



# Happy Holidays



# THE DETROIT

teacher

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## Runoff Election for DFT Officers

The DFT Election Committee will conduct a runoff election for the positions of DFT president, three vice presidents, treasurer and recording secretary. The United for Teachers Rights slate won all of the 11 executive board positions and three trustee seats.

Edna Reaves of UTR got 47 percent of the vote for president, with 487 votes. Steve Conn of the Equal Opportunity Now/By Any Means Necessary slate got 35 percent of the vote with 365 votes. Merishira Oliver of the Great Educators Movement slate received 18 percent of the vote with 192 votes.

Those elected to the executive board are: *LaShawn Sims, Lakia Wilson, Glenda Booker, Marcus Walton, Mark Moroni, Jason Posey, Leslee Przygodski, Terry Strauss, Robin Jennings, Quan Neloms and Darnese Wilkinson. Lisa Card, Elena Brantley-Phillips and Rahjina Johnson* were elected as trustees.

There will be a runoff election conducted in the next few weeks. According to the DFT constitution and bylaws, the officers must receive more than 50 percent of the votes.

The runoff vote will be counted Jan. 17. The next president will take office on Jan. 20.

Patrick Burton, chair of the Election Committee, said the Election

Committee made changes in this election.

"We've made a lot of changes for the better to make things honest and as transparent as possible," he said.

The Election Committee also con-

ducted two debates — a telephone debate and a live debate at the November membership meeting.

"The phone debate was a real success," he said. "At one point we had over 1,400 people listening."

## Make Your Vote Count

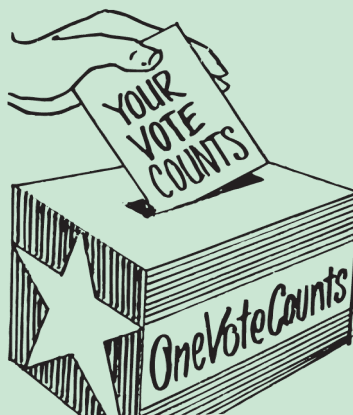
Some 100 ballots in the Dec. 6 DFT Officers Election were thrown out because members did not sign their envelope. Make sure your vote counts in the upcoming runoff election.

### Be sure to:

1. Sign the return envelope.
2. Make sure your address is correct.
3. If you vote straight ticket, don't vote for individual candidates.

Ballots are sent to the same address as the one on your paycheck. If that's not correct, change it with the district. The DFT gets all addresses from the district.

"You need to follow the directions and sign the outside of the ballot," said Patrick Burton, Election Committee chair. "Your name has to be on it to verify it's your ballot."



# REFLECTIONS: PART 1. THE JOURNEY BEGINS

As I prepare to close out my career as DFT president, and an educator in the Detroit Public Schools, in my next two columns I wish to reflect upon my journey as an activist for the union, and ultimately its president.

The journey begins at Western International High School. Richard Wiesniewski was the long time building representative at Western, and a darn good one. However, after about 20 years or so, he decided he was ready to concentrate on his other activities at the school: chair of the Ethnic Club, Student Government, fund raising, etc.

## President's Report



**Keith  
Johnson**

As usual, no one wanted the thankless job of being the building rep. Several of my colleagues approached me, reminding me that I never had a problem speaking up and speaking out, thus I was "perfect" for the job. Among these colleagues were Ines DeJesus, who went on to become Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and Kim Gonzalez, currently principal of Clippert Academy.

Reluctantly I accepted, ran, and won. I immediately took my responsibilities seriously, attending DFT membership meetings, then conducting meetings at Western to debrief my colleagues on what was happening with our union.

My commitment to our union, my willingness to raise questions and get involved got the attention of Sandra and Samele Ambrose, "The Twins." They encouraged me to get involved with the

UTR slate, the caucus that represented the DFT leadership under President John Elliott and Executive Vice-President (the late) Carol Thomas.

The Twins taught me about getting involved in the union in ways that mattered: fund raising, activism, volunteerism, phone banking, and rallying. They also taught me how to conduct myself at conventions and the (then) QUEST Conference conducted by the AFT.

I was further guided by executive board members such as George Adams, John Butler, Marjorie McWilliams, Sarah HENRY Williams and others about the struggles and successes of the DFT and the importance of solidarity within the union. Their lessons, experience, and advice would prove to be an invaluable asset to me as I ascended through the ranks of leadership positions with the DFT.

The Twins also were instrumental in "putting me on the map" when they encouraged me to do an interview with Al Allen from WJBK (now Fox 2) during the work stoppage in 1992. Mr. Allen characterized me as "one of the rising stars in the DFT." Little did I know that a few months later my career destiny would take a dramatic turn, and I would get thrust into the DFT office as a Labor Relations Administrator.

During the years I was the building rep at Western, Janna Garrison, who would later become DFT President, and Rick Sale were the people I would contact to answer questions I had about the contract, working conditions, or anything else. When Rick was selected by Superintendent David Snead to go to the Office of Labor Affairs, President Elliott selected me to take Rick's place.

While I was honored by the faith John had in me, I wasn't sure I knew enough

to succeed Rick. Fortunately, in addition to Janna, I had (the late) Ted Madison and Marvin Green to train me and guide me on how to effectively represent our members. I watched, listened, and learned how they did their jobs and their attention to detail. This was an immeasurable help to me as I learned to master the skill of representation.

These people, and so many more, were an intimate and invaluable component into what would become 21 years of service in the DFT office. I am so grateful to all of them for seeing something in me that made them believe in my leadership potential and my dedication to our profession and our union.

For those whose names I did not include in this segment, please don't believe that your contribution to my experience and my service is not acknowledged and appreciated. The list seems infinite, as were your contributions to me. Know that I am eternally grateful to all of you for shaping and molding me into the type of leader who was always acting in the best interest of those I represented, just the way you taught me.

## THE DETROIT teacher

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## Updates . . .



### Compassion for Cancer at Renaissance

Renaissance student senate members Jaylen Bradley, a tenth-grader, and Yolonda Perry, 11th grade, (above) spearheaded a school-wide project in October. The students and staff at Renaissance High School showed their support of Breast Cancer Awareness on Oct. 28 by purchasing T-shirts that said "Fight" on the front and "Renaissance Cares" on the back.

Supporters had a balloon launch – despite the cloudy and cool weather that day – to show unity and compassion for the fight against breast cancer. Proceeds from the sale of the T-shirts were sent to the national breast cancer awareness organization.

### Getting Students Ready for College

By Rita Carpenter

The College Readiness Plan would like to congratulate Glynda Hutson, counselor at Noble School, for the outstanding High School, Career Tech and College Readiness Fair held on Nov. 12.

The Fair introduced Noble's 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students to choices of high schools and their academic curriculums. The students were engaged and grateful for the opportunity early in the school year to be able to research the best choices for themselves.

Students got information for their parents about high schools and college readiness plans, scholarships, college funding, high school career technical programs, wellness, health, nutrition, hygiene, dental, money management and financial literacy.

The schools and programs that participated in Noble's fair were Davis Aerospace, Randolph Technical, Ben Carson, Crockett Technical, Frederick Douglass Academy for Young Men, Communication Media Arts, Detroit School of Arts, Detroit Collegiate Prep at Northwestern, Golightly Technical, Detroit International Academy for Young Women, Breithaupt Technical, Martin Luther King, Westside Academy and College Readiness Plan.

Noble Elementary Middle School is an example of providing a quality education to our children. Angela Broaden, the principal, La-Toyia Webb Harris, the assistant principal, and Hutson are examples of great educational visionaries.

College Readiness Plans workshops, career and college fair events can be scheduled by calling 313-515-9005.

## It's Evaluation Time Again

It is the time of year when administrators should be conducting formal mid-year evaluations, yet many of our members are just now being observed for the first time all semester, if at all.

In 2011, the state made it mandatory that teachers receive an evaluation score each year, but did not clearly define the process. To date the state still has not finalized legislation on teacher and administrative evaluations. But careers are being destroyed because no one is on the same page.

As it currently stands, a principal (or the district) can set you up to fail before you have an opportunity to teach. How is that possible you might ask? Think about it, when school starts many of our classrooms are overcrowded with upwards of 35 to 45 and in some cases 50 plus students. It usually remains that way until well after the fourth Wednesday count.

Within that period of time, you are expected to:

- increase student achievement (raise test scores)
- have excellent classroom management skills (without administrative support)
- differentiate instruction
- maintain accurate attendance and record books
- build a rapport with students, parents and staff
- go above and beyond your classroom duties

Each of the above items weighs heavily in the evaluation score. In my opinion, there should be a state mandated cap for class size. If the district exceeds that cap, then the teacher's evaluation score should be waived.

Currently in our district, your score determines whether you are moved from school to school or even laid off. Some teachers have been moved several times this year alone. Others are new hires, yet the administrator is charged with issuing an evaluation score for mid-semester.

An ineffective or minimally effective rating is a high price to pay when you have no control over the situation you have been placed in. This district truly needs to take a closer look at what is actually occurring in many of the schools and how it impacts the teacher's evaluation.

At the very least, the district ought to develop an appeals process so that one might bring forth any unfair or unusual situations that may have impacted the process. Until the state finalizes a uniformed evaluation standard, the scores should not be used to the teacher's detriment.



Edna Reaves

### Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Elizabeth Gauer and Regina Head. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.



# Salute to Veteran's Day



By Kathy Meloche  
Clipper Academy

On Nov. 11, Clippert Academy hosted its annual Veteran's Day Celebration. This year the school's display was even bigger and better than usual, thanks to the Detroit Children's Museum. Don Bogart and staff from the museum assembled a large number of artifacts for the display including: a replica of the tomb of the unknown soldier, uniform coats and caps, and even a real shell casing!

In addition, Dominic Bailey, a veteran and special education teacher, brought in his metals, uniform, and bronzed boots. We honored 50 veterans from our Clippert family this year. We are so proud of all of the men and women who serve in our nation's armed services.

## THE D NEWS

### Breast Cancer

Breast cancer, like many health ills, hits Detroit teachers just like the general population. Sometimes teachers keep their health concerns private. Others reach out to teach their students about an issue that affects one in nine American women.

Jacqueline Blakely, a teacher at Sampson-Webber Academy, is a two-time survivor of breast cancer and feels that awareness is the most important work she can do for breast cancer. So she organized a "Positively Pink" breast cancer awareness event Oct. 1 at the school. She invited a speaker from the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute to explain the disease.

Students dressed in pink, held a parade, and decorated their classroom doors around the theme of learning about the



## DSO Performs Live for Carver Students

Students at Carver STEM Academy got the opportunity to listen to classical music performed by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra on Nov. 12. And right in their classroom. A DSO live podcast from New York City was streamed into the school for the students twice during the day. Carver music teacher M.T. Oldani coordinated this awesome and culturally enriching event for the students.





# DETROIT SMAKERS

## r Hits Detroit Teachers



**The Sampson-Webber Academy staff**

disease. All of this as part of the school's Positive Behavior Intervention and Support program.

Deveon Gilliard, a 13-year-old Sampson student, didn't think it silly or embarrassing for the boys to learn about the disease. He understood that men can get breast cancer too. "You can never know," he said. "It takes time for the cysts to grow."

Katrina Studvent from Karmanos said the disease will claim 1,400 lives in Michigan this year. When she asked if anyone had been affected by breast cancer, several hands of Sampson staff went up. Blakely brought the disease — and awareness of it — out of a textbook and into the students' real world.



**Sampson teacher Jacqueline Blakely with students Saniah Anderson and Christian Seals.**



## East English Gets Out the Vote

Patricia Eubanks doesn't like what she sees in midterm elections, so she decided to do something about it. On Nov. 3 she and instructional specialist Nadonya Muslim organized a mock election for every student at East English Village Preparatory Academy, except the seniors, who could vote in the real election.

"We want students to be aware," said Eubanks, the school's media specialist. "We see such a lack of civic awareness."

Eubanks said the Junior ROTC students escorted classes to the polls set up in the atrium. They also registered voters and monitored the voting booths.

East English Village students got voter awareness packets weeks before. They got lessons on the history of voting and the women's suffrage movement. They were asked to bring in political lawn signs and make signs of their candidates of choice.

This cross curricular activity also included inviting candidates into the school to speak — like DFT treasurer Michelle Broughton, a candidate for Wayne County Commissioner.

"This is very personal and very selfish," Eubanks said about organizing the mock election. "I had a problem with the voice in this city. It's very silent. Regardless of the weather, it's important to go out and vote."

Eubanks said she wanted to instill in her students the privilege and importance of voting. She succeeded.

"Some of the students who were not old enough came up and asked me if they could vote," she said. "Why not use this election to teach them? Why not let the kids be our voice?"

## Paying the Best Teachers a Little More



**Mark O'Keefe** I recently had a conversation with an old family friend who said, "I do think we should pay the best teachers a little more." That's easy to agree with.

I expressed a distrust of the ability to accurately identify the best teachers. Her response was that somehow the parents all seem to know who the best teachers are.

This is hard to argue with. The problem is that the state is trying to establish a process for grading teachers, and they are not using the same criteria as the parents. Have you ever heard a parent say you should put your child in Mrs. Smith's class because she has the best MEAP scores? I doubt any parent would say, "The difference between the highest and lowest performing students in Mrs. Jones' class is lower than average, so she must be the best teacher."

Teachers are inherently distrustful of administrators who can game the system. If they like one third-grade teacher better than another, it is easy to skew the results by trading two excellent students from one class for two low-performing students with behavior problems in another class.

I made all these points during our conversation, but afterwards, I realized I had failed to address two glaring problems with merit pay. I felt like the person who said, "Why is the ball getting bigger and bigger... and then it hit me."

First, why is it that in 20 years in education as a teacher, union officer, and now union staff member, no teacher has ever asked why we aren't working harder to get merit pay? If this is such a good idea, why aren't teachers the ones pushing for it?

But the bigger problem is not with discrepancies within a school district. We would all like to pay the best teacher in Detroit a little more than the worst teacher in Detroit. But the true cause for concern should be that the worst teacher at some suburban district makes 50% more than the best teacher in Detroit.

Even school districts with the same foundation allowance from the state and the same local property tax revenue per student find ways to pay their worst teachers 30% to 50% more than Detroit's best teachers.

So for those who are truly concerned about pay equity for teachers, let's start with a standard pay scale for Michigan Public School teachers. Given that most of the local school district's revenue now comes from the state and that we should value each child equally, let's provide equal funding and equal pay.

To ensure equal opportunity for success, we should also have state mandated maximum class sizes. Lansing has been running Detroit Public Schools for 12 of the last 15 years. During that time, they have lowered our pay, increased hours, increased class size, and expressed disgust when that failed to produce higher test scores than the surrounding suburbs.

I will be happy to jump on the merit pay bandwagon to resolve small inequities within school districts once we resolve the enormous inequities in pay between school districts.



**Mark Twain student Aiyanna Moore, principal Linda Whitaker, student Deon Morris, and teacher Yvonne Wilson at the Mesopotamia exhibit.**



## Inspired by Teaching and Mesopotamia

Between working on her doctorate, Yvonne Wilson can be found spending long hours at Mark Twain, readying another interdisciplinary lesson for her seventh-graders.

Often the school is open late while teachers do work and wait for traffic to clear.

"You can hear people laughing in the building," she said. "There's so much we can do in that time. We can stay around the clock and still have stuff to do."

In November, students were psyched about her unit on ancient Mesopotamia, the region that is now modern day Iraq. The students built projects of life in Mesopotamia, including three land forms, two period buildings, foliage and animals, and correctly naming and labeling their projects.

They wrote paragraphs and practiced ancient script. All of this according to state standards in Social Studies.

"The professional development we do is based on what we're currently doing and trying to implement, it's not just busy work," said Wilson, a 15-year Detroit teacher. Wilson puts the state standard on every assignment and said she doesn't want her students to simply "look for the little grade" but to master the content.

The result was a hall full of masterful projects and student pride in their work. Students identified the Zagros mountains, the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and other factoids about Mesopotamia.

Wilson is happy at Mark Twain and it shows in her work with students.

"I love it here," she said. "I love DPS. If you cut my wrists, I'm going to bleed that blue that's on the door."



# 2014 COPE Contributions

## Over \$600

Edna Reaves

## \$300 to \$399

Mark O'Keefe

## \$200 to \$299

Michele Artt  
Lois Doniver  
Patrick Falcusan  
Wanda Hogg  
Keith Johnson  
Judith Sims  
Ricardo Thomas  
Margaret Weertz

## \$100 to \$199

Kimberly Arseneault  
Ivy Bailey  
Rose Bonacci  
Paula Trilety

## \$50 to \$99

Gail Alston  
Nicole Ames-Powell  
Marionette Anderson  
Francisca Argueta  
Frances Beeman  
William Beeman  
Debra Benyi  
Mary Bradford  
Lynn Chudy  
Jennetta Clark  
Cheryl Harvey  
Elaine Hoffman  
Aaron Kelly  
Valerie Kilgore  
Keith Lapointe  
Dollie Lee  
Shirley McNichol  
Edward Parrine  
Charles Robinson  
Michael Schenk  
Lashawn Sims  
April Smith  
Frank Squeo  
Gracie Wooten

## \$25 to \$49

Theodore Alverson  
Gudrun Babicki  
Shirley Banks  
Janis Barnhart  
Meldorae Bracy  
Karen Bradfield  
Inealia Duren  
Evelyn Foreman  
Tamara Fresh  
Jewel Gines  
Robert Griffie  
Carnette Johnson  
Deborah Kirkland  
Crystal Lee  
Henry Lunsford  
Wendell Massey  
Esther Massey  
Cynthia Matthews  
Sandra Murphy  
Steven Portnoy  
Elaine Riley  
Roslyn Ruffin  
Marcus Walton  
Jeffrey Wasilewski

## Under \$25

Suzanne Aldridge  
Vanessa Aldridge  
Angela Alexander  
Shirley Allen  
Keshia Allen  
Lisa Almeranti  
Karen Al-Saadi  
Maria Andrade  
Maria Andrade  
Paul Azzo  
Zona Ballweg  
Nancy Balogh  
Linda Banks-Grasty  
Carla Beardsley  
Julie Beatty  
Marshelle Beebe  
Gloria Bennett  
Kaitlyn Billops  
Laura Black  
Vida Bonacci  
Glenda Booker

Frances Brady  
Michelle Broughton  
Cassandra Brown  
Kenneth Brush  
Antoinette Bryan  
Danita Byrd  
Tonia Byrd  
Caprice Cleveland  
Maria Cobb  
Patricia Conner  
Tina Cooper-Tyler  
Nancy Courtright  
Richard Cross  
Regina Davenport  
Maria Davis  
Nicole Davis  
Althea Denard  
Ana Diaz  
Karen Easterly  
Nadine Egnatios  
Lenore Ellery  
Lena Ellison  
Alethia English  
Rachael Evans  
Lisa Everett  
Kim Ewing  
Mehnaz Fatiwala  
Ross Fazio  
Phyllis Frazier-Chillison  
Karey Fryer  
Edith Giles  
Agatha Gordon  
Elzbieta Gorny  
Candace Graham  
Leslie Graves  
Rachele Green  
Delores Guye  
Queen Hall  
Karl Hartwig  
Anna Henning  
Rochelle Hicks  
Alecia Hill-Williams  
Rhena Holmes  
Monete Hudson  
Pamela Hurst  
Tracey Hutchison  
Regina Jackson  
Valerie Jakubus

Sharon Jamison  
Robin Jennings  
Shraddha Jha  
Ana Jimenez-Rodriguez  
Alice Johnson  
Maria Jones  
Tracy King  
Karen Kohfeldt  
Terri Kraft  
Erin Krause  
Lanell Lasenby  
Edwina Lawson  
Crystal Lee  
Kathleen Leveck  
Carmen Lewis  
Tisha Lewis  
Melinda Lizak  
Tracy Marino  
Lawanda Marshall  
Terrence Martin  
John Martin  
Patricia Mayer  
Jacqueline McCarty  
Audrey McGrier  
Ingrid McIntyre  
Helen Miklos  
Kimberly Mitchell  
Carol Moore  
Yvonne Moore  
Lydia Moore  
Nadonya Muslim  
Mona Nance  
Lawrence Neely  
Wendy Newberry  
Michelle Nimmons  
Dorene Odum  
Mershira Oliver  
Karen Omalley  
Vanessa Parnell  
Sherrill Patton  
Thelma Pearson  
Stacey Pearson  
Gwendolyn Peoples  
Mignon Pierce  
Michele Pizzo  
Maureen Porubsky  
Jason Posey  
Vito Powell

Linda Pride  
Maria Purdu  
Susan Ramos  
Vanessa Rasheed  
Anthony Roberson  
Larry Rocquemore  
Lydia Romano  
Cheryl Ropke  
Patraika Rossell  
Marsha Schafer  
Darlene Scherer  
Lisa Scott  
Latisha Scott  
Denise Sears  
Debbie Shell  
Patricia Smith  
Charlene Smith  
Emily Smith  
Dorothy Steinhart  
Sheila Stewart  
Tracey Tuckey  
Candace Sullivan  
Yolanda Tait-Sain  
Terry Tate  
John Taylor  
Linda Thomas  
Michelle Thompkins  
Doreen Turbow  
Michele Twymon  
Deanna Vanderbilt  
Laureen Vanhese  
Merel Wade  
William Ward  
Debra Washington  
Renee Webster  
William Weir  
Michael Weiszbrod  
Crystal White  
Rodger Willard  
Janice Williams  
Rosemary Williams  
Trece Williams  
Verita Winn  
Emil Wolok  
Darnise Woods  
Marwan Wright  
Lydia Yeghiazarian  
Linda Yousif  
Leonard Zabawski

## Membership Meeting Attendance

School representatives who were in attendance for the months of September and October 2014 are listed below.

### SEPTEMBER 2014

A.L. Holmes  
Academy of the Americas  
Bates Academy  
Bewer Academy  
Brown Academy  
Carstens  
Carver Academy  
Cass Technical  
Charles Drew  
Clippert Academy  
Cody Academy of  
Public Leadership  
Davis Aerospace  
Davison

Douglas Academy for Young Men  
Dixon  
Drew Transition Center  
East English Village  
Spain  
Edison  
Edward "Duke" Ellington  
Emerson  
Field, Moses  
Fisher Magnet Lower Academy  
Garvey Academy  
Henderson  
Hutchinson  
Jerry L. White Center  
John R. King

King High  
Keidan  
MacKenzie  
Mann  
Marquette  
Marshall, Thurgood  
Mason  
Noble  
Osborn College Preparatory  
Priest  
Pulaski  
Schulze  
Vernor  
Western International High

### OCTOBER 2014

Academy of the Americas  
Bates Academy  
Bennett  
Blackwell Institute  
Bow  
Breithaupt Career and  
Technical Center  
Mann  
Brewer Academy  
Brown, Ronald Academy  
Carstens  
Cass Technical  
Charles R. Drew  
Clemente, Roberto Academy

Clippert Academy  
Cody Academy of  
Public Leadership  
Cooke  
Davis Aerospace  
Davison  
Douglas Academy for Young Men  
Emerson  
Field, Moses  
Fisher Magnet Lower Academy  
Garvey Academy  
Gompers  
Holmes, A. L.  
Hutchinson  
Jerry L. White Center

Keidan  
John R. King  
MacKenzie  
Marquette  
Marshall, Thurgood  
Mason  
Maybury  
Munger Pre K-8  
Noble  
Northwestern High  
Schulze  
Spain  
Thirkell  
Turning Point Academy  
Western International High

## Three Teachers, Three Grants

### Drumming Toward Understanding

In September, music therapist Richard Cross, received over \$1,000 from Donors Choose to buy djembe hand drums. Cross, the well-known Detroit teacher who composed a song for Lemonade Day, named this project "Bully Beat Down Through Drumming."



Cross will use the hand drums to start a drum circle with students at Turning Point Academy, a day treatment school.

"Group drumming has many positive benefits for children and adolescents," he said, "including enhanced academic performance, social skills, as well as mental and emotional health."

"I will be able to use the drum circle to teach students how to work cooperatively with one another," Cross says, "and allow for the love of beating a drum with others, both bullies and the victims, and encourage positive communication."

### Memories for Turning Point Students

Although Turning Point, a school for severely emotionally impaired students, isn't a typical school, Renee Kraus wants her students to have fond memories of their time there. She wants students to have keepsakes from the school.



"We do not have yearbooks," she said. So she wrote a grant to Google Detroit to start a project to capture a year of experiences in memory books. She won a \$1,300 grant for a digital camera, Dell laptop computer, cardstock paper, bonding combs and other materials to make the books.

"The students will be able to cherish these memory books and photos for the rest of their lives," she said. "Our students are faced with too much negativity on a daily basis and many of our students do not have books in their homes. They'll be able to use photography and writing as a way to express their feelings."

### Learning the Art of Compost

Science teacher Linda Speirs finally will be able to start a composting garden at Turning Point Academy, thanks to a \$500 grant from the DPS Go Green Challenge Bosch Energy Science and Technology Community Fund. Her project will create an African keyhole compact permaculture structure.



In grades three to 12, students will get a hands-on exploration of science and math concepts outside of the school.

"I wanted to do this but didn't know how to pull it off because I didn't have the money," Speirs said. An African keyhole garden is a small scale intensive raised bed garden that is fed through compost. The garden

is made in the design of a keyhole with a basket center that allows water and nutrients to reach the soil where plants are growing.

"Now our students will learn nutrition and where their food comes from," Speirs said. "As we have our lunch, the kids will have buckets to put the discards. The compost will directly feed the garden."

## Earhart Student Wins Float Contest

Eighth-grader Naomi West likes to talk art, drawing and her dreams of art as a career.

"There's nothing else I want to do," says the 13-year-old. "Do you want to see some of my art?"

Naomi was the only Earhart School student who submitted a sketch for the Thanksgiving Parade Float Contest. But art teacher Barbara Nichols said she had full confidence Naomi could win.



**Earhart art teacher Barbara Nichols and float winner Naomi West.**

"I was not shocked it happened but I was surprised," said Nichols, a five-year Detroit teacher. Naomi is such an accomplished artist that she qualifies each year for the DPS student art exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

"She's an exceptional artist," Nichols said. "She stands out in her work ethic, completing things and listening to what I'm teaching her."

Naomi has won \$1,700 in prizes for her artwork, as well as a 30-foot long float called the Children's Pet Cuddle and Care Club. She also won a night at the Marriott hotel before her front and center ride on her float at the parade.

After the press conference with her float emerging from behind a black curtain, Naomi said the days have been thrilling.

"They literally took a ton of pictures," she said. "My face hurts."

All Meetings start at 4:30 p.m. Dates and times are subject to change.

### January

- 5 Schools Reopen**
- 8 DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**  
**DFT Office (7700 Second Ave.)**
- 15 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**  
**(IBEW Hall)**
- 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday.**  
**Schools closed**
- 20 Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 p.m.**  
**(Triumph Church)**

**We're on**  
**Facebook!**  
check us out at

[www.facebook.com/DFT231](http://www.facebook.com/DFT231)