WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

A New Unionism

Now that Michigan is a Right to Work state, where do unions go from here? In January, AFT Michigan held regional meetings around the state to hear from members and brainstorm before a statewide summit Feb. 9 in Flint.

“We’re going to fight back,” said David Hecker, AFT Michigan president. “We’re going to retain a strong, viable union and we’re going to turn this around.”

At a Jan. 23 regional meeting at the DFT, Hecker said right-wing CEOs who pushed through the law hope that thousands of workers will resign their union membership, making unions weaker and leading to the disappearance of unions in the state.

Right to Work states that employees in a union shop are not compelled to pay union dues as a condition of employment. Unions still exist, however, in right to work states. And most are quite strong, he said.

“We’re the victims of our success,” said Keith Johnson, DFT president. “We want members to understand that being a part of a union doesn’t mean you won’t experience setbacks.”

Johnson urged union members not to give the Republicans what they want.

“They want to see despair,” he said. “They want our members to believe unionism is futile. This is all the more reason to galvanize. This is all the more reason to re-organize.”

Mark Dilley, an AFT Michigan organizer, said two million people voted for Proposal 2, the ballot initiative to enshrine collective bargaining in the Michigan constitution.

“That means we have two million people to work with,” he said. “Two million who want to unionize.”

Before unions, there was mass chaos and work stoppages in many shops. Few workers or CEOs want to return to that. Unions have been important in making workplaces safe, fair and organized. The purpose of unions hasn’t changed in 80 years.

“We are stronger together than we are as individuals,” said Jon Curtiss, an AFT Michigan organizer. “By paying dues, you have to ask yourself: Do I make this union weaker or do I make this union stronger?”
Are you enjoying your service as a Detroit Public Schools employee? Many of you would answer, "NO, HELL NO!" While the behaviors of some students don't help, it's not the students who create that sentiment.

Beyond the concessions, class sizes, lack of books, supplies and other materials, there is the pervasive attitude among the so-called leaders of our schools and district that have destroyed the morale and passion that drove us to become professional educators.

It is not the concept of an emergency financial manager that is destructive; it is the conduct that permeates the hearts and minds of too many of our principals.

That pervasive attitude is to threaten, intimidate, humiliate, and virtually beat teachers into submission. Let me be clear: this does not apply to all of our principals. The truly effective principals are the ones who recognize their staffs as their soldiers on the front line. The teachers are the ones who make it happen for our students.

As I visit schools and conduct my walkthroughs I can easily identify these schools where there is a "team" concept. I see schools where teachers feel valued, appreciated and supported by their administration. In such schools teachers are not afraid of what will be said about their union president visiting the school and their classroom. They know I'm not looking for problems. I'm looking for the good stuff that is happening in our schools.

At others I have to contend with principals who track me down wondering why I'm there and who called me. I tell them why I am there, that NO ONE CALLED ME, and that I couldn't care less whether they like it or not. They turn around and admonish the staff about keeping their concerns "in the family." What a joke! That behavior alone runs antithetical to the "family" concept.

I recently attended a staff meeting with a building administrator and assistant superintendent to develop a comprehensive plan to address student behavior that was disruptive to the learning environment.

The principal was less than pleased by my appearance and her facial expressions and body language evidenced that fact. I offered input and strategies they could use collectively to change the culture of the school.

The next day the principal canvassed the school trying to find out who called me and why? Never mind that I offered suggestions that supported the principal's need to lead and the staff's need to support her. Never mind that I offered suggestions that would hold teachers accountable as well as administration. She did not want the UNION involved. Memo to all principals within DPS; as long as we have DFT members educating children in DPS the union WILL BE INVOLVED!

This is a by-product of the dictatorial, oppressive, and callous style of leadership exhibited by the current emergency financial manager who seems to have adopted the mantra; "I'm the boss, you're my subservient, do what I say or I will get rid of you." Our DPS legacy of collaboration through cooperation has been displaced with no respect for the practitioners of the craft.

The EFM has dubbed the principals as the "CEOs" of the schools. There is no problem with that. The problem occurs when he allows principals to treat their staffs as SUBSERVIENTS rather than subordinates.

In too many instances principals – like the emergency financial manager – are not respected, they are FEARED!

The point here is that a smart and capable leader recognizes that leadership is not about power it is about influence; leading in such a way that those you are charged to lead will happily and fervently help you carry out the mission when they know you believe in them, you respect them, and you support them.

The emergency financial manager will not educate a single child in DPS, I'm not sure he even knows how. Principals will not educate a single child, yet they are charged with providing the quality of leadership and support that is conducive to teaching and learning. It is frustrating to see principals engage in behaviors they never would have tolerated when they were teachers. Neither the union nor the district leadership at the time would tolerate disrespect, fear and intimidation as part of the educational fabric.

The emergency financial manager and some of the people in leadership positions need to take inventory of themselves, their behaviors and attitudes before they destroy what is left of DPS.

What this school district needs are leaders not dictators, facilitators not overseers. If this pervasive attitude of the EFM and members of his leadership team does not change, we will not retain our best teachers. And we won't be able to attract new ones to take their place.
Evaluations: Cloudy but Serious Business

By Edna Reaves, Executive Vice President

Here we are nearly one year later and the evaluation process is still not clearly defined. Numerous members have contacted the union with the same concerns and experiences that landed many of our teachers in the unemployment line.

Roy Robert’s effort to eliminate the deficit calls for the reduction of 542 instructional positions between 2014 and 2016, saving the district $49.9 million. Evaluations will be the deciding factor in determining who is retained. Yet unanswered questions still loom over the process.

It is February and employees still do not know the attendance criteria and how it will be scored in the evaluations. The attendance policy has yet to be defined. What constitutes an excused absence versus an unexcused one?

No one has defined "contributions." Chief HR Officer Vickie Hall said contributions are those things done above and beyond the classroom or school day. If that is so, why are employees being penalized for not doing something on personal time? Is it not enough to grade papers and write lesson plans at home because of the loss of prep periods?

While your union leadership is working diligently to encourage the district to develop a fair and comprehensive evaluation process (evaluations are now prohibited subjects of negotiations), you can ease the burden on yourself by embracing the diagnostic tools available. Visit Learning Village and PD-360 and become familiar with the rubric. Know what is expected of you and incorporate those requirements into your daily routine.

Observers want to see:
• Open and closure of the lesson
• Teacher and student interaction
• Engaged students
• Variety of assessments
• Cooperative groups
• Use of technology
• Classroom decorum that displays learning
• Current lesson plans and grade books

Observers don’t want to see:
• Teachers sitting behind the desk
• Passing out ditto sheets
• Students off task or disorderly
• Cluttered rooms
• Read & answer question assignments

Initially, this process can be overwhelming and a bit intimidating because we are not accustomed to evaluations. When administrators walk into your room, carry on with your lesson. If they need to talk to you, they should wait for the appropriate time to interrupt you if it is necessary. If observers walk into your room, it is understandable for you to acknowledge them, but continue with instruction immediately if they are there to conduct an observation. Note the time observers enter your room and how long they stay, but continue with your instruction. Some of our members are so consumed with the administrator being in the room that they forget to demonstrate their ability to teach and interact with students.

DPS leaders have blamed teachers for the lack of student success, ignoring their consistent fiscal and academic mismanagement. Their inept behavior has now set their eyes on teachers. We cannot control the actions of this dysfunctional district, but we can be primed in our classrooms.

Do your best to ensure you are not part of the deficit elimination plan. In the words of Newell D. Hillis, “Failure is blindness to the strategic element in events; success is readiness for instant action when the opportune moment arrives.”

To you my brothers and sisters I say, Carpe Diem and shine bright as morning glories!
I Love to Teach,  
But I Hate My Job

By Mark O’Keefe, DFT Controller

What do the Blue Pigs and a classroom bathroom have in common? These two items were on a list of pros and cons one Detroit teacher made last spring when trying to decide if she should retire.

The list of cons was extensive. It included 32 things she hated, 46 things she disliked and only 16 things she liked. Many DPS teachers would be able to replicate most of the list based on their own experiences.

Partial list of cons:
• PD 360 chats
• Printing benchmark tests
• Staff meetings
• Burst
• Interviewing for my job
• Professional development
• Career week
• Evaluations
• Interim reports
• Hall decoration contests
• Required college courses for continuing education
• Taking Excedrin 4 times per week
• Getting up at 5:15
• Going to bed at 9:15
• Always being tired
• Lack of respect
• Disorganized school
• Nasty memos
• Nasty emails
• Not being appreciated
• Told what to put on bulletin boards in rooms
• Competition between teachers
• Forced to follow district’s schedule
• Writing GLECs on lesson plans
• Too tired to see people
• Low student attendance

• Students arriving one hour late
• Lack of security
• Being told what to do by instructional specialists
• Missing preps
• Sick bank stolen by DPS
• No positive feedback
• Lack of opportunity for creativity

Surprisingly, the cons list does not include the reductions in net pay due to a 10 percent pay cut, 3 percent health care trust, 4 percent increase in pension contributions, loss of pay for lost preps, longevity and oversized classes, and having to pay 20 percent of health insurance premiums.

The pros list included:
• Teaching kids
• Assessing kids
• Seeing former students
• Being good at something
• My walls
• Being nice to children
• Math
• Wayne State tutors

So what did this teacher decide? She decided to come back for another year. After one day, she said it was the worst decision she made in her life. If only she had known how much worse the job would be with only two preps per week, two hour staff meetings, individualized learning plans for all students, and an increasingly unbearable work environment. So she retired in mid school year, and she has enjoyed every day since.

And the Blue Pigs and classroom bathrooms? They are the only two items on the “pros list” unique to DPS.

However, the Blue Pigs are not coming to her school this year.

So what’s left?
King High Gets $20,000 in Instruments

Fidelity Investments clearly is smitten with the instrumental music program at Martin Luther King High School. And this love affair is paying handsome dividends.

On Jan. 23, Fidelity’s Detroit Investment Center visited the school to hear the jazz band play “Girl for Ipanema” and “Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?” Next, company officials were treated to the marching band’s pulsing renditions and synchronized steps.

A Fidelity official harkened back to his days in his high school’s jazz and marching bands before asking for a drum roll. The curtain went up in the Performing Arts auditorium to flashing lights. Six Fidelity officials were holding $20,000 worth of new instruments.

The instruments include five pairs of marching cymbals, three flutes, two trombones, a xylophone, mouthpieces and reeds.

Four years ago, Fidelity invested $40,000 in the program. And it appears the company is thrilled with its investment and with band director Victoria Miller.

Three students gave testimonials about the importance of the world-renowned music program.

“I got to leave the state and the country and go to London,” one jazz band member said.

“The band is like a family,” said another. “They greeted me and it feels like I’m a part of something.”

Another student said the band kept him off the streets. But a co-ed kept him straight, “You were never in the streets.”
Detroit Federation of Teachers  
Notice of Election  
to be Held at the March 14, 2013 Membership Meeting

REGULAR ELECTION OF THREE (3) ELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS  
(Two Year Term of Office – March 2013 to March 2015)

AND

ELECTION TO FILL A VACANCY ON THE ELECTION COMMITTEE  
ONE (1) POSITION TO BE FILLED  
(Term to Expire March 2014)

ELECTION CALENDAR

January 17, 2013 (Thursday)  
Open Nominations and Acceptances. Nominations and acceptances may be mailed to P.O. Box 2785, North End Station, 60 E. Milwaukee, Detroit, MI 48202 OR hand delivered to the DFT office during office hours.

February 7, 2013 (Thursday)  
Close Nominations and Acceptances at 4:00 p.m. for Post Office or 5:00 p.m. hand delivered to the Election Committee at the February 7, 2013 Membership Meeting.

February 11, 2013 (Monday)  
List of candidates mailed to schools, to homes of nominees and posted in the DFT office.

February 28, 2013 (Thursday)  
DEADLINE FOR GRIEVANCES regarding nominations.

March 7, 2013 (Thursday)  
ELECTION COMMITTEE hears grievances, if any. EXECUTIVE BOARD hears grievances, if any.

March 14, 2013 (Thursday)  
MEMBERSHIP hears grievance(s), if any, and votes on decision(s). VOTING BEGINS IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER.

IF THERE ARE NO GRIEVANCES,  
voting will begin at 4:00 p.m. Those in line at 5:30 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

Candidate’s Eligibility Date: January 17, 2012  
Voter’s Eligibility Date: February 14, 2013

Election Committee members who are candidates for re-election will be replaced by temporary appointees named by the Executive Board.
Grants . . .

**Childhood Hunger**

Share Our Strength seeks to end childhood hunger and build partnerships in communities to achieve that end. No Kid Hungry grants are awarded to schools that are involved in afterschool or summer programs aimed at providing access to food for children. Grants range from $5,000 to $10,000. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit grants@strength.org.

**Financial Literacy**

The Comerica Charitable Foundation provides grants for projects that address economic self-sufficiency for low-income families, neighborhood revitalization, access to health care and education. In the area of education, the foundation is focused on financial literacy programs for K-12 students and scholarships for low-income students to study business or finance. Grants vary. Deadline: March 15, 2013. For info, visit www.comerica.com/about-us/community-involvement/pages/comerica-charitable-foundation.aspx.

**Environment**

The Captain Planet Foundation makes grants twice a year that support high-quality education programs that engage students to improve the environment in their schools and communities. Grants from $500 to $2,500 are available. Deadline: Feb. 28, 2013. For info, visit grants@captainplanetfdn.org.

**Library collaborations**

The SIGMS Technology Innovation Award is sponsored by the International Society for Technology in Education. The award honors two teams made up of a media specialist and a collaborating teacher. One prize goes to an elementary team and the other to a secondary school. ISTE is looking for a teacher/media specialist team who implemented a collaborative technology project, received support from the administration, and have supportive data so others may duplicate what they have done. Grants of $1,000 for the media center and $1,000 to attend the ISTE conference and more are available. Deadline: Feb. 28, 2013. For info, visit www.iste.org.

**Food Journalism**

The Earth Day Network is offering prizes for high school journalists who write articles about the need for healthy, sustainable food in schools. Articles must be published in the school newspaper and written in the students’ own words. Students who are U.S. citizens and ages 13 to 18 may enter for prizes of $300 to $1,500. Deadline: Feb. 28, 2013. For info, visit www.earthday.org.

**Small Libraries**

The Lisa Libraries is an organization dedicated to providing books and small libraries to nonprofits that work with children in low-income or underserved areas. The program was started by author Ann M. Martin and friends to honor children’s book editor Lisa Novak. The program’s purpose is to provide new children’s books to fill under-filled shelves, and to give children who may have never owned a book the opportunity to have books of their own. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit LisaLibraries@gmail.com.

**Gardening**

The Mantis Awards from the National Garden Association have been supporting educational gardening for 17 years. This year the NGA will select 25 groups to receive grants of $349 each to educate people about the importance of gardening. Deadline: March 7, 2013. For info, visit http://grants.kidsgardening.org.

**Creative Essay**

Creative Communication invites students and teachers to submit student essays for a contest to win prizes and recognition. This is an extremely selective contest. Deadline: Feb. 19, 2013. For info, visit www.poeticpower.com.

**Environmental Projects**

Siemens, with Discovery Education and other sponsors, offers its environmental challenge for teachers and students to get involved in an environmental learning project and enter a rewarding competition. The challenge invites teachers and students to become agents of change and work to create sustainable improvements in their communities. Grants up to $10,000 are available. Deadline: March 5, 2013. For info, visit www.wecanchange.com.

We’re on Facebook!

Check us out at www.facebook.com/DFT231
Michigan residents favor stronger support for educators, improving teacher preparation and expanding early childhood education as the top three priorities to improve student learning in public education, the Center for Michigan concluded after a year-long project that conducted 264 community conversations across the state and polled about 1,900 people over the phone.

"We see real opportunity this year to act on what the citizens want in a couple of key ways," said John Bebow, president and CEO of the Center for Michigan.

The Center talked to more than 5,800 individuals in communities across the state. In those conversations, 88 percent of attendees - varying from students to parents and some educators - said stronger support for educators was the best way to improve student learning.

Garnering the next-highest level of agreement was teacher improvement, which saw support from 79 percent of attendees and expanding early childhood education at 74 percent. Initiatives that would hold educators more accountable ranked fifth in the most desired action from the community conversations, right after reducing class sizes (68 percent to 71 percent, respectively).

The results of the community conversations ran in line with the separate research method of phone polling, where accountability swapped spots of importance with expanding early childhood education. The least supported ideas in the community conversations - changing the school calendar, increasing school choice and expanding online learning - saw increased support among those polled by phone, but they were still well behind accountability and early education.

"I think some of the concern about online-learning is whether we're talking about online-only schools or online learning to accentuate what happens in brick and mortar schools," Bebow said, noting that most were skeptical of replacing traditional schools with so-called cyber schools.

As for the concern over failing schools, Bebow said he thought the Center's report was consistent with the findings of the McClellan report Gov. Rick Snyder has been basing much of his school reform suggestions on.

"The majority of people who participated in this rate our statewide schools as a C or lower. Among the toughest critics are low-income and minority citizens of the state," he said. "The methods of doing so, I think, are open to debate. There was higher urgency on other things than the choice question."

Some 54 percent gave the statewide public education system a "C," though when it came to letter grades for their local public education system the biggest percentage (38 percent) gave a grade of "B."

African-Americans and low-income residents gave the toughest grades on the K-12 system, with 32 percent of African-Americans in community conversations giving the system a "D" or "E" and only 15 percent of whites in community conversation agreeing with that assessment. Instead, 31 percent of whites thought the K-12 system deserved an "A" or "B".

Teacher preparation and qualification was a big issue, with the most frequent responses in support of improving teacher preparation suggesting candidates be better prepared for student diversity with regard to cultural, economic, individual learning ability and style, and gender diversity.

One way to go about doing that, the report considered, was to make it more difficult to get into the profession.

"Many of the students that we spoke to are aspiring teachers themselves and they would often speak to the fact that they are concerned about the respect for the profession," said Amber Toth, outreach director for the Center. "They would like that which is required of them to be more difficult."

But alongside that issue, Bebow said, was great concern about how much is already asked of teachers and if there was a better way to help facilitate the involvement in a student's success outside of the classroom.

"There's a lot of concern about family involvement. There isn't consensus...what to do about it but there is a lot of concern about this issue," he said. "There's concern that teachers are not just teaching anymore, especially in struggling schools. They are serving as quasi-school psychologists and nurses and nutritional consultants and everything else. There's a sense that we're asking them to do an awful lot with not enough in that regard."

Nine out of 10 participants said there was more business and community groups could do to improve student learning, the report said. Some suggestions were to provide more real-world experiences such as part-time jobs and internships, mock interviews and demonstrations to both students and educators of skills employers want.

The group was most hopeful to see reforms for early childhood education given its status in the governor's State of the State, as well as teacher evaluations, which are currently being discussed by a committee chaired by Deborah Ball, dean of the School of Education at the University of Michigan.

"It's important for us to inject this into the system because...the public voice is missing in the committee hearings," Bebow said. "We're hopeful this will give legislators another sense of public opinion."
Retirements

The following DFT member has announced her retirement: Jeanette Henderson. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

Keith Johnson and his United for Teachers Rights team took office in January after being sworn in at the Jan. 17 membership meeting. The 20-member leadership team will serve the DFT for two years.

The leaders elected were: Edna Reaves, executive vice president; Nadonya Muslim, vice president; Mike Schenk, vice president; Felecia Clark, recording secretary; and Kurtis Brown, treasurer.

Also elected to the Executive Board are members: Wanda Lundy-Colquitt, Mark Moroni, Wendy Newberry, Vanessa Parnell, Steven Portnoy, Lisa Scott, LaShawn Sims, Ivy Bailey, Vida Bonacci, Glenda Booker and William Gardner.

Elected as DFT trustees are: Vanessa Rasheed, Marcus Walton and Beverly Wilkerson.

We’re Looking for You!

Detroit retired teachers are invited to a special DFT Retiree Chapter meeting on March 19, 2013 at 11:30 a.m. at the DFT Hall, 2785 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202 (corner of Lodge Fwy).

The Retiree Round Up will feature food, fellowship and fun. The first 50 men to come through the door will get a door prize.

The DFT Retiree Chapter meets on the third Tuesday of every month (except December, July and August) for donuts and coffee, socializing, information about your benefits, and current news about the Detroit Public Schools.

For information, go to http://dft231.mi.org/retirees.

DFT
2012 Dues for Tax Purposes

- Full Dues .........................$894.08
- Three-Quarter Dues ........$670.56
- Half Dues .........................$447.04
- Quarter Dues .................$223.52
Michigan First to Award $50,000 in Scholarships

Video and essay contests for Detroit-area students include three $10,000 grand prizes

Michigan First Credit Union – together with Young & Free Michigan, its young adult financial education program—has given away more than $650,000 in scholarships to metro Detroit students over the past nine years. The community financial institution has expanded scholarship programs for 2013 to include a $10,000 grand prize in each of three categories.

The three scholarship categories include: a high school video contest, a high school essay contest and a college video contest. Applicants can create their response with a 60-second video or a 300-word essay. For each category, this year’s question is “What would you do with $50,000?” The three winners will receive a $10,000 scholarship, and runners up will receive $5,000 and $3,000 scholarships. The top 10 applicants in each category will be selected by online voting and a panel of judges will select the winners.

“By expanding our scholarships this year, we’ll be able to make an even greater impact in the lives and futures of local students,” says Michael Poulos, Michigan First’s president & CEO. “This credit union was founded by Detroit teachers and education is something we believe in doing our part to support.”

The Michigan First Foundation—a non-profit founded in 2012 with a focus on youth and education in metro Detroit—funds the scholarships as part of $160,000 in contributions to local charitable organizations and students each year.

In addition to the more than $50,000 awarded through the three categories, up to 30 $1,000 scholarships may be awarded to entries from selected high school participants in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties.

Applications will be accepted through Feb. 12 at YoungFreeMichigan.com. All applicants must be high school seniors or current college students as well as members of Michigan First Credit Union, but interested metro Detroit students may join when they apply for the contest. The public voting for the top videos and essays will take place between Feb. 13 and 19, determining the top 10 finalists in each category. The winners will be selected the week of March 4.