

## Building Reps Learn Value of DFT

**D**FT Building Representatives met Nov. 16 to learn about their roles in the district's 100 buildings as well as workers compensation, grievances, disciplinary hearings, evaluations, Family Medical Leave Act and contract changes.

The workshop emphasized how we can help each other and understand our rights. It also underscored how the union helps teachers when issues surface for them.

There have been cases recently when administrators single out teachers or take misunderstandings to a new level.

"There are things you can't control," Edna Reaves, DFT executive vice president, told the building reps. "But you must stay true to your position and represent."



**Terrence Martin, DFT labor relations administrator, and Edna Reaves, DFT executive vice president.**

In some recent cases teachers are being harassed not because of the job they do but because of their relationship to those in positions of power. A DFT labor relations administrator said it is becoming more important to fight the anti-teacher sentiment pervasive in Michigan.

"You are an ambassador," Terrence Martin said. "We have to do a better job being an ambassador for our profession." At the same time, teachers must be brave, stick together, and weather the current climate.

"Remember an injury to one is an injury to all," Martin said.

Mark Davis, a building rep from Bow Elementary School, said he needed to seek the union's help recently.

"The union represented me well," Davis said. "That's our charge today — to go back to school and build the trust in your union. I hate to use this expression but it's like slavery time. We have to stand up. I may have differences with the contract but I can say the union works."



**Nicole Davis, building rep at Ronald Brown Academy, attends the Nov. 16 workshop.**

# DPS's Financial Status Improving But Cannot Be Temporary

The news that DPS was taken off the state and federal "high risk" list was a welcome sign that the financial status of the district is improving. Now is not the time, however, to do too much rejoicing.

While the improved status

the district must implement systemic changes to prevent a recurrence of those bad practices.

The past fiscal year ended with the district revealing it must pay \$17 million to Wayne County RESA, a bill that goes back to 2010. That debt prevented the district from having a balanced budget. It also prevented DPS employees from receiving bonuses like those negotiated last year with the employees (unionized or not). Bonuses are predicated on the district having an operating budget surplus.

## DPS MUST INVEST IN EMPLOYEES AND REWARD THEIR SACRIFICES

A good part of DPS's financial recovery is directly tied to the reduction in wages and benefits, negotiated and imposed since the emergence of an emergency(financial) manager in 2009.

Employees, DFT in particular, have

endured the Termination Incentive Plan (TIP), which was negotiated to PRE-VENT a 10 percent wage reduction — a loss in perpetuity! This was negated when EM Roy Roberts imposed a 10 percent pay cut in 2011.

We also have endured the elimination of compensation for lost preps, oversize classes, and the suspension of step increments.

As the district capitalizes on its improved financial status, a reinvestment in the employees must be a priority. To attract and retain qualified teachers, we must restore the steps, gradually or immediately restore wages, and become more competitive with other districts. Districts across Michigan will look for quality teachers in the coming years as more educators retire.

As DPS moves closer to emerging from under an emergency manager and returning control to an elected school board and superintendent, it must incorporate long term, sustainable, and systemic changes that will prevent the district from ever engaging in the fiscal practices that precipitated an emergency manager.

At the same time, established practices must make DPS a destination for the best educators. That will not get accomplished unless the employees are rewarded for their sacrifices to save the district from itself.

## President's Report



**Keith Johnson**

makes DPS more attractive for additional grants and supplemental funding previously off limits due to the fiscal mismanagement that has plagued us for years,

## High Quality Common Core Resources

*The AFT is sharing the following new, high-quality Common Core resources helpful to teachers:*

**Building Better Classrooms:** Cleveland Teachers Union exemplar lessons on ShareMyLesson.com — With a grant from the AFT Innovation Fund, the Cleveland Teachers Union set out to create exemplar lessons that focus on the key instructional shifts required by the Common Core State standards. The union recruited a skilled team of classroom teachers to write lessons for students in kindergarten through 2nd grade. A national expert reviewed each lesson using the EQuIP Rubric, a widely used tool designed to evaluate Common Core materials. Teachers received feedback on their work and made revisions, polishing their lessons to the highest standards. This school year, Building Better Classrooms will create lessons for students in grades 3-5. All of the Building Better Classrooms lessons are available on Share My Lesson — you can find them by visiting the Cleveland Teacher Union profile page, at <http://www.sharemylesson.com/mypublicprofile.aspx?uc=3320193>.

**Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center** model instructional units on ShareMyLesson.com — The CTU Quest Center received a grant from the AFT Innovation Fund to develop model instructional units. Teams of National Board Certified Teachers wrote four units: an interdisciplinary unit focusing on informational text for grades K-2; a geometry unit for K-3 math; an interdisciplinary unit focused on close reading for grades 3-5; and a high school mathematics unit on quadratics. Each unit includes lesson plans displaying instructional practice; suggested teacher support for student responses; adaptations for English learners; and an analysis of the CCSS to support educators in understanding the shifts in teaching practice. — You can find them by visiting the CTU Quest Center profile page, at <http://www.sharemylesson.com/mypublicprofile.aspx?uc=3396320>.

**THE DETROIT** teacher

The Detroit Teacher is the official publication of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, American Federation of Teachers Local 231, AFL-CIO. Member of the Union Teacher Press Association, International Labor Press Association & Michigan Labor Press.

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# Coming to Detroit, A Truck Load of Free Books!

A truck of 40,000 books will be coming to the children of the Detroit Public Schools, courtesy of the American Federation of Teachers, the DFT and other local unions. On Jan. 25, the books will be distributed to our teachers and students, all made possible by the AFT and an organization called First Book. This is going to be a wonderful event for our city.



**Edna Reaves**

This is going to be an awesome event that will provide reading opportunities for our students. Teachers can build a classroom library and students can start building an at-home library of their own. You all remember that feeling when you were young and got a brand new book. Let's give that feeling to every child in the Detroit Public Schools.

AFT-Detroit, comprised of the DFT, the Detroit Association of Educational Office Employees, and the Detroit Federation of Paraprofessionals, is making this event possible with the help of our teachers, secretaries, paraprofessionals, administrators, parents and community partners. All you have to do to get

## Updates . . .

### Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Carol Brown, Barbara Williams-Bryant, Deborah Fullen and Allen Klegon. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

### Call the Editor

If you are a DFT member and have an interesting event planned at your school, please call The Detroit Teacher and the editor will come out to take photos and compose a story. Call editor Margaret Weertz at 313-875-6776 or email her at mweertz@dft231.com.



a free book for each child in your class is fill out a simple registration form.

Yes, the whole village of Detroit is registering with First Book. We need 2,000 individuals working in a Title I eligible school to sign up. Registration is FREE. Register now at [www.firstbook.org/aft](http://www.firstbook.org/aft). Signing up today reserves you a timeslot to pick up your selection of books. Be one of the 2,000 that will bring 40,000 FREE books to our students.

We are more than a union that works for parity and stands up for employee rights. We are about educating children and getting the best resources for them.

In these difficult times, we find ourselves continually defending what we do. The truth is: giving is what we always do.





# THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

## Rally Supports Struggle at Cesar Chavez Academy

Cesar Chavez Academy teachers and staff recently formed a union and are working toward a first contract that helps stabilize their school by retaining quality staff. Unfortunately, The Leona Group — the for-profit company that manages the school — and CCA administrators are violating the law by imposing unilateral decisions around mandatory subjects of bargaining. Most recently, several long-serving CCA educators were laid off or had their hours reduced with no notice or negotiations.

For the last 13 years, Lynne Santoscoy has been a social worker at Cesar Chavez, a charter school in Southwest Detroit. On Oct. 30 she was informed that her position was going to be eliminated by the end of the week. The

next morning, she was asked to leave the building immediately with no opportunity to say goodbye to students and parents she has worked with for years.

AFT Michigan organized a rally Nov. 1 to show support for Santoscoy and the efforts of the staff in their fight for worker rights.



Photos courtesy of AFT Michigan

## Reggie Bush Visits A. L. Holmes



**Detroit Lion Reggie Bush with students at A.L. Holmes.**

In an effort to ensure children still exercise, get outside, and have recess, Reggie Bush, running back for the Detroit Lions, reached out to Playworks Detroit and asked how he could get involved.

Knowing how important playing organized sports was to him growing up, Bush wanted to see more children participate in safe and healthy play, have fewer conflicts and bullying in schools, and be able to concentrate on their education in a positive, inclusive environment.

The Playworks program promotes all of those things and more. When Bush reached out to the organization, its first plan of action was to bring him to A.L. Holmes.

“We have been steadfast in our support for Playworks since they brought their unique program to Detroit in 2010,” said Delores Alexander, a teacher at A.L. Holmes. “The climate of our school and the lives of many students have been transformed by this valuable program.”

During Bush’s Oct. 21 visit, he joined lunchtime recess outside with the Playworks coach, Antoine Jones, and his group of junior coaches. He played three line football with students in third through eighth grades. A.L. Holmes students had a good time catching passes from Reggie Bush. He talked with students, encouraged them as they played, and offered props to all of the students who participated.

“His visit was an exhilarating experience for our students,” Alexander said. “He high-fived every student as they passed by when recess was over. They went home with smiles on their faces and a copy of his autograph in their hands.”



# Teaching Students How to Honor Veterans

At many schools Veteran's Day is simply a half day of school. At Clippert Academy, however, it is a day devoted to our nation's veterans. Two weeks before Veteran's Day the Clippert staff begin collecting pictures and names of the veterans related to its students and staff.

The school compiles the photos and creates the backdrop for its Wall of Fame. On Veteran's Day teachers hang the backdrop and add all of the artifacts that are loaned to the school by the veterans.

“This year we had boots, canteens, certificates, uniforms, and a special case with a folded flag and many medals and awards,” said teacher Kathy Meloche. When the Wall of Fame is ready the celebration begins! And that includes music, food and dancing. “We call out the names of the veterans every half hour and they are met with cheers and great excitement from the crowd,”



**Clippert staff members and U.S. veterans Charline Jenkins and Dominic Bailey.**

## THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

Meloche said. Students visit the Wall and point out their veterans to their friends.

“It’s an awesome celebration,” Meloche said. This year Clippert honored special guests Charline Jenkins and Dominic Bailey, both veterans and staff members at Clippert. This was Clippert’s fourth celebration and the school hopes to continue them for many years to come.



**Clippert sixth-graders Diego Zumga, Leonardo Juado and Lizandro Duenas.**

# Teen Conference a Huge Success

School social worker Kim Travis-Ewing has been an active DFT member for many years. Nine years ago she organized a youth conference and called it Mobilizing African American Families.

At this year’s ninth annual conference at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History on Oct. 19 students learned about leadership skills, character building, self esteem and much more.

Ewing reminded students that, “Some people let things happen and while others make things happen.” With her can-do spirit and positive energy, Ewing engaged Durfee Elementary-Middle School teachers Melanie Wilson and Tracey Russell to bring Durfee students to the wonderful day-long event.

The students gained skills like respectfully managing social media and preparing for college. They won big prizes for their participation in the conference but took home much more in their minds.

“Durfee students are trailblazers who are making things happen,” Ewing said.



**Durfee conference participants Tayah Perkins, Ronnie Williams, Keira Zanders and Tyreeck English with teacher Tracey Russell (far left) and conference founder Kim Travis-Ewing (far right).**



# A Class on Class

For Angela Cruz, just being invited to lunch at Joe Muer Seafood in the Renaissance Center was thrilling.

"I was very nervous at first," Cruz said. "I thought it was going to have a giant chandelier. I was just imagining it all."

Cruz, a student at Turning Point Academy, dressed in her finest clothes and took part in the fancy luncheon as a way to learn etiquette and table manners.

Kathy Hemingway conceived of the idea to give the girls at the school some life lessons they will need in the future. Hemingway is a social worker at Turning Point, a school for severely emotionally impaired students.

"Our school is 95 percent boys so the few girls we have we try to keep them together like a sisterhood," said Jeneé Moore, a Turning Point paraprofessional. "We're trying to teach etiquette and fine dining."

Even before they got to the renowned eatery, they learned some basics: place your napkin on your lap, use the cutlery from the outside going inward, do not start eating until everyone has been served. The students practiced at tables at the school with place settings, napkins and forks.

Lee Wasik, manager of Joe Muer, underscored the lessons to be learned.

"I hear the gentlemen at your school were jealous they couldn't come," Wasik said. "Should there have been gentlemen here, we always take care to serve the ladies first. The host is always served last."

The girls happily adhered to the rules of etiquette in the esteemed establishment with marble floors, wood grain, brass and white tablecloths.

"This is an amazing place," said student Ebony Davis, "and an awesome experience."



**At left: Students Rosa Hicks, Ebony Davis, teacher Debbie Thomas, Donna Woods and Tyecia Anthony.**



**Lee Wasik  
Joe Muer manager**



**Kim'Yatta Goodson and Turning Point assistant principal Tamara Jones-Jackson.**



**Gavin Manley  
Joe Muer server**

# Afraid to Take a Sick Day?

After five years of working at the DFT without taking a sick day, I just missed five days due to bronchitis. What if I was still in the classroom? Would that affect

my evaluation? Would I get holiday pay if I was sick right before a holiday? Would I even get paid for my days?



**Mark O'Keefe**

The contract provides 12 sick days per year. Two of these days can be used for personal business. Five can be used for funeral/bereavement for immediate family, provided the days are used within seven calendar days of the date of death. Absences for specified childhood diseases are not charged against your sick bank.

All medical leaves are governed by the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The district requires any ab-

sence of more than four days to be under an approved FMLA leave. By law, the district cannot backdate FMLA leaves.

So in my case, even if I had time in my sick bank, I would not have been paid for the fifth day off, unless I submitted a FMLA leave application to the district's medical office by the fourth day.

Taking a sick day before a holiday does not prevent you from being paid for the holiday. However, if you take a *personal business day* before or after a paid holiday, you do not receive holiday pay. Also, abuse or capricious use of sick leave is prohibited, so if you take a sick day before or after a holiday (or any other time) you better be sick.

Your evaluation will not be adversely affected by use of bereavement days, personal business days, specified childhood diseases, or ap-



proved leaves including FMLA. So you only lose points on your evaluation if you have more than five sick days that are not covered by the above exceptions.

Going to work while you are sick in order to help your evaluation could backfire. It is difficult to be effective when you are ill. Ultimately, the evaluation process is designed to measure whether you are effective. So the bottom line is, if you are sick, do not be afraid to use your days.



## Grants . . .

### Early Career Educators

The Zeta Chapter of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International is awarding grants-in-aid to local "early career educators." For its purposes, an early career educator is a female teacher who has five or fewer years of teaching experience. Helping early-career educators is an initiative of the Society. The local chapter of active and retired metro Detroit teachers is providing \$150 to classroom teachers for projects in their classrooms.

Delta Kappa Gamma is a professional honor society of women educators from

around the world promoting excellence in education.

The grants are for early career educators who have an interesting or innovative program, or require funds to further enhance an activity for their students. For an application email [lpas60@gmail.com](mailto:lpas60@gmail.com) or call 313-461-5809. Deadline: Dec. 21, 2013.

### Science Labs

The Shell Science Lab Challenge offers a chance for middle and high school teachers to upgrade their science labs. Teachers who are exemplary and suc-

cessful despite their limited lab equipment may apply. Science teachers in grades 6-12 with special attention to urban or underrepresented groups should apply for prizes and equipment up to \$20,000. Deadline: Dec. 21, 2013. For info, visit [shellsciencelab@nsta.org](mailto:shellsciencelab@nsta.org).

### Minority Achievement

The Fordham Street Foundation is interested in programs that improve academic achievement for minorities. Grants vary. Deadline: Jan. 15, 2014. For more info, visit [www.fordhamstreet.org/home.asp](http://www.fordhamstreet.org/home.asp).



# Weingarten Most Influential in the Fight for Pensions

Institutional Investor has compiled its inaugural ranking of the 40 most influential players in the fight for—and against—defined benefit pensions. Ranked first is AFT President Randi Weingarten, for her determination to see that AFT members retire with their pension security intact.

AFT members participate in pension plans with more than \$1.5 trillion in assets. These deferred wages provide a secure retirement for millions of families. Weingarten regards the push away from defined benefit pensions toward defined contribution plans as especially dangerous because it puts the risk of investing and possibly outliving their retirement savings completely on the shoulders of individual teachers. As a source of capital, defined benefit plans also make critical investments in our economy, including rebuilding our nation's infrastructure.

The AFT published a report for trustees earlier this year,

which revealed a conflict of interest by some Wall Street firms. Some of these asset managers sought to invest workers' capital while also supporting efforts to destroy defined benefit plans.

A number of the firms listed in that report responded in positive fashion. We are now engaged in a broad-based effort with state treasurers, large

asset managers and other unions to expand retirement security through pooled professional asset management. We also believe pension plans can help rebuild our country through investments in infrastructure, while generating a competitive risk-adjusted return. Together with the Clinton Global Initiative, we have committed to encourage \$10 billion of investment in infrastructure over the next five years.



## Interesting Program for SCECH Credit

Dec. 4, 2013

5:15-8:00 p.m. \$25 per session

Troy Marriott, 200 W. Big Beaver Rd., Troy, MI 48084

Register at [aj2725@wayne.edu](mailto:aj2725@wayne.edu) or call (313) 577-8270 with any questions.

Each program has been approved for 3 SCECH with the State of Michigan.

### Iran and the West

The 1979 Islamic Iranian Revolution drastically altered the relationship between Iran and western countries. Recent efforts to restart diplomatic interaction between the U.S. and Iran signal a paradigm shift from the rhetoric of conflict and confrontation that has dominated the past 34 years. A major regional player, a key oil producer and a country with an emerging nuclear program that has ambiguity as to its civilian or military objective, Iran remains a critical, yet controversial country to understand within the field of international relations and geopolitics today.

Stephen F. Dachi is a foreign affairs specialist and international consultant, who served as a diplomat in the U.S. Foreign Service in Asia, Central Europe and Latin America from 1967 to 1996.

In 2007, he represented the United States at an international conference in Tunisia in a meeting with representatives of the Iranian government, as part of the ongoing dispute about Iran's nuclear enrichment program. In 2010 he spent a week in Iran and visited several Iranian cities, leading a group of professionals from the U.S. and other countries and conducting a seminar on Iranian history, politics and the nuclear issue.

### SPONSORS:

U.S. Institute of Peace

Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, WSU

World Affairs Council of Detroit

All meetings will be held at 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, unless otherwise noted. All Meetings start at 4:30 p.m. Dates and times are subject to change.

## December

- 5 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 8 Preschool Teachers Luncheon, 2-4 p.m.  
Longacre House, Farmington Hills**
- 12 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 17 Retirees Chapter Holiday Luncheon,  
11:30 a.m. at Golightly Career and  
Technical Center**
- 23 Christmas Break, schools closed**