Detroit leache

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JUNE 2008

High School Restructuring **Deliberated**

he group considering restructuring Detroit high schools reached consensus to go with a turnaround plan and do it as soon as possible.

In a May 27 meeting that included DFT members, administration, principals, parents and business people, the group decided that the business and parent community is seriously concerned about the ability to boost graduation rates using the traditional approach.

The committee is exploring a turnaround plan with the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) — an intermediary based in New York.

In a conference call with ISA, the group learned that in ISA schools in New York, the graduation rate is 85 percent or better, compared to non-ISA public schools with the same demographics, which graduate students at 40 percent.

ISA believes the solution to failing urban high schools is smaller schools with a structure that produces success. That structure is a college preparatory curriculum with an emphasis on the core curriculum, especially writing and reading. It also has a staff that relates to and is invested in each student's success. The principal of the small school has control over hiring and the budget, which builds in accountability.

Gerry House, ISA president, said one without the other does not lead to suc-

The district can consider for-profit organizations, such as Edison and Green Dot, but ISA, which is not for profit, doesn't have a canned curriculum. ISA works with the curriculum, standards and vision of the district.

DFT President Virginia Cantrell agreed that change needs to happen for parents to continue to choose public over charter schools. But she expressed concern about the implementation.

"I feel there's an urgency," Cantrell said. "We are at a fork in the road and

See RESTRUCTURING on Page 2



Chess Coach Lionel Scott oversees a practice session at Pulaski Elementary School.

Pulaski Chess Team **Places Third in Nation**

K, chess is brainy. But for Pulaski Elementary and Middle School students, it's just plain fun. Taking men off the board is fun. Hitting the clock is fun. Winning...is

really fun.

Coach Lionel Scott, assistant coach Christopher Thompson, and their team were in a state of shock bringing home a third-place award, and handfuls of trophies and medallions for their fine maneuvers at the national school chess tournament in Pittsburgh in May.

That's because this is the first year the school had a team. All but three teammates had never played before.

"I was blown away," said Scott. "I'm still shocked."

Scott said his team didn't fare well at the state tournament in Ypsilanti in February so the win is even sweeter.

"We really got beaten up," he said. "The kids didn't want to play after that. But I told them we'll just use those losses."

It's a ritual for the team to study its losses after playing. Scott told the players they had two months to study and practice.

Chess players, Scott says, learn two les-

sons from the game: patience and problem

"Only the most patient players win at their skill level," he said. At the city-wide competition, the players got a real work-

"It's like a dog fight," he said. "You fight them for three weeks trying to get a win. That was the hardest we worked. That's when I had a hint they could do something good."

The lesson in patience paid off at the nationals. One student played a three-hour

"You have to be the most patient player and you can't quit," Scott says.

Scott, a newcomer to chess, started playing eight years ago. A friend kept asking him to play but Scott was reluctant. He thought it was too boring. Once he started playing, there was no going back.

"Now, I can't imagine doing anything else but chess.'

DFT Members Need to Fly Together

Tirst came the closing of 33 schools. Then the district proposed a plan to transfer teachers in mid-year. Thankfully, your union worked with the superintendent and school board to stop that plan. We showed administrators there would be no savings and it would be detrimental to teachers teaching and children learning.



Virginia Cantrell

President's Report

Now there is the looming issue of reconstituted schools and turnaround plans. We are represented in these discussions and voice our concerns at each stage of development to ensure the plans are solid and successful.

We are working diligently as the school year comes to a close to make sure teachers who lost their preps or had oversized classrooms will be paid. We are faced with a continual iron in the fire at this union office from early morning until late evening.

These are trying times for public education in general and the Detroit Public Schools in particular. We have withstood the efforts of those who wish to create a separate and unequal system of public education for Detroit children by developing plans to increase the number of charter

schools and dictate to Detroit citizens how their school system should be governed.

The DFT continues to fight and prevail because we believe in fighting for what is fair and right and we refuse to compromise our values or our commitment to our members and to the children of Detroit.

We remain steadfast in our belief that each Detroit student has the right to a quality education and that Detroit teachers are committed to providing that education. We are

Lessons From Geese

Geese flying in a V-formation have always been a welcome sign of spring as well as a sign that heralds the coming of winter. Not only is this a marvelous sight, but there are some remarkable lessons that we can learn from the flight of the geese, because all that they do has significance:

- 1. As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for others behind it. There is 71 percent more flying range in V-formation than in flying alone. Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of purpose can get there more quickly.
- 2. Whenever a goose flies out of formation, it feels drag and tries to get back into position. Lesson: It's harder to do something alone than together.
- 3. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into formation and another goose flies at the head. Lesson: Shared leadership and interdependence give us each a chance to lead as well as an opportunity to rest.
- 4. The geese flying in the rear of the formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Lesson: Encouragement is motivating. We need to make sure our "honking" is encouraging and not discouraging.
- 5. When a goose gets sick or wounded and falls, two geese fall out and stay with it until it revives or dies. Then they catch up or join another flock. Lesson: We may all need help from time to time. We should stand by our colleagues in difficult times.

—Angeles Arrien Used with permission of The MASTER Teacher, Inc.

steadfast in our position that the school district is directly responsible for providing the best environment for teachers to effectively teach and for students to learn. That includes an effort to reduce class size in all grade levels, paying members in a timely manner for services rendered, providing support on matters of discipline, and making sure all necessary books and supplies are abundantly available.

Teachers and support staff should be treated with the appropriate respect, professionalism and dignity to make them feel welcomed, appreciated and valued.

We have serious problems within the Detroit school district and we need to come together to address these problems so we are able to provide a quality education to all Detroit children.

A few years ago, I was presented a pin of a flying goose that was attached to a message that has remained close to me in some of the trying situations that confront me as president of this union.

It reminded me that we are not alone in our work. We need each other. It gets fatiguing when you try to fly alone.

My wish for us brothers and sisters in the union is to work together.

For now, I'd like to wish you well, Godspeed, and enjoy your well deserved rest over the summer. Let's come back in August with a renewed energy, unity and purpose as a union. We need to take a lesson from the geese.

Deliberation Begins on Restructuring High Schools

RESTRUCTURING, from Page 1

whichever path we choose, it better be the right one. It better be successful."

Two schools — Osborn or Cody — are identified as possibilities to implement ISA. However, implementing the plan for September would give less than the ideal six to nine months planning period.

Sidney Lee, DFT treasurer and a member of the restruturing committee, said she was reluctant to go with ISA without reviewing all the other intermediaries and having a full planning period.

Lee also expressed concern about fees paid to ISA, which could cost up to \$400,000 for one school. The fees provide coaches over four years to implement the structure.

"We've got to make sure we do the planning," Lee said. "Before we take up

one plan, we need to hear from some of the rest of these or all of them."

Mary Kovari, a Western International High School teacher and member of the committee, said she was worried that the community wouldn't tolerate a delay. "I feel worried if we wait," Kovari

"I feel worried if we wait," Kovari said. "Maybe the business stakeholders won't want us to lose our momentum."

A follow-up meeting was set for June.

Point/Counterpoint

In the age of choice, do parents know how to pick a school?

If you have a strong opinion pro or con on this question, please email your opinion to:

mweertz@dft231.com.

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Editor — Margaret Weertz



At Barbara Jordan Elementary School every staff member plays a part in the Reading First program, including Marjorie Cowan, Regina Olden, and Catherine Hart (above). At right is Reading First **Coach Regina Olden with student** Summer Halliburton, fourth grade.

Reading First Coach Rallies Her School

e're entering a new era in education. That's the way Reading First coach Regina Olden sees it. We can't do anything the way we used to do it. We can't reach kids the way we did before. Children aren't coming to us as prepared as they have in the past. Families aren't as cohesive as they were.

And the stakes are higher.

"We're in an era of education where we have to go beyond what's required," says Olden, Reading First coach at Barbara Jordan Elementary School.

Six years ago, the school (then known as Hampton) was identified as having not made AYP for at least six years. The school clearly was faltering. The building went through restructuring. In addition, Hampton Elementary School went through a difficult merger with Hampton Middle School to become Barbara Jordan.

The merger was a painful operation for the staff and the recovery slow. The turnovers of three principals followed. Barbara Jordan was identified to receive Reading First intervention, a program to get students reading at grade level by third grade.

For six years, Olden and K-3 staff worked to raise reading comprehension and achievement. They used data consistently. They differentiated instruction. This is what happened: Test scores rose, then took a dip, then rallied again.

"It's a new crop of kids each year," she explains. The teachers never are able to rest on their laurels. There is continual

Olden stayed through these years of upheaval. The teachers could use more in the way of resources and support — an

aide here, an additional prep there. There are real signs, however, of Reading First cohesion at the school.

Every teacher has a chart in her classroom with three circles atop each other: the bottom circle outlined in red; the middle circle yellow and the top green. Names are posted in each circle of students reading at benchmark, below (strategic), and the lowest (intensive).

Every teacher and every student knows where they are and what needs to be done to move kids up. They use the data (ITBS, DIBEL, Terra Nova, Open Court reading assessments, etc.) to drive instruction. The kids are required to read 25 books each semester.

"We've learned the big thing — differentiating instruction," she said.

Olden is a believer in resources.

"You need a lot of great tools in the building," she said. The school, however, did not even have a library. With a \$10,000 Reading First grant and a \$10,000 grant from the National Limousine Association, Olden bought library books, furniture and overhead projectors. She cleaned out what had become a storage room and made a library.

The perennial cheerleader of teachers, Olden keeps the troops rallied.

"She works really hard as a coach," said Gina Jourdonnais, a Reading First facilitator with the Michigan Department of Education. "She has a rapport with the teachers and students here. She goes above and beyond the call of her job."

The Reading First grant expires in a year. Olden hopes the latest test scores improve and the school will come off

For now, Olden has one job to do rally the troops.

Western High Students Trek to Nicaragua

ell phone. Digital camera. Nice

Materially, La Rhonda Caldwell has so much more than her host family in

So why did she feel so happy for 14 days in February, staying in a home with no electricity, running water or in-door

"It's something about there," the 16year-old Western High School student said. "Everyone makes you feel like fami-

"People are calm there. It's more peaceful. And they treated me as if I were their own child."

Caldwell went to Nicaragua with two classmates, two Cass Tech students and seven other metro area students as part of the service learning program Building with Books. Students in the program work with charities in the area like Capuchin Soup Kitchen and Motor City

Blight Busters. Once a year, a few students are fortunate enough to take their mission outside the country.

Caldwell laughs off the outhouses and birdbath showers. She noticed how her host mother cooked over a wood stove to feed her and washed her clothes against

"I really want to go back and live there," she said. Caldwell is committed to raising money to go to different parts of Nicaragua and Africa to build schools.

"That's what children want there," she said. "They don't want games, they want to go to school."

Besides making bricks, building the foundation and latrines for the school, Caldwell went on daily excursions. She learned how to pick coffee and milk cows. The experience makes her more determined to do community work in Detroit and abroad.

"I really appreciate more what I have."

From the Journal of La Rhonda Caldwell

y trip to Nicaragua was indescribable. Everything and everyone was so great. The one thing I couldn't forget was my family, because the time I spent with them can't be imagined, only experienced.

Every day when I woke up, my host mother would have breakfast done. My lit-

tle sisters would already be up, anxious to see what I was going to do that morning. They were always sitting on the porch waiting for me to finish eating so we could play before I went to work on the construction of the school, and before they went off to school, a few miles

We usually played their Spanish version of "patty cake" or catch. They treated me as if I were their big sister, always looking up to me and trying to do the things I did.

My mother was the nosy type (caring parent). She was always around every corner seeing what I was up to and if her kids were being good. She enjoyed me playing with the kids and talking to her. She mainly smiled because she knew I couldn't understand her as much as I La Rhonda Caldwell with

She was a gentle woman who did all she whom she stayed with in could to please me. I felt as if I were her child, Nicaragua. because she was always making sure I was OK



one of her "little sisters"

and if I needed anything. She did everything from scrubbing my clothes on a rock to clean them, to cooking over a dirt stove with wood to make my dinner at night. She was so marvelous in many ways. I couldn't ask for a more precious mother than

My dad was more of a quiet type who was usually at work all the time picking coffee or in his room alone. So one day I showed him pictures of my real family and different things from the U.S. He started asking many questions. That meant a lot to me because I didn't feel like just a guest but as if I was declared part of the family.

Many people wouldn't think it was meaningful to them, but to me it was. At first, my dad would never talk to me. But I realized it wasn't that he didn't like me, he was just nervous to talk to me. Before we left, my dad told me that I could come back any time and that I was like family. Those words made me feel so great inside. It felt good to know that I really belonged and that he really cared about me.

This trip was truly one that I couldn't ever forget and my family will always be in my heart. All those moments with my sisters, my mom and my dad will stay with me forever. They are truly my other family.

Grants

Grants for Math Teachers

The Mathematics Education Trust (MET), the charitable arm of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), is taking proposals for its Classroom Based Research Grants program. The program will award a grant of up to \$8,000 to winning K-12 classroom teachers who perform research in partnership with college or university math educators. Eligible applicants are K-12 classroom teachers who are teaching math and are members of NCTM either individually or through their school. Deadline: Nov. 14, 2008. For more information, visit www.nctm.org/resources.

Mattel Foundation Offers Grants

The Mattel Children's Foundation provides fundraising for non-profits serving children in the United States through its Domestic Grantmaking Program. Organizations serving U.S. children may apply for grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000. The foundation supports programs that make a difference in children's lives, especially where there is a clear need (physical, financial, emotional, or health-related). Preference goes to projects that have demonstrable results and innovative methods to reach children's needs, and align with Mattel's goals,

including, learning, health and girl empowerment. For more info, contact foundation@mattel.com. Deadline: July

Kellogg Supports Children in Need

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation's mission is to support children, families, and communities in efforts to create an environment in which vulnerable children can succeed. Most important, the foundation focuses on programs to assist children living in poverty and dealing with at least one other hardship factor. The foundation focuses on five areas: family income and assets, community assets, education and learning, food, health and wellbeing, and civic and philanthropic empowerment. For more info, visit: www.wkkf.org.

Literacy Programs Recognized

The American Library Association (ALA) is accepting applications for its World Book/ALA Information Literacy Goal Award. The purpose of these awards is to encourage creative literacy programs in school and public libraries. The award consists of one \$5,000 award to a public library information literacy program, and \$5,000 to a school library information literacy program. For more information, visit www.ala.org. Deadline: Dec. 1, 2008

Partner with Classrooms Abroad

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) has launched its Challenge 20/20 initiative, which invites elementary and secondary schools to participate in partnerships with classrooms in other countries. The classrooms work together and tackle a global problem in a way they can address locally. The online partnership requires no travel expenses or fees and offers schools the opportunity to educate students to become leaders in this interconnected world. Private and public schools may apply by visiting www.nais.org. Deadline: Aug. 15, 2008.

Youth Garden Awards

The National Gardening Association (NGA) and Home Depot are offering grants for organizations that garden with young people. The NGA Youth Garden Grants award gift cards from \$250 to \$500 for Home Depot and the Gardening with Kids catalog. Applicants must plan to garden in 2009 with at least 15 children ranging between ages 3 and 18. For info, visit www.kidsgardening.com. Deadline: Nov. 1, 2008.

Seeds for Education

Wild Ones supports organizations that share its mission through its Lorrie Otto

Seeds for Education grants. The goal is to support projects that focus on the development and enhancement of an appreciation for nature using native plants. Funds of \$100 to \$500 will be provided to purchase seeds native to the area. Projects must involve teaching about native plants. For info, visit www.for-wild.org. Deadline is Nov. 15, 2008.

Teen Driving Safety

State Farm and the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) want to make a difference by addressing the number one killer of teens: car crashes. To this end they are inviting students in grades 9-12 to devise Project Ignition programs. Project Ignition invites high school students - with help from teachers and advisors – to develop service learning campaigns to address teen driver safety through creative, novel programs. For info, visit www.sfprojectignition.com. Deadline is July 3, 2008.

Peace Poetry Awards

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF) offers the opportunity of a variety of contests and awards to cultivate a culture of peace. The annual Barbara Mandigo Kelly Peace Poetry Awards enables poets of all ages to enter and win awards from \$200 (for youth) to \$1,000 (adults over 18). For info, visit www.wagingpeace.org.

Roll Call

Following is a list of the schools and other work sites represented at the May 8, 2008 General Membership Meeting. The information comes from the sign-in sheets.

Bagley Chadsey Bates Chrysler Beard ELC Clark Bethune Clemente Cleveland Bow Boykin Clinton Breithaupt Clippert Brewer Cody Brown Cody 9 Cooke Burt Cooley North Burton Butzel Courtis Campbell Crary Crockett Carleton Carstens Crosman Carver Davison

Day School for the Deaf

Detroit City Detroit Open **Detroit Transition East** Douglass

Drew Attendance Durfee (MS) Earhart Edison Ellington Emerson Farwell

Ferguson Academy Finney Fleming Ford (HS)

Gardner

Guyton Hancock Hanstein Head Start Heilmann (ES) Henderson (U) Holcomb Holmes (AL) Holmes (OW) Home Teaching Hutchinson Jemison Jordan Joyce King (ES) King (HS) Lessenger Logan Ludington Malcolm X Mark Twain Marquette Marshall (T) Maybury McColl Mumford

Munger

Noble Northwestern

Golightly

Osborn Owen Parker White Wilkins

Pershing Priest Psychological Services Pulaski Renaissance Retirees Robeson Sherrill Social Workers Southwestern Spain Stark Stephens Taft Trombly Vernor VI/POHI Webster West Side Academy Western Westside Multicultural

Winterhalter

NW Early Childhood

Office of Mathematics



Pioneering Track Coach to Retire

It's hard to believe there was a time when Detroit Public Schools didn't have girls track teams.

Back in 1975, Charles Lewis was teaching at Denby High School and got a call from Woody Thomas at Central High School.

"I got a girl here who can fly and I want her to have some competition," Lewis recalls Thomas telling him. Coaches in five high schools volunteered to coach girls track and started competing against each other.

The following year they asked the board for a small stipend to buy uniform T-shirts and shorts. The third year, coaching for girls track was official. The problem: Lewis and the

other pioneer coaches could no longer do it.
And when it opened up for pay, lots of potential coaches lined up.

"We'd been doing it for free," Lewis said. "Now we couldn't get paid." Lewis threatened to go to court, his principal supported his cause, and the district finally relented and paid the coaches.

After 41 years as a social studies teacher, track and cross country coach – the last 20 years

at Martin Luther King high school -Lewis is hanging up his running shoes. Asked for his reason on his retirement form, Lewis wrote: "After giving my best for 41 and a half years and wanting to make a difference, it's time to go."

teaching and coaching.

The old school coach puts running second to home. But ahead of boyfriends, hair appointments and other non-essentials.

"We're on the home school track," he explains (home comes first, school second, and track third). "I don't care if you are the best runner in the world, if your mom says you can't make practice because you didn't make your bed, you have to take care of your home front first."

Coach Lewis uses track and cross country to drive home some principles in life.

"Winning at all costs is not as important as the right attitude," Lewis says.
"We have ups and downs and adversity in meets. Things that happen on the track relate to life. If you have the right attitude, you can handle it."

Senior Monique Zellars put those principles into place running track and cross country for four years.

"Life is like a relay team," says Zellars. 'The first person in charge is getting you started. Once you find that, the second and third leg is to maintain that spot. The last leg is most important - bringing it on home.' Zellars likens the first person to parents, the

second and third to teachers and coaches, and the last to yourself.

Four year track and field runner Monique

Indeed

Indeed.
Zellars will be attending
University of
Michigan in the

fall

Zellars listens intently to Coach Charles

Lewis, who is retiring after 41 years of

For Lewis, he is reflecting on the last four decades with Detroit Public Schools, still grateful to have been hired here from his hometown Grand Rapids.

"Detroit hired me and I was happy to move here, work in the city, and try to make a difference. I like to think I did."



School social workers Kim Travis-Ewing and Leonard Zabawski man the phones at a phone bank held during a week in May.

Social Workers Work to Save Union Jobs

etroit Public Schools social workers, psychologists and nurses are pushing for the right to bargain over outsourcing in public schools. The social workers ran a phone bank in May, urging DFT members to call state senators to support House Bill 4533

The bill would allow non-instructional workers in public schools to have input when a school board is considering outsourcing.

Since 1994, the Public Employee Relations Act has prohibited public school employees from bargaining on outsourcing non-instructional jobs to private companies. As a result, they cannot propose solutions to a district's financial problems to reduce costs, including changes to their own contracts if they are willing to alter them in order to preserve their jobs.

The aim of HB 4533 is to allow public employees into the discussion when privatizing is being considered. The bill passed the state House last year but has not moved out of the Michigan Senate's Education Committee. State Sen. Wayne

Kuipers (R-Holland) is chair of the education committee and reportedly is not a supporter of the bill. State Sen. Kuipers did not return a call for this story.

"This is an alarming trend for school districts," said Leonard Zabawski. "They think privatization is the answer. It's just not good public policy."

Zabawski, who organized the phone bank, said the bill does not prevent privatizing it just allows current employees to be involved in the discussion. Zabawski is concerned that school districts could further privatize the work force, outsourcing school social workers, psychologists and nurses.

"The current work force has value," he said. "The social workers - many of them live in Detroit - are invested in the community. They're invested in their students and their social problems and their fight to get an education. We don't have a lot of turnover in the social work department. But when a system privatizes they tend to have a lot of employee turnover."

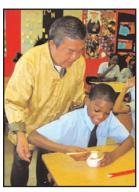
To contact your state senator, go to unionvoice.org/aftmichigan.

Visit the DFT Web site www.DFT231.com

The World is Their Oyster Sauce

hat do people eat in the Philippines? What do they wear in Madagascar? Students at Catherine Blackwell Institute want to know what life is like across the globe. Their curiosities are answered, thanks to resource room teacher Willie DeChavez.

DeChavez puts the "international" in the school with week-long activities



exploring other continents.

For a week in May, each classroom adopted an Asian Pacific country to explore. In one classroom, DeChavez cooked Chinese food.

In another, students heard about India from DTE marketing executive Iqbal Singh, a native of India.

"We're not alone in this world," DeChavez says. "There's stereotyping and discrimination because we have little understanding of other cultures."

The 16-year Detroit teacher is on a mission to introduce the world to

Blackwell students.

"This is a very good opportunity because we have no Asian students here," he said. And students aren't able to take field trips to Thailand and Japan. So the Blackwell teachers bring the world to their students.

"These kids are really getting into this," said fifth grade teacher Larry Ray. Ray's students like the fact that he is a world traveler himself.

"It's an honor to be able to have a teacher that's been to Paris," said Ra'Dale Estell, 11.

Ray said his interest in history grew after he started traveling.

"I like to see how other people live," he said. "After I started traveling, I got more of an appreciation of history."

DeChavez, a native of the Philippines, said his passion is sharing and learning about cultures. As cultural chair of the Council for Asian Pacific Americans, posters, artifacts, and resources are at his fingertips. Blackwell is the beneficiary.

In a class that adopted China, DeChavez cooked Asian food, explaining the difference between chow mein and lo mein. The students also learned how to maneuver chopsticks and scoop the noodles into their mouths.

In February, the school had a month-



Willie DeChavez cooks up Asian food for students at Blackwell Institute during an Asian Pacific exploratory week in May. At left, DeChavez instructs a student on the art of eating with chopsticks.

long study and celebration of the African continent. Passports to Africa required students to do research projects and learn about the cuisine, culture and political lives of people in Africa.

Principal Patricia Hines said these

international studies help prepare students for this century and the global economy. DeChavez thinks the studies are crucial.

"Some students think the world is only in Detroit," he said. "We are all different but we can be united."

Final Check Dates For 2007-08 School Year



First Check Date For 2008-09 School Year

All DFT Members Sept 16*

*Effective date of the 2.5 percent wage increase scheduled for 2008-09

Calelidal

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

- Building Representatives Dinner, 4:30 p.m.
 - Double Tree Dearborn, 4:30 p.m.
- **17** Retirees Chapter, 11:30 a.m.

JULY

10-14 AFT Convention (Navy Pier, Chicago, IL)

AUGUST

25 Teachers Return (Professional Development)

Have A Wonderful Summer Vacation!