reasons," says Monseille Calhoun, an audiologist.

The audiologists are required to be state licensed and nationally certified



by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA). Many indicators can point to hearing problems.

"A lot of kids with hearing problems will have lower reading scores," says Dalecki.

Many times audiologists recommend sound equipment for the classroom. Teachers may say they talk louder to reach all children but to a child with a hearing impairment, their voices appear distorted.

"The equipment helps the teacher," said Patricia Millender. "You can talk loud but you'll have voice fatigue."

The Detroit Public Schools is celebrating its 100th year of the Communications Disorders Department. The district was a lighthouse district; it was the first in the country to have a Speech and Hearing Clinic at the School Center Building in 1939. At that time the main communication concern was stuttering.

In December the center's staff was decimated with the layoffs of four of the 10 audiologists. The audiologists serve DPS' 88,000 students. But they also serve the Detroit parochial schools, as well as public and parochial students in the Grosse

Pointes, Harper Woods, Hamtramck and Highland Park. ASHA recommends one audiologist for a student population of 10,000. Serving a population of over 100,000 would warrant 10 audiologists. But the center has only five audiologists and one clinic coordinator. The center also has two speech pathologists.

Once a month the center stacks up children to see a doctor. These children need Medical clearance to consider placement for learning impaired program or voice therapy. A doctor hasn't been to the clinic in three years, however, because the district has difficulty in funding that service.

Hearing problems range from congenital hearing loss to temporary hearing loss due to ear infections or build up of fluid or wax or other impairments. But a visit to the center can clarify other learning and health issues.

"Sometimes I'm the first person to tell them their child is autistic," says Nina Fracassa.

The center has many successes. One child was diagnosed early, won a full scholarship to University Liggett in Grosse Pointe Woods, and then won a full scholarship to Yale University.

"I was with her all along," Ellis said. "We have the best follow up. No one has follow up like we do."

Burton Engineer Searches for Teacher

Like the abandoned Michigan Central Station in the shadow of his school, engineer John Mohn wonders if anyone cares about what came before them.

Do they care about the building engineers who clean these old Detroit buildings? Do they care about the employees who have been nurturing these spaces for decades? Do they care about these workers who have spent their best years working for DPS?

"I don't think they'll want me much longer," Mohn says about the increasing trend toward privatizing all the auxiliaries of public education.

Mohn has been a DPS engineer for 25 years, most of those years at Guyton Elementary School, which closed last year. As a child, he went to Guyton, Jackson Intermediate and Cass Tech.

Mohn cares.

Last fall while looking for a shutoff

valve above a false ceiling in the boys' lavatory at Burton International School, Mohn discovered a red wallet. It contained a checkbook, credit cards, a driver's license, birth certificate, union card and other personal effects. A former student apparently stole it, took the cash and put the remains in the ceiling.

This likely occurred in the early 80s when the building was the Franklin Adult Day Center. The wallet had been there for, perhaps, 27 years.

Mohn, 53, is on a mission to find its owner, Sandra Matthews.

"I can't help but wonder what became of Ms. Matthews," Mohn wrote in an email. "She would be over 60 now. Is she retired? Still teaching? If so, where? There are pictures of her children — they would be in their 30s now. How are they doing? I wonder what thoughts she might have about working with adult stu-

dents. Was theft of personal items a major problem back then?"

"If someone at the DFT would be able to track down Ms. Matthews," Mohn wrote, "that would be great. I imagine she's all but forgotten the theft, but would, nonetheless, be happy to have the items returned, especially the birth certificate." Unfortunately the DFT couldn't locate her; her union activity stopped in 2003.

Mohn is still doing his research. He found that Matthews had a daughter named Kikuyu Matthews, born in 1976.

"A Google search found an article in Jet magazine, 1994, about someone from Detroit having that name who was to attend MIT (WOW!)," Mohn wrote. "Another search suggested that Kikuyu Matthews might now be Kikuyu Daniels. There's someone by that name currently (I think) employed at MIT."



John Mohn

For now, Mohn has the wallet in safe keeping, and keeps researching.

"One of the joys of working in these old buildings," he said, "is you do find interesting things."

Each One-Reach One Mentoring Program At Clara W. Rutherford Academy

By Gina Wilcox

It began more than six years ago. God placed it upon one educator's heart to begin a program that would address the issues faced by young girls. Six women originally embraced the mission but today there are 13 professional women who give of their time, resources and skills to act as a bridge for fourth- and fifth-grade girls at Clara W. Rutherford Academy.

As mentors, these professionals inspire, correct and encourage 35 girls as they aspire to cross a bridge into safety.

The girls take part in etiquette lessons, arts and crafts, knitting classes, a book club and have cultural experiences in the greater Detroit area. Mentors have, individually, taken their mentees to church services, their homes, out to eat and pampered them with pedicures and manicures. The mentors meet with their mentees – some women have as many as four girls while others have three or two – once or twice a week during the lunch period. We are committed to improving the lives of our future generation, our girls.

In December, the mentees were treated to the wonderful Christmas performance of the Nutcracker Ballet at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills. The girls were excited and immensely enjoyed this new experience.

Principal Miriam Adams, through the Title 1 Fund and school wide fundraisers, has paid for many mentoring activities, such as the Nutcracker Ballet tickets and the bus. However, the mentors as well as the Visionary Women's Ministry from Corinthian Baptist Church, provide much of the funding. Last year, the mentors held a fundraiser selling Little Caesar Pizza Kits. Donations are always needed and appreciated. There is no cost to the girls or their families.

The mentors are: Carolyn Wize, Ericka Davis, Regina Davis, Rhoda Hurley, Cathy Wenz, Jan Smith, Keisha Smith, Urvashi Mehta, Margaret Williams, Charmaine Bartley, Lynda Mowbray, Francine Ellison, and Macell Myers.



THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

Africa: There's Nothing Like the Real Thing



Dora Blain got bit by the Africa bug in 1995 when she took her first trip there.

The experience was so inspiring that the retired Kettering teacher determined to return. But she wanted to take students. Those plans never panned out. For some reason the students had fears.

"They were scared of traveling across the waters and going into a whole new continent," Blain said. Instead she recruited five of her colleagues at Kettering High School and Kettering West Wing. In February, they made the journey to Ghana and came back with countless impressions.



"There was a pleasure that everywhere I looked, everybody looked like me," said Addie Douglass. "For our culture

— the people born and raised in the U.S. — we were robbed of our culture. The little we learned was not enough."

Everywhere Douglass looked; it reflected a world where she wasn't a minority. The advertisements and billboards showcased people of color.

For Deborah Supuwood, a retired Kettering teacher, it was a spiritual journey to see where the great Diaspora began.

Kettering teacher Lois Tilly was astounded by the deference in Ghana toward education. All of the children and teachers were in uniform. Homework was completed. Attendance was mandatory.

"If their parents can't afford a uniform, they can't go to school," Tilly said.

Gennina Thorpe loved the unspoiled land, the water, the sky.

"I could feel what the slaves felt when they were taken away," she said.

The group visited castles, the tomb of W.E.B. Dubois, slave holding cells and universities.

The women came back inspired and are even planning a spring 2011 trip to Dubai and Egypt. But Blain, always the teacher, still dreams of taking students.

"This is an international world we're living in today," she said. "There's nothing like seeing the real thing."

After School Programs Get Student Boards

Michigan Circuit Court Judge Craig Strong was on hand March 10 at MacDowell Elementary School to do an important job. He was present to swear in new student advisory boards for the 25 schools participating in the 21st Century After-School Program.

Four students from each of the schools will help govern the programs and make decisions to improve them. Pictured above is the team from Beckham Elementary School: including (from left) teacher and 21st Century site manager Pat Roper, parent Carlene Whitman-McGaughy, and principal Janet Glenn.



ALL THAT JAZZ



The Duke Ellington Jazz Band from the Edward (Duke) Ellington Conservatory of Music & Art is an after-school rehearsal group that is mentored by the jazz staff from the University of Michigan. These musicians perform compositions by Freddie Hubbard and Herbie Hancock to name a few. This group recently performed at the University of Michigan Jazz Festival. The ensemble was one of only two middle school jazz bands in the festival. The directors of the band are Deborah Scales and Herbert Cage.

Schulze Student Wins Top State Award

Ask Benjamin Nwachukwu (right) how the chambers of Congress work and he can tell you. However, you might not hear the humble student's quiet words.

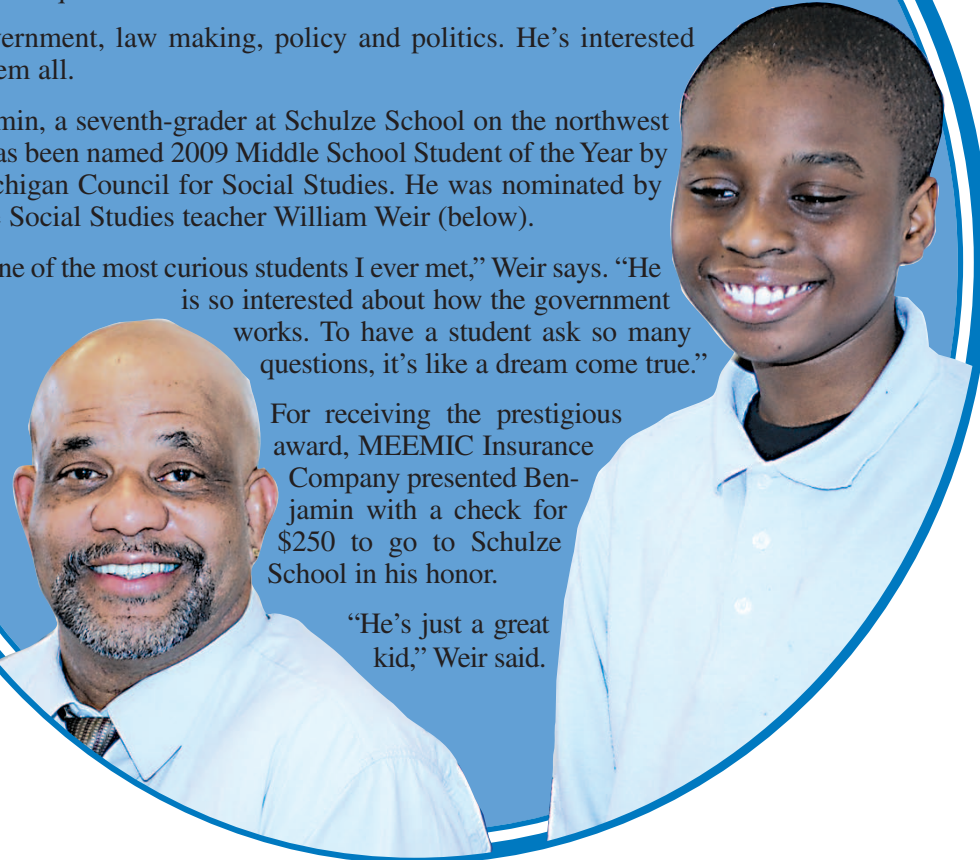
Government, law making, policy and politics. He's interested in them all.

Benjamin, a seventh-grader at Schulze School on the northwest side, has been named 2009 Middle School Student of the Year by the Michigan Council for Social Studies. He was nominated by Schulze Social Studies teacher William Weir (below).

"He is one of the most curious students I ever met," Weir says. "He is so interested about how the government works. To have a student ask so many questions, it's like a dream come true."

For receiving the prestigious award, MEEMIC Insurance Company presented Benjamin with a check for \$250 to go to Schulze School in his honor.

"He's just a great kid," Weir said.



The Thrill of the Spelling Bee

By Charlene Uresy

The thrill of competition for the Scripps National Spelling Bee permeated the halls of Spain School recently. Students were buzzing with excitement, trying to predict who would win. This was the third year fifth-grade teacher Deborah Stephens, right, administered the famed tournament. Stephens started the bee after organizing a school trip for the fourth- through eighth-graders to see the inspirational film Akeelah and the Bee. The excitement of participating in the spelling bee has been going on ever since.

This year's winner was seventh-grade student Jasmin Germany. It was her third year of participating in the bee – the other years she did not place. Before this year's competition Jasmin said to herself, "If I study harder, I can win this." She enlisted the help of her parents and her younger brother, Nichols. They helped her with words from a prepared list and words from the dictionary. Jasmin was elated when she won, and was looking forward to the next step – participation in the Wayne County spelling bee at the Charles Wright African American Museum.

When Jasmin entered the museum she was nervous because she did not know any of the other 60 students participating. Most of these students were from suburban schools. Each contestant was presented with a Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary before the tournament began. They were allowed to do some quick cramming with their new dictionaries prior to the competition.

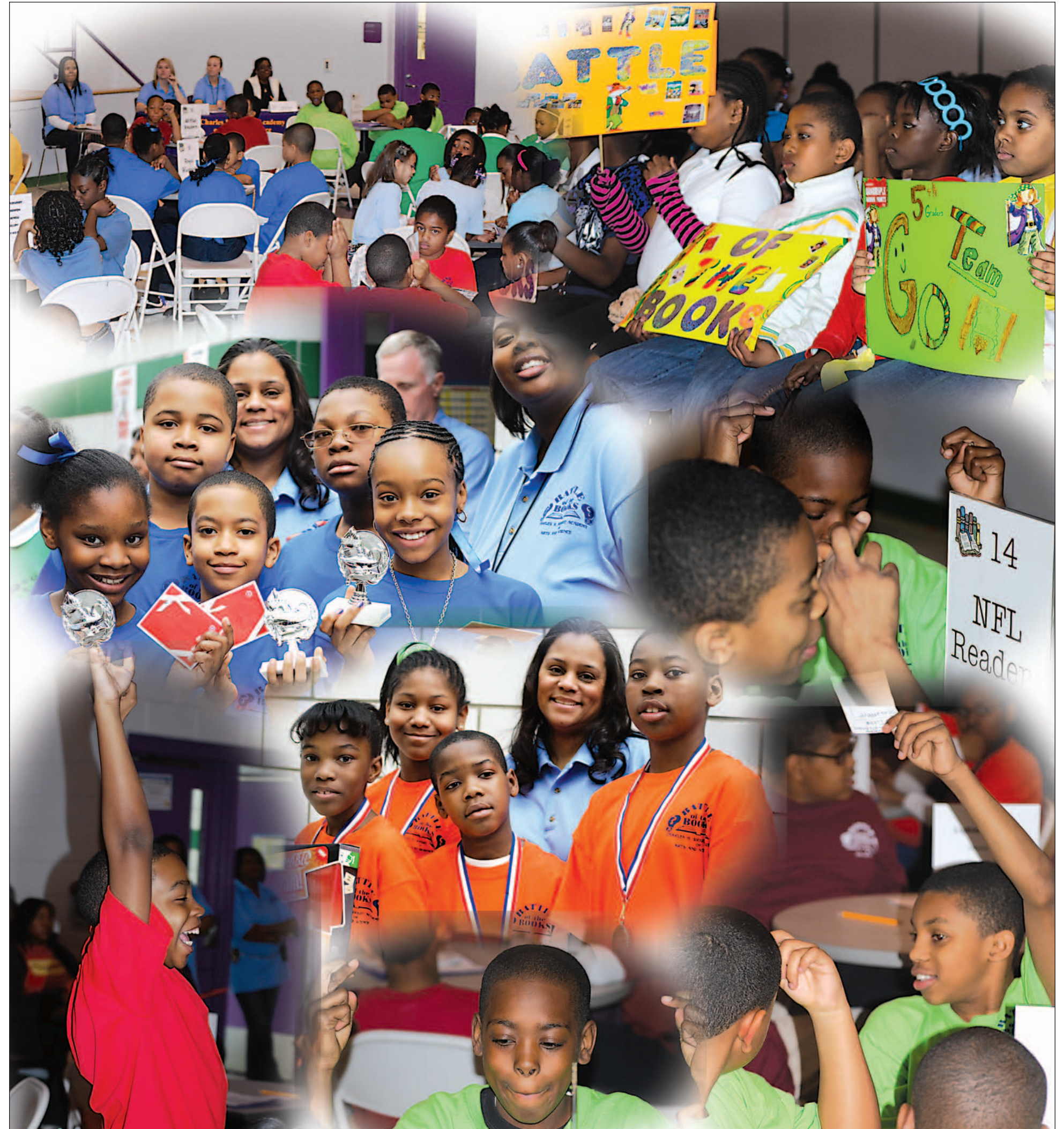
Jasmin represented herself and Spain School well, misspelling a word in the seventh of 11 rounds. She was very grateful for the opportunity to participate and is looking forward to next year's competition. Mrs. Stephens has started a wildly successful academic contest at Spain, that is fast becoming an inherited right of involvement for its students.



Charles Wright Academy Battles for Book Title

Fifth-grade students at Charles Wright Academy painstakingly read five books and prepared in teams to answer tricky questions about them. They had 20 seconds to remember the author's name and answer intricate details about the characters and story lines. The March 19 morning competition

was quiet and tense. The teams were so well prepared they had to go into three tie-breakers. Finally a first place group emerged with trophies, gift certificates and other awards. "This isn't just a singular moment," said Principal Sylvia Green. "This happens all year long."



Group Works To Help Students

Like many things in Detroit, a group that helps disadvantaged Detroit students to get eyeglasses or uniforms, fell on hard times. Funding to Student Assistance Services, Inc. (SASI) came primarily from the United Way. But SASI lost United Way's support. "Like many small independent agencies, we lost our funding," says SASI President Kathy Cornish. SASI is largely made up of DPS attendance officers who work with schools to find students who need resources.

"The attendance officers are our eyes and ears," says Cornish. The district has approximately 34 attendance officers, formerly truant officers, who work with 172 Detroit schools. They know when a family experiences a home fire or job loss or other unfortunate events.

"We're an agency without walls," says Cornish, who retired in 2006 as an attendance officer.

SASI has been in place for five decades, having been established in 1953, to help students stay in school every day. It is looking to replace its \$10,000 to \$12,000 it needs each year to buy students clothes, glasses or replace hearing aids. "We need to raise this money consistently," Cornish says. To do that SASI is holding its first Detroit Princess river boat ride June 3 from 6:30-9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$40 and can be obtained by calling 313-404-0946 or 313-272-9165.

"We're hoping to make it an annual event and teachers will get on board and maybe even bring their classrooms," Cornish says. SASI partners with the Department of Attendance and it collaborates with the Goodfellows to get shoes for students.

Not interested in a sunset cruise, but want to support SASI? The group takes tax-deductible donations sent to SASI, P.O. Box 401578, Redford, MI 48240. Or donate through the website at www.assiststudents.org.

2010: New Year, a New Attitude

By Talecia Tate and Nicole Cato

Each year we all make New Year's resolutions. We pledge to lose a few pounds or save a few more dollars. By the time March rolls around, we have abandoned those lofty goals. But this year will be different.

Under the leadership of the Principal Calvin B. Patillo, the staff, students and parents at Owen Academy @ Pelham have adopted a new mission. 2010: New Year, a New Attitude.....Adminstrating, Teaching, Servicing, Parenting and Learning. This new motto gives stakeholders an opportunity to reassess and redirect their attitude.

We started the year with a new mentoring program for the middle school students. Mentoring sessions are held bi-weekly and mentors include the principal and teachers. Mentors design activities to increase critical thinking skills, goal setting and a sense of responsibility. Students are enjoying the out-of-classroom learning and discussions with their mentors. It gives them an opportunity to discuss important issues and make real life connections to lessons taught in class.

To kick off our new attitude, we had a school wide balloon launch. On Jan. 12 Owen students and staff participated in "The Sky is the Limit" balloon launch. Each student, K-8, wrote their goals on a note card and attached it to a balloon. Each card included the school's return address and asked the finder to write back and encourage the students to follow their dreams.

The entire school gathered in the front of the building and released their balloons in unison. As the balloon soared further and further away, the students began to think about exploring their unlimited possibilities.

To date we have received two responses, both from small towns in Ontario, Canada. They were so excited to find the balloons four days later, and encouraged the third-graders to follow their dreams. We will continue to promote the students to follow their dreams, the sky is the limit!





CASS HOSTS ROBOTICS COMPETITION

— Some 40 metro Detroit schools attended the FIRST ROBOTICS competition March 12 hosted by Cass Tech High School. The program teams an engineer with 15 to 20 students at a school to work together for six weeks to build a robot. The competition pitted robots against each other by scoring points when a robot gets a soccer ball through a goal post. The program aims to get kids interested in engineering by working with a real world engineer on a real technical project. "This is like playing a varsity sport with a pro every day," said Francois Castaing, head of First in Michigan.



Grants...

Environment

The Lawrence Foundation focuses on supporting environmental, educational, human services and other causes. The foundation has made over \$3 million in grants since its inception in 2000. Grants are awarded twice a year. Deadline: April 30. For info, visit www.thelawrencefoundation.org.

Singing For Change

Singing For Change is a foundation started by the singer Jimmy Buffett to support programs improving the quality of life and empowering people to make positive changes in their communities. Grants from \$500 to \$10,000 with ongoing deadlines are available to programs concerned with health, education and the protection of families, programs promoting environmental awareness, and programs that help marginalized people overcome barriers. For info, visit info@singingforchange.com.

Literacy Grants

Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation is committed to providing financial support for programs that further children's health and wellness, domestic pets, and literacy and education. The foundation's literacy and education grants go to support programs such as summer reading programs, early childhood, literacy programs for children with special needs. Deadline: May 30. For info, visit www.buildabear.com.

Youth Education

The American Honda Foundation is committed to grant-making that reflects the basic beliefs of Honda companies: imaginative, creative, youthful, forward-thinking, scientific, humanistic and innovative. The foundation particularly supports youth education that focuses on science, technology, engineering and math, as well as literacy and job training. Grants from \$20,000 to \$50,000 are provided to schools for a one-year period. The grants have rolling deadlines. The next one is May 1. Applications are submitted online at <http://corporate.honda.com.america>.

Young Heroes

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes recognizes the efforts of young people who take action to protect their environment or improve their communities. The leadership shown by these young people, ages eight to 18, makes the heroes worthy of the award. The Barron Prize focuses on 25 young people who either focus on helping their communities, or protecting and sustaining the environment. The prize consists of \$2,500 toward their education or their service project. Deadline: April 30. For info, visit www.barronprize.org.

Math and Science

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, with support from Texas Instruments Demana-Waits Fund, provides scholarships to

prospective secondary mathematics teachers. College students who are currently finishing their sophomore year, are student members of NCTM, and intend to teach secondary school mathematics are eligible to apply. Up to \$10,000 maximum will be awarded to a current college student pursuing this career goal and attending college full time. Deadline: May 7. For info, visit www.nctm.org.

Learning & Leadership

The National Education Association Foundation supports public school teaching and curriculum improvement. Its Learning & Leadership Grants support educators having high-quality professional development experiences. Grants from \$2,000 to \$5,000 fund individuals participating in summer institutes or groups engaged in collegial study. Deadline for applications: June 1. For info, visit www.neafoundation.org.

Educator Awards

Vernier Software & Technology and the National Association of Biology Teachers are sponsoring an award to recognize excellence in the teaching of ecology or environmental science. This award recognizes a secondary school teacher of ecology or environmental science who has carried his or her commitment to the environment into the community. The award includes \$1,000 toward travel to the NABT Professional Development Conference and \$500 worth of Vernier equipment. Teachers may be nominat-

ed or self-nominate. Deadline: May 7. For info, visit www.nabt.org.

Biotechnology Teaching

The National Association of Biology Teachers announced the Ron Mardigian Biotechnology Teaching Award. The award goes to a secondary teacher who has demonstrated excellent, innovative teaching of biotechnology in the classroom. The award may be given for a short-term series of activities or a longer term integration of biotechnology in the curriculum. The award includes \$1,500 — up to \$500 toward travel to the NABT Professional Development Conference, \$500 in Bio-Rad materials, and \$500 for general science supplies. Deadline: May 7. For info, visit www.nabt.org.

Literacy

The Marine Toy for Tots Foundation is committed to playing an active role in developing one of the nation's most valuable resources — children. The foundation delivers toys to those children who might not receive them during the winter holidays. The foundation continues its support for children beyond the holidays through its Toys for Tots Literacy Program, which began in 2008. The program delivers books to public schools or libraries that provide economically disadvantaged children with emotional and educational support. The foundation takes requests for books on an ongoing basis. The request form is available online at mttff@toysfortots.org.



InsideOut Reaches Kids through Poetry

What's a better way to get students writing than through their own experiences? Many times that way is through poetry.

InsideOut is a Detroit-based organization that worked with 6,200 Detroit students last year to write and publish their own poetry. It operates several programs and sends established poets into the schools to teach kids in this special art.

InsideOut's after-school workshops, Citywide Poets, work with high school students to improve writing and performing skills at three different sites across Detroit. Citywide students lead writing workshops with other students. Over 90 percent of alumni go on to college.

Citywide Poets was nationally recognized recently by Michelle Obama and the National Endowment of the Arts as one of 15 youth arts and humanities programs to receive the prestigious 2009 Coming Up Taller Award.

That was exceptionally good news for the organization that has been producing great student work for 15 years. Fifteen years ago, however, the Detroit arts community had more resources. Today InsideOut has lost its Title I funding and depends on other organizations and individuals for money.

Last month, one of Citywide's student poets won a \$5,000 scholarship from Sun Life Financial Inc. Cass Tech senior Myriha Burton participated in Citywide Poets for three years and earned an award at the 2008 Brave New Voices National Youth Poetry Slam in Washington, D.C. She'll use the funds for college.

Even better news was the \$50,000 grant that InsideOut won from Sun Life to continue its work with Detroit schools.

"Poetry is a really powerful way to engage kids in writing," says Terry Blackhawk (above), executive director and founder of InsideOut. Blackhawk likes to quote famed writer Grace Paley: "I went to the school of poetry to learn to write prose."

"It engages kids personally and helps them find confidence in their voice," Blackhawk says.

Blackhawk, a retired Detroit teacher, is hoping to secure more funding to expand the programs to more schools.

The programs are powerful for students: research shows an 11 percent achievement advantage for those students in the program, over non-participants.

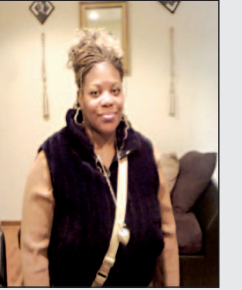
Clippert Middle School teacher Joanne Leggat conducted the research. Leggat saw that InsideOut participants were more likely to use dictionaries, thesauruses and descriptive words.

"They became excited about creating and using their imagination and less concerned about failure since they weren't graded for attempting something," Leggat said. "I am not a poetry writer and not much of a writer ... so the students benefited from a real lover of poetry."

InsideOut Literary Arts Project will host a "Showcase for Success" at the DFT building on April 29 at 5:30 p.m. This event will feature student performances and panel discussions by teachers, students and parents about the impact of InsideOut.

Take My Advice, Take Time To Listen...

BY Tura R. Smith-Dean,
Instructional Specialist
Trix Elementary/Middle School



Have you ever wondered why it takes 30 minutes out of your 60-minute math, science, history, computers or ELA class to deal with behavioral issues? Or, during your 3-hour ELA block, your reading lesson is interrupted by John again, the fourth time this week.

Do you yell, holler and demand the students "shut up" and listen? Have you found yourself being ignored by 30 students and you have 35 students sitting in your room? Or, during hall duty you tell students to stop playing and walk to the right and they act like you are invisible? If you are a teacher, social worker, counselor, support staff or administrator, you probably have experienced one of these scenarios during your career.

Today, the students are quite different from the students we had just 10 years ago. Today the students are trying to cope with issues some adults have not had to encounter. We must realize that some of our students are raising themselves, are responsible for their younger siblings, and two-parent households are almost a thing of the past. Our children are angry, defiant and violent. They are hungry, helpless, homeless and hopeless.

My question: Do you know the story of the students you are educating? Do you know the real reason why Derrick is so angry? (Because he didn't eat dinner the night before). Or why Amanda is late everyday? (Because she has to watch her baby sister while her mother runs the streets, and not to mention she does not have an alarm clock). Or why Terrell's pants and shirt are so dirty? (Because the water was cut off a week ago). Or why Jordan, William, Tracey and Jakia have to be the class clowns everyday? (Because that is the only attention they get).

LISTEN... YOU MUST KNOW THEIR STORY. Take time to listen. It does not take long. Perhaps it takes a simple question: How are you doing today? Is something on your mind? Do you need someone to talk to? Remember, students do not care what you know, until they know you care.

Sometimes as adults we feel students must respect us, but we do not have to do the same. RESPECT is earned NOT given. Respect must be mutual for student and adult. Take a moment and ponder the numerous encounters you have had with students over your career, did you really know their story?

I personally have worked with students aged five to 15. I am able to connect with them because I listen. We have built relationships; and relationships are the foundation of our life experiences. Students know that I will be there when they need encouragement, a hug, a smile or a kind word. Please take my advice: take time to listen. Listening may change their lives FOREVER.

DFT
That's my Union!

Fixing the Small Learning Issues Early

A group of Priest Elementary School teachers think they're on to something.

The teachers are implementing strategies in young kids to stave off a diagnosis of special education. The program — called Early Learning Success — was piloted in 1992 in Northville Public Schools and showed a dramatic decrease in those students later sent to special ed.

While rates of special education eligibility have steadily increased in Michigan and the nation, those placed in special education in Northville schools decreased since the program was implemented.

“The goal is to reduce the number of children referred to special ed,” says Sue Reck, a second grade teacher at Priest. With early intervention, that can happen.

“We’re meeting the children at their level and fixing the things they need fixed,” Reck said. “Right now we have the failure model: you have to fall so far behind in order to intervene.”

Reck, who was trained in ELS with four other Priest teachers, is hoping to reverse that trend.

“For most kids, it’s a few little fixes,” she said. “If you concentrate on those, they move up.”

Brain research shows that for many children the pathways on the two sides of their brain aren’t connected. If they don’t have balance and gross motor skills, the connection on both sides of the brain is not formed.

These children need to toss balls, skip, jump and use both sides of the body to build the pathways.

“Get those babies out of the walkers,” says Reck. And away from the TV. Experts believe the lack of physicality in young chil-

dren is hurting the development of the brain.

“So many of our children are spending so much time in front of screens, whether TV, video or PlayStation,” Reck says. But the more senses a child uses, the faster she learns.

Some of ELS’ 12 proficiencies stem from using motor skills and visual memory. One strategy is for students to close their eyes, visualize a word, and spell it backward. Another is to toss balls while skipping.

When the teachers were first introduced to ELS at Wayne RESA, their skepticism piqued. Another new program with great expectations. But the teachers found ELS makes the DIBELS benchmarks and GLCEs easier to track.

The Priest teachers caught the attention of executives at Mercedes Benz, who funded a grant for each teacher at the school through AdoptAClassroom.org. They are the only DPS school to receive a request from a donor to sign up every teacher for a grant. ELS is what they’re investing in.

How to Build Brain Pathways

- Turn off the TV
- Dribble and sing at once
- Balance with eyes closed
- Do sit and spins
- Walk with a bean bag on your head
- Do pushups



Priest Elementary School teachers implementing the ELS program are Martha Bills, Kathy Fischer, Sue Reck, Vida Bonacci, and Jan Drewek.

Calendar

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

APRIL

- 2-11 Schools Closed, Spring Break
- 12 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 13 Special Education Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 13 Social Workers Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 14 Attendance Agents Chapter Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- 15 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 15 Psychological Services Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 20 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 22 African Centered Education Chapter, 4:30 p.m.

MAY

- 3 Special Education Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 6 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 6 Preschool/Head Start Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 11 Social Workers Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 12 Attendance Agents Chapter Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- 13 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 18 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 18 Educational Technicians Chapter Meeting, 3:30 p.m.
- 20 Psychological Services Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 20 African Centered Education Chapter, 4:30 p.m.