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 Mean Necessary slate got 35 percent of the vote with 365 votes. Mershira 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 Rahjinah 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 conducted 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."
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.

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.
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.

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, Goliightly 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-Toya 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.

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.

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 uniform evaluation standard, the scores should not be used to the teacher’s detriment.

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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.

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.
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.

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

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.

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."
Membership Meeting Attendance

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

**SHEPTEMBER 2014**

- A.L. Alston
- Academy of the Americas
- Bates Academy
- Bever Academy
- Brown Academy
- Carstens
- Carver Academy
- Cass Technical
- Charles Drew
- Clipper Academy
- Cody Academy of Public Leadership
- Davis Aerospace
- Davison

**OCTOBER 2014**

- Academy of the Americas
- Bates Academy
- Blackwell Institute
- Bow
- Breinhaupt 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
- Davis Aerospace
- Davison

2014 COPE Contributions

- Theodore Alverson
- Guadrun Babicki
- Shirley Banks
- Janis Barhart
- Karen Bradfield
- Inaia Duren
- Evelyn Foreman
- Tamara Fresh
- Jewel Gines
- Robert Grifile
- Carnette Johnson
- Deborah Kirkland
- Crystal Lee
- Henry Lunaford
- Wendell Massey
- Esther Massey
- Cynthia Matthews
- Sandra Murphy
- Steven Portnoy
- Elaine Riley
- Roslyn Ruffin
- Marcus Walton
- Jeffrey Walsilewski
- Suzanne Aldridge
- Vanessa Aldridge
- Angela Alexander
- Shirley Allen
- Keshia Allen
- Lisa Almeranti
- Karen Al-Saad
- Maria Andrade
- Maria Andrade
- Paul Azzo
- Zona Ballweg
- Nancy Balogh
- Linda Banks-Gasty
- Carla Beardsley
- Julie Beatty
- Marselle Beebe
- Gloria Bennett
- Kaitlyn Billups
- 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 Courtinr
- 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 Fatihwala
- Ross Fazio
- Phyllis Frazier-Chilison
- 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
- Monette Hudson
- Pamela Hurst
- Tracy Hutchison
- Regina Jackson
- Valerie Jakubus
- Sharon Jamison
- Robin Jennings
- Shradhita 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
- Nandona Muslim
- Mona Nance
- Lawrence Neely
- Wendy Newberry
- Michelle Nimmorns
- Dorene Odom
- Mersha Oliver
- Karen Omalley
- Vanessa Parnell
- Sherrill Patton
- Thelma Pearson
- Stacey Pearson
- Gwendolyn Peoples
- Mignon Pierce
- Michele Pizzo
- Maureen Porubsky
- Jason Posey
- Vito Powell
- Tamra Porubsky
- Patricia Smith
- Charlene Smith
- Emily Smith
- Dorothy Steinhardt
- Sheila Stewart
- Tracey Stuckey
- Candace Sullivan
- Yolanda Tait-Sain
- Terry Tate
- John Taylor
- Linda Thomas
- Michelle Thompkins
- Doreen Turbow
- Michele Twymon
- Deanna Vindler
- Laureen Vanhese
- Meryl 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
- Marvan Wright
- Lydia Yeghisian
- Linda Yousif
- Leonard Zabawski
- 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 Steinhardt
- Sheila Stewart
- Tracey Stuckey
- Candace Sullivan
- Yolanda Tait-Sain
- Terry Tate
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- Renee Webster
- William Weir
- Michael Weiszbrod
- Crystal White
- Rodger Willard
- Janice Williams
- Rosemary Williams
- Trece Williams
- Verita Winn
- Emil Wolok
- Darnise Woods
- Marvan Wright
- Lydia Yeghisian
- Linda Yousif
- Leonard Zabawski
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 say, "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.

"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."