

Federal Judge Blocks Anti-Teacher Dues Deduction Bill

The Federal Court for the Eastern District granted an injunction June 5 that blocks implementation of Public Act 53, a controversial anti-union law aimed at prohibiting payroll deduction of union dues for school employees. PA 53 was passed by the Republican legislature and signed by Gov. Rick Snyder in March. In issuing the injunction, Judge Denise Page Hood said the law was likely to be found unconstitutional.

"We are gratified to hear that this unfair and punitive law has been put on hold," said David Hecker, president of AFT Michigan.

"PA 53 singled out school employees for retaliation and does absolutely nothing to improve education for Michigan students," Hecker said. "Voters are getting more and more upset

with Lansing politicians who appear more interested in attacking teachers than getting Michigan back on track."

PA 53 disallowed the automatic deduction of union dues for public school employees. Other public and private entities with employee unions were allowed to continue to deduct dues. The decades-old practice is automated and costs almost nothing for an employer to process.

The attorneys for the state said the legislature's motive in passing the law was to save school districts money and make unions more accountable to their members. When pressed by Judge Hood, the attorneys for the state said they did not know how much would be saved.

"I'm flummoxed at the flimsy and fictional justification for this law," said Andrew Nickelhoff, attorney from

Sachs Waldman, who represented AFT Michigan in challenging the law. "All of this is so flimsy and contrived and so without rationale."

The attorneys for the state failed to show how the law made unions more accountable.

"I consider this an admission that the real purpose of PA 53 was to punish and silence the political adversaries of the legislative majority," Nickelhoff said. The real objective of PA 53, he said, was to diminish union power.

"This is the only honest and forthright rationale for PA 53."

While the injunction is a step toward fairness for unions, it is likely to be appealed. In that event, school unions, including the DFT, are prepared to implement an alternative process to collect dues.

100
Percent
at
Burton



One hundred percent of the staff at Burton International School said yes to the union. They said yes to the Detroit Federation of Teachers. By June 1, 100 percent of the staff signed up for alternative payment of their 2012-13 union dues. Way to go, Burton!

Irresponsibility and Disrespect Primes DFT for Battle

By Keith Johnson
DFT President

The demeaning and disorganized way Detroit Public Schools has addressed staffing after issuing layoff notices to all teachers has angered and hurt DFT members to the point they are ready to fight.

The district's cavalier attitude toward employees it should value has made many feel as valued as a disposable diaper. **THE BATTLE IS ON!**

President's Report



**Keith
Johnson**

From the drive-by observations to "interviews" that more resembled a cattle auction than a professional activity, DPS has set the stage for an avalanche of lawsuits that will surely be filed by the DFT as well as individual employees.

WAITING IN VAIN

At Fellowship Chapel and the MSU Woodward Avenue Campus, hundreds of teachers waited for up to three hours to participate in "interviews" with principals. In some cases the principals never showed up or left early. No one had the decency or professional courtesy to tell those waiting that there was no one there to interview them. They were told they could interview with someone else or reschedule.

Some members received emails in the middle of the night telling them they were scheduled for interviews that afternoon. Teachers were scheduled to interview for positions and grade levels for which they were not certified. Some still have not been scheduled for interviews at all.

Human resources staff members were loudly calling out (in a church no less),

"Anyone here for Marquette at 4:30?" This is completely unprofessional and disorganized, not to mention ineffective.

To their credit DFT members exemplified the courtesy, respect and professionalism that was missing from their employer despite the dysfunctional atmosphere in which they had to operate. Many left out of frustration because of their family obligations.

"YOU'RE NOT WORTHY"

What I found particularly insulting is the attitude of the so-called educational leaders in our schools — the principals. The egregious, unprofessional, dispassionate manner in which some have treated teachers at their schools is an abomination. During his "exit interviews," the principal of Bates Academy told at least three teachers they would not be back, even telling one she didn't "fit the style" of Bates. One teacher was so overcome that EMS had to take her to the hospital when her blood pressure rose to a stroke-level. Fortunately she will be fine. But how could a principal be so tactless, especially since he has NO AUTHORITY to make that blanket decision. The staff at Bates was so angry they cancelled their end-of-year luncheon.

The principal of Bow Elementary sent a letter to at least two teachers praising them for their service but advising them their services would no longer be needed and they should seek employment elsewhere.

The incoming principal of George Washington Carver brought her staff from



DFT President Keith Johnson with DFT Secretary Felecia Clark at the 2012 Building Representatives Dinner.

another school to a "meet and greet" in which she allowed them to select the rooms they'd want for next year. This would be fine except **CARVER ALREADY HAS STAFF IN THOSE ROOMS!**

The outgoing principals at Mae C. Jemison, Bethune@Fitzgerald and Stewart who are going to Sampson-Webber, Coleman A. Young and Carleton, respectively, told the staff at those schools they were "bringing their own people." This is as though the existing staff can be so thoughtlessly discarded like a disposable diaper.

The principal of Wayne Elementary proclaimed she was "getting rid of 50 percent of her staff," a staff that was like a little family until her arrival destroyed the fabric and collegiality that existed at the school for years.

Some of these principals have apparently drank the Kool-Aid and think they get to pick their staffs. We will prove them and the leadership of the district who fed them this twisted information wrong.

The lawsuits are being prepared as we speak. DPS continues to commit irresponsible and unprofessional acts that only strengthen our case.

**The DFT is ready for battle!
ARE YOU?**

Updates . . .

Retirements Announced

Peggy Ruckes, Linda Merckerson, Rosalind Payne-Thompson, Gabrielle Hughes, Joan Davis and Mary Walker-Pringle have announced their retirements on July 1. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

Teachers Tour Black Colleges



Detroit teachers Nadonya Muslim (left) and Kim Travis Ewing (right) took 29 students during spring break via charter bus on a tour of Historic Black Colleges and Universities, including Tennessee State, above, Morehouse, Spelman and Fisk universities.

Sign Up for Alternative Dues Today

In spite of a court injunction, the DFT still needs every member to sign up for automatic dues deduction for the 2012-13 school year. The dues will not be deducted until we know you are placed.

On June 5, a federal court judge issued an injunction over dues deduction. This is a temporary measure and could be overturned. If we lose on appeal we are back to square one. Pay your dues today at either site below:

Through the DFT, go to: <http://mi.aft.org/dft231/>.

Through AFT Michigan, go to:
<http://www.aftmichigan.org/dues.html>

THE DETROIT teacher

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They Just Aren't Ready

By Edna Reaves
DFT Executive Vice President

The state wasn't ready and neither was Detroit Public Schools. The state evaluation tool will not be ready until 2014, so why pressure districts into a process that many aren't prepared to handle. The state should have waited until it had a comprehensive evaluation tool that could be rolled out statewide and would apply to all districts in a fair and equitable manner. A highly effective or ineffective rating should mean the same in any area of the state. Other districts recognized that this process was going to be insurmountable this year and requested a waiver. Why didn't DPS? They got this one wrong and everyone knows it.

The time-consuming interviews would not be necessary if the district had sought the waiver. This whole interviewing process has been flawed from its inception and was a disgraceful experience for our members. I could not believe when I arrived at Fellowship Chapel and witnessed hundreds of teachers listening to a Human Resource representative shout out times, not names, for school interviews. This suggests they didn't have a clue who was there to interview for which schools, despite HR scheduling the interviews and teachers signing in at arrival. Many teachers sat for hours only to learn that the principal didn't show up for the interview. They just aren't ready.

Numerous effective teachers will be unemployed this fall because the district has failed to create a fair recall process. The union is gearing up for what we believe will be mass chaos when school starts. Why, you might ask? Principals have been told to over staff just in case the teachers they selected are not considered for placement. The components for consideration are evaluations, attendance, discipline and professional development. But our members have not received an attendance policy, discipline standard, or professional development criteria. School is in summer recess and many of our teachers have not been evaluated and others have not been scheduled for their first interview.

How did we get here? We can point to the legislators for forcing districts to do what they were ill prepared to do. But I also question Gov. Rick Snyder's decisions. Help me understand why it was necessary to assign 15 of DPS schools to the Education Achievement Authority, a state district, when the state already controlled the entire DPS district? Why is the governor removing students to educate them when he is already responsible for educating them? If John Covington has the solution for EAA schools, then he should apply the same to the entire district.

The reason we are in this interviewing debacle is because Roy Roberts elected to layoff the entire teaching population and give away 15 schools. Not a smart "business" decision. He turned over funding for 11,000 students, many coming from five of our larger high schools. If Roberts' heart and mission is truly to educate ALL of Detroit's children and eliminate the deficit, he should have told the governor that he already controlled the school district. All the state accomplished was to remove funding from DPS, make it harder to reduce the deficit, and require a longer stay for the emergency manager. Way to secure your job Mr. Roberts!

Unfortunately, Snyder and Roberts got it wrong. People who don't educate children are making decisions that impact students. Teachers will again bear the burden of these mistakes and our students will suffer irreparable harm. Putting a small bandage on a big wound will not heal it any faster. The state was not ready with its own evaluation process, it was not ready to run DPS, and it is not ready to run the EAA district.



Edna Reaves

EAA Fails Math

By Mark O'Keefe
Controller

EAA, the new state-wide school district, will take 15 schools from DPS this fall. When the EAA first reported how much it would pay teachers, leaders did not specify an actual salary. They only said it would be \$5,000 above the regional average, and that the extra salary would compensate teachers for the longer day and longer school year.



Mark O'Keefe

Now that they have released salary schedules, we can see that they were wrong on all accounts. First of all, the salaries are not \$5,000 above the regional average. The regional average master's step 10 salary for the 83 tri-county public school districts was over \$79,000 for the 2010-2011 school year. EAA teachers will max out at \$71,090, which is \$8,000 a year less than the regional average.

If EAA decided to actually pay \$5,000 over the regional average, it would still not compensate for the longer school day and longer school year. In DPS, teachers who work extended day and extended year receive an extra \$15,000.

And besides making \$23,000 less than what the average metro Detroit teacher would make for working the same hours, EAA teachers will not be part of the state's pension system.

Apparently, EAA is hoping to apply the same fuzzy math to their academic statistics as well. Chancellor John Covington recently announced he plans to seek a waiver from the state to allow EAA students to take the MEAP test for the grade level at which they are functioning.

That way, he will be able to announce that 100 percent of his ninth-graders passed the MEAP. He just won't bother to mention that it was the third grade test.



Golightly teacher Susan Bloodworth and assistant teacher Shelly Shaver.

Golightly Pilots Literacy Program

When Shelly Shaver was a child, her mother would read a favorite book — “Goodnight Moon” — to her every night.

“That room was so warm and cozy,” Shaver remembers about the book. “It had a fireplace and slippers and the bunny was so cute.” One night her mom said, “Well why don’t you read me the book?”



Golightly parents Reggie Simpkins and Andra Bomar-Simpkins draw the cover to their book at the literacy camp.

“I can’t read, I’m only three,” Shaver told her mom. But after awhile, Shaver started telling her own story, all by herself.

“And that’s where my literacy began.” Shaver shared that experience with parents at Golightly School on May 23 for a Family Literacy Night sponsored by Target and Scholastic in a program called Read & Rise. Read & Rise is a pilot program in 51 schools across the country. Golightly is the only school in the Midwest to have it. Last year, Target sponsored a makeover of the Golightly library. Target presented a check to the

principal and \$5 gift certificates for each student to use at the biannual Scholastic Book Fairs.

“We use the funds from the book fair to purchase library books, audio visual and classroom sets,” said Susan Bloodworth, Golightly teacher. Literacy Night was a tight program that introduced parents to literacy tips and asked them for a family pledge to read at home.

It’s especially fruitful, Bloodworth said, for kids to catch parents, teachers and other adults reading.

“When I had DEAR (drop everything and read) time, if I got up and got on the phone or the computer, they would quit,” Bloodworth said. “If I got down on the carpet and read, they would keep reading.”

Goodfellows' Teacher of the Year from Clippert

Detroit Goodfellows board members surprised Mark Ragis, a 20-year Detroit teacher, at a June 8 school assembly by naming him the winner of the third annual Goodfellows Teacher of the Year. Ragis (pictured on the left in photo) teaches English at Clippert Academy in southwest Detroit. The Goodfellows presented him with a \$200 gift card to buy classroom supplies and will honor him at the Detroit Goodfellows Annual Tribute Breakfast this fall.



The Goodfellows Board of Directors selected the winning teacher from nominations by Detroit Public School students in grades three through eight who answered the question: "Why is your teacher so special?" There were more than 200 submissions and Ragis received eight nominations.

The winning entry was submitted by Clippert seventh-grader Evelyn Sanchez, 13 (in photo on right).

"Mr. Ragis is special because he is very patient," Sanchez wrote. "He is nice and funny. He tells jokes to the class and makes us laugh. He also teaches the class very well. We all love our homeroom teacher, Mr. Ragis."

The Detroit Goodfellows sponsors the Goodfellows Teacher of the Year contest to show its sincere appreciation to Detroit Public School administrators, teachers and support staff who, each year, work so diligently to identify students in need of its holiday gift packages. The 98-year-old charity's mission is to ensure that there is "No Kiddie Without a Christmas."

Founded in 1914, the Detroit Goodfellows sponsors an emergency dental program for children, awards scholarships through Wayne State University, free shoes to children in need and helps send hundreds of needy children to camp each summer.

Central Collegiate Students Win \$30,000 Scholarships

While studying Chemistry II in Denise Rivers classroom at Central Collegiate Academy, the students learned about building an energy efficient gymnasium and fitness center and gathered information on energy conservation. They learned about heating and cooling systems and alternate energy sources.

On May 30, the Central Collegiate students participated in the Engineering SMART Detroit Program Competition, which is affiliated with the Engineering Society of Detroit. The competition consisted of building a gymnasium and fitness center in an area of the country the students desired. They had to write an essay and give an oral presentation on the energy efficient resources and materials they used.

The student teams had to diagram the site plan and building floor plan, two drawings of elevations, one section diagram, and a view of the roof. They had to show energy efficiency in building design, materials and technologies, user friendly ideas, attention to climate and sun orientation, and power generation for the building. They also had to show en-



(from left) engineering student Sophia Alotta; Central student Antonio Chambers; Central student Philip Brooks; engineer Rejane Leao; chemistry teacher Denise Rivers and Central student Asia Byrne.

ergy efficiency for lighting, the HVAC System, and the thermal envelope.

The students were questioned about their building and why they chose that location and resources. Central Collegiate was second runner-up in the final

competition of teams and each of three students received \$30,000 scholarships to Lawrence Technical University.

"The students were under heavy scrutiny," said Rivers, a 13-year Detroit teacher. "I picked my best class."

THE DETROIT NEWSMAKERS

Mark Twain Students Help Victims of Tornado

On March 16 Patricia Hammell started up her computer and SMART Board at Mark Twain Academy to show her students videos of a tornado in Dexter, Mich.



"It was terrible but it was a wonderful way to expose them to the random targets of tornadoes," she said. Hammell explained what to do if they heard sirens or if the news announced there

was a watch or warning. Using the SMART Board, she showed them that Dexter was only 55 miles from Detroit.

They watched workers search for survivors on the video. Hammell called Dexter Superintendent Mary Marshall and left a message. The superintendent called back crying because the Detroit school wanted to help. No other school called. Marshall gave the district's address for sending a care package.

"A care package just wouldn't do with the enormity of destruction we saw," Hammell said.

The fourth-graders asked each other what they could do to help students in Dexter and brainstormed what to provide.

"The next day students began bringing in clothing and toys, strollers, baby baths, back packs, very nice things," Hammell said.

With the outpouring of donations and school supplies, Hammell made a deadline, filled up her Expedition and drove out to Dexter after school was dismissed.

"Finding the ruins was not difficult at all," she said. "There were many homes completely destroyed with families living in tents outside their beautiful homes."

After dropping off the donations, people were already lined up to gather the things they needed.

The next day Hammell shared photos and details of dropping off the donations.

"Seeing their things getting unpacked gave them such a thrill," she said. "They went out of their way to help and they were successful."

A Turning Point in Life

Twenty four students were honored June 7 at Turning Point Academy, the east side school for emotionally impaired students. At a dinner in the school cafeteria with ornate decorations and maize and gold table linens, the students were honored for graduating or transitioning back to a neighborhood school. "They've learned strategies for their behavior – what got them here in the first place – and they're moving on," said school social worker Kathy Hemingway. "We wanted to say, 'Good luck on your new beginnings.'"



Nytia Dupree, lead Darty, Judge Terry L. Guinn.

Duke Ellington Music & Art Festival

On Detroit's east side, the Duke Ellington Conservatory of Music & Arts entertained parents and the community May 30 with an art, music and dance extravaganza.

Duke Ellington student Alayna Johnson choreo-

graphed two complex and fluid dances. Johnson, 13, has been dancing for four years and choreographing for two. This amazingly talented

student is one to watch in the years to come.

Jazz band teacher Dennis Lee lead two jazz ensembles, including an advanced jazz band violinist, to perform several renditions including the piece Killer Joe. As the finale, stu-



dent Jordan Caldwell gave a tribute and a crystal momentum to retiring band teacher Herbert Cage Jr.



Head teacher, Jovonni Jenkins, principal Gary Taylor, Wilma Perry L. Clark from 70th District Court in Saginaw, and Chris



Davison teachers Judy Robinson, left, and Tony Shopinski with Miss Michigan 2011 Elizabeth Wertenberger.

Happy Retirement Robinson and Shopinski!

After 14 years of broadcasting an award-winning television show at Davison Elementary School, Judy Robinson and Tony Shopinski are sailing into retirement.

The dynamic duo will be able to sleep in instead of appearing at the east side school before 7 a.m. to ready the props, camera and student anchors. The show, however, will go on. They are handing over the equipment and production to teachers Tom Barnes and Maria Jones-Foster. In the last week of "Good Morning Davison" with Robinson and Shopinski as producers, they welcomed Miss Michigan Elizabeth Wertenberger, DFT President Keith Johnson and others as guest anchors.

Robinson and Shopinski spent their entire teaching careers at Davison. Robinson taught for 39 years and Shopinski for almost 23. During the years of the TV show, they were never seen on camera until the last day.

"We managed to finish on the last day," Shopinski said. "Everything is rush rush in the morning so there's not always a lot of time. Judy and I did the broadcast and several staff members did the pledge with our guys. [Wayne County Commissioner] Martha Scott came too late for that but gave Judy and me tickets to Friday's Tigers game. The game got ugly in the 10th but the fireworks were great."

Fun Day at Fleming

More than 2,000 Detroit preschoolers attended Fun Day at Fleming School June 11. Animal Oasis of Clinton, Mich. provided an exotic zoo and farm animals. The zoo held a sloth, hedgehog, prairie dogs, alligator, camel, lemur, kangaroo and more. Retired Detroit science teacher Arlene Foley volunteered for Fun Day and said animals are a great teaching tool.



"The first test I ever gave asked the kids to pick out a chicken," Foley said. "They picked a duck. We learned very early you have to get out of the classroom and expose kids. Many impoverished families cannot afford this. They don't get prior knowledge to know the difference between a goat and a donkey. It's invaluable."

The students also made crafts from Arts & Scraps, had their faces painted and got temporary tattoos. Pictured with Foley, below, are Detroit teachers Elizabeth Hartley, left, and Wanda Lundy-Colquitt, right. Don Strobel, above, of Animal Oasis holds a hedgehog.



28th Annual Building Rep Appreciation Dinner

"You are the Pulse of the Union"

The 2012 DFT Building Representatives Dinner honored those people who do the union's work in the schools every day. But the mood at the DoubleTree Hotel in Detroit on June 8 was somber as teachers survived a tremendously difficult year.

"But we have not seen the darkest days yet," said DFT President Keith Johnson. He said every union member has to sign petitions, get out to vote, and keep the focus on the working man and woman.

"If we are inactive, our union is dead."

Marshall Widick, a Sachs Waldman attorney who has been successful in fighting cases on behalf of the DFT, said the state is attacking teachers at an unprecedented pace.

"There's a hostility in Lansing toward teachers that doesn't affect any other unions," Widick said about laws prohibiting dues collection and seniority when recalling teachers. "These laws are just overtly hostile. Frankly I get angry. I think it's just pathetic."

Rosalind LaRocque, an AFT staff member who has written a soon to be released book "Reform versus Dreams" said, "The people who can make it work are not even asked what can work."

Daryl Newman, secretary treasurer of the AFL-CIO, said all union members are under attack.

"These attacks do nothing to improve the quality of education," said Newman. "Why is this all happening? Because a lot of members did not vote. While we were celebrating the election of 2008, they got to work. They have been plotting and planning this for 25 years."

Johnson said he hopes the fall will bring a new energy to the union.

"You are the pulse of the union" he said. "It is through you we hear about the challenges you face. It is through you we hear about the great things going on in your school. It is you who makes our union strong."



At the reception table, Dorian Evans, Glenda Booker and Terrence Martin.



From left: Yolanda King, DeVette Brown, Crystal Lee, Richele Oliver, Marcus Walton, Mitzi Davis and Debra Washinton.



Pat McPherson, Angela Lowry, Frances Borg, Vida Bonacci, Gwendolyn Peoples and Robin Partmon.

28th Annual Building Rep Appreciation Dinner



Seated: Pamela Shriman, Carol Stewart, Kim Travis-Ewing, Beverly Wilkerson. **Standing:** Robin McDaniel, Lorraine Sheffield, Julie Jablonski, Marion McGhee & Reneth Stewart.



Seated: Louvera Lawrence, Patrick Falcusan, Jewel Gines. **Standing:** Vanessa Parnell, LaShawn Sims, Yolanda Smith and Wanda Hogg.



Seated: Steve Portnoy, Mike Schenk, William Gardner and (standing) Lois Doniver, Lisa Scott, Melaine Tillman, Miranda Washington and Wendy Newberry.



Seated: Liz Duhn, DFT President Emeritus John Elliott, and Dyan Jenkins-Ali, (standing) Mary Helen D'Angelo, Kim Procter, Kemmie Holmes, and Danielle Doniver.



Contestants performing the best "cat walk."

28th Annual Building Rep Appreciation Dinner



AFT Michigan President David Hecker, Wanda Lundy-Colquitt, Rosalind LaRocque and Felecia Clark.



Seated: Karin Whittler, Judy Smith, Terrence Martin and Estella Burnette. Standing: Johnny Mickles, James Britton, Glenda Booker and Dorian Evans.



AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Daryl Newman and DFT Executive Vice President Edna Reaves.



Roz Edmondson of Delta Dental and Darryl Hibbett from HAP.



From left: Joyce Burrell, William Burrell, Michelle Broughton-Gibson, Rosalind Tally-Fore, Victor Gibson and Janel Curry.



George Barnes of Heritage Optical.

Planets and Spacecrafts Hang from Detroit Classroom

Each year science teacher Shira Blum plans an extravagant project to stretch students' artistic and scientific intelligences.

One year the theme was the Arctic and Antarctica and its habitat. Another year, her fourth-grade class at the Academy of the Americas created an underground mine to explore minerals and rock formations. Last year they re-created the newsworthy BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

This year Blum's theme was galaxies, constellations and Greek mythology.

"They learned about outer space, the earth, moon and sun," said the 12-year Detroit teacher.

To turn her room into a universe itself, each student had to create an object that would float from the ceiling. They could not buy their project from Michaels, the craft supplies store.

El Arte, a southwest Detroit non-profit that brings art to classrooms, worked with Blum's students. El Arte's Deby and Rick Zuccarini were artist-mentors for the classroom. The result: a color drenched and striking installation of the students' imaginations of outer space. The art installation was so inspiring that another teacher called the news media to take a peek.

Blum says she wants the students to learn scientific concepts, but she's also trying to reach students with different strengths and intelligences. Each student researches a constellation, using technology, and writes a

summary of what he or she learned. She relied on El Arte to bring the project to life.

"I'm the science teacher," Blum says. "I wouldn't know how to do all that."



Calendar

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

JULY

27-29 AFT Convention in Detroit

AUGUST

7 Primary Election
27 Staff Reports. No students.

SEPTEMBER

4 School begins.