

THE DETROIT teacher

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Coming Together to Save Our Schools



WE DID IT!

Earley's Departure: A Great First Step in Taking Back Our Schools

What a winter. With the announced departure of Darnell Earley, the DFT won one of its top five priorities. But it took a sustained effort to get there.

Members led a campaign that started last summer, first opposing the proposed \$6 million in healthcare cuts.

Several months later it led to the DFT filing a lawsuit demanding Earley to step down. It worked.

The constant pressure of DFT members never let up. When Earley proposed devastating healthcare cuts, a dozen DFT members, dressed in black and wearing surgical masks, walked into Earley's office. Their message was simple: our health care is critical to keeping healthy for work.

In the end, the healthcare fight wasn't a complete victory. But Earley reduced his proposed \$6 million in cuts to about \$1 million.

DFT members continued to show frustration with their working conditions, lack of respect, and the intentional dismantling of the district. When they started calling in sick and snapping photos of their students' learning conditions, the public woke up and the nation took notice.

The schools and the DFT offices were bombarded with media requests from CNN, CBS, PBS NewsHour, Al Jazeera, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, local papers

and TV stations.

District officials, who were not interested in listening to union leaders before, suddenly asked to meet to talk about teacher concerns.

That day we won another top goal, an end to the two-hour staff meetings.

DFT members caused a tipping point in public opinion. Definition: "the point at which a series of small incidents become significant enough to cause a larger, more important change."

The lesson for DFT members is to grab the public's attention and moral outrage over what is wrong for kids in Detroit and the people responsible for teaching them. We engaged the public's imagination, we drew them in, we spoke out when the cameras were rolling.

"When people saw the black mold, falling ceiling tiles, and dead rodents, we didn't have to explain how wrong this was," said Ivy Bailey, interim president. "The photos told the story. And our community finally heard what we were saying all along."

DFT Administrator Ann Mitchell says we still need a sustained effort over the next six months to engage each member and our community.

"We can't let up."

WHAT A WINTER! — Here is a Timeline of Events

November 3	2,000 DFT, AFT Detroit, and AFT Michigan members skip Marzano training and go to Lansing
November 30	Marchers for Education begin their 90-mile walk to Lansing
December 3	DFT Executive Board votes for trusteeship and the support AFT can give us
December 8	Marchers arrive in Lansing to a crowd of hundreds
December 15	Interim President Ivy Bailey delivers 900 letters from teachers to legislators and Gov. Snyder
January 11	64 of 100 DPS schools close due to sickouts
January 14	Membership meeting with AFT President Randi Weingarten draws 2,200 members
January 19	DFT wins 3 concessions: an end to two-hour staff meetings, sick leave accrual, and a joint committee on curriculum
January 20	88 schools close due to sickouts, hundreds distribute leaflets at Auto Show while President Obama visits
January 21	EM Darnell Earley files a temporary restraining order against 23 teachers, Ivy Bailey and others
January 25	Judge Cynthia Stephens denies injunction against teachers
January 28	DFT files a lawsuit against DPS demanding repairs to schools and Earley to step down
January 30-31	DFT conducts neighborhood walks, and "Labor in the Pulpit"
February 2	EM Darnell Earley announces his resignation
February 3	DPS Bans AFT health inspectors from entering school buildings, DFT files emergency motion

The Fight Has to Continue

First I want to say this: I'm proud of our teachers. I'm proud of you being advocates for the students. I'm proud that you know the conditions in our schools are not right. I'm proud that so many of you talked to the media and turned out for our actions.



Interim President

Ivy Bailey

Ivy Bailey

You spoke from your heart during the last few months. The whole focus was putting the students first. For that moment, with all the personal attacks on teachers — the pay cut, the healthcare — everybody put that aside. The effort was a selfless one because at the end of the day the

children matter most to us.

This is a huge start in getting the people of Michigan to support us. But we need more support. The comments in response to national news were overwhelmingly supportive of us because: they get it. But reading the comments after local reports, some were surprisingly negative. Not so much from the people living in Detroit, but from the suburbs.

Here's who support us:

- Detroit parents
- Detroit pastors
- Detroit legislators
- Local union people.

But we need all of Michigan to stand with us. The tide has to turn so the folks in Lansing see this is a cascading movement for equity and there is no keeping a lid on these intolerable teaching and learning con-

ditions.

We know all of our schools don't have deplorable conditions. But the point is: none of them should. You should be able to take your children to a safe and inviting environment. There should not be such a disparity among schools.

All schools should have adequate heat, books and supplies, and a certified teacher in every classroom with pay comparable to the surrounding areas. All students should have classes in art, music, foreign language and physical education.

In the last few months, we've taken a lot of actions and reached out to our community for support. The test will be in sustaining this effort in the coming months. If we all engage and do all we can, we will rebuild this district and regain all we lost.

THE DETROIT teacher

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Updates . . .

DFT 2015 Dues for Tax Purposes

Full Dues	\$897.16
Three-Quarter Dues	672.87
Half Dues.....	448.58
Quarter Dues.....	224.29

DFT Remembers Holley Sabotchick

The DFT has had 10 presidents in its history, and Holley Sabotchick worked with five of them. Sabotchick was assistant to the president under presidents Mary Ellen Riordan, John Elliott, Janna Garrison, Virginia Cantrell, and Keith Johnson. She started working at the DFT at the age of 21 and stayed 45 years.



DFT members were saddened by the news that Sabotchick passed away in October at 70 years old.

“She was the institutional memory of the DFT,” said Keith Johnson, former DFT president. “When I came to the DFT she taught me so much.”

He recalled that Sabotchick told him to be more patient and understanding. She said people may not have the same level of

nerve as he had to stand up for themselves in the face of administrators.

Sabotchick was the go-to person at the union office, having vast knowledge of the constitution and bylaws, history and practice at the DFT.

She was a deep believer in the union and manned the DFT like it was her own company.

“She knew the contract like the back of her hand,” said Barbara Downey, DFT dues clerk. “She was meticulous about her work.”

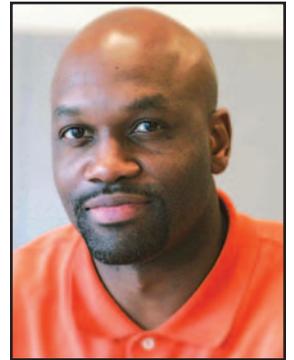
Sabotchick retired in 2012. Her husband, Ken, often drove her to work and picked her up, staying to chat for a few moments in the morning.

Besides her husband, Sabotchick is survived by a sister and brother-in-law, a niece and two nephews.

Taking Our Cause to the Community

A lot has been happening at the DFT and we’re moving in the right direction. Most important, we are shifting our focus and expanding our outreach to the community. As we have one-on-one conversations with our neighbors at the grocery store, or with our parents at school, we are doing the union’s most important work.

The community is with us. But lots of folks are simply not informed about what’s happening to our public schools. They don’t know that officials have neglected the buildings, failed to make critical repairs, and short-changed students on critical courses like music, art and foreign language. They don’t know that the “financial experts” have failed to manage the budget. Then they turned to the teachers for a 10 percent pay cut.



TERRENCE MARTIN
DFT Ex. Vice President

I was at a Lutheran church on Sunday. The pastor was talking about how churches are the ground zero of education and movements. He said that Sunday school was started for slaves because they were not permitted to go to regular school. Churches were where the Civil Rights Movement began. Many movements started in the basements of churches with just a few people.

This month, the DFT is returning to the churches in our “Labor and Education in the Pulpit” outreach. We are asking pastors to discuss the role of public education with their congregations. The DFT knows that to rebuild public schools in Detroit, the fight does not just belong to DFT only, but to everyone in the community.

So we are doing weekend “Labor to Neighbor” community walks, knocking on doors and asking people for a minute of their time. What do we ask of them? To talk to their neighbors and friends and ask them to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us to save our schools, to sign the petition to save public education, and to participate in our meetings, rallies and marches to Lansing.

This is a grassroots struggle. In some ways we are going back to the origins of organizing. We are educating and informing folks in Detroit – and all over Michigan – that it wasn’t the teachers, parents or students that reduced services in Detroit schools. It was gross mismanagement. It’s plain wrong. And we won’t stand for it. Enough is enough.

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

Anonymous Knitter Gives Warmth

An 84-year-old Grosse Pointe Shores woman has been knitting hats for children for years. A local church who got them didn't seem to need them anymore. So she asked her neighbor, DFT editor Margaret Weertz, if she knew anyone who could use them.



"Of course," Weertz said. She thought of Glenda Booker, who organized a hat and glove giveaway last year with her sorority for the students at J. R. King Academic and Performing Arts Academy.

Since June, the knitter, who doesn't like attention and wants to remain anonymous, started knitting away. Each week she would call Weertz and say, "I finished six more."

By December, the knitter finished 78 hats for Detroit school children.

On Dec. 15, Booker let kindergarteners and first-graders pick the warm hats of their choice. The knitter was satisfied to see the photos of children wearing her navy, purple, gray and burgundy hats.

"No two are alike," she said. "I'm happy they are going to good use."

Moments after the delivery, she resumed knitting — for next year's giveaway.



Parents Protest Demoting Bilingual Secretary

In another move that made little sense, district officials on Jan. 4 moved Noe Ortiz, a bilingual secretary at Clippert Academy, where 90 percent of the students are Spanish speaking. The move was made because of "bumping" but actually, Noe was demoted from a Level 4 to Level 2 secretary in the process.

Upon receiving her letter to move schools, a group of 30 parents and community members walked to the Fisher Building Nov. 30 with signs demanding her reinstatement.

"They're taking our Spanish speaking secretary," said Jessica Martinez. "She's been there 10 years and she's being bumped."

Parent Donna Broughton said, to make matters worse, she's the basketball coach and does translations when needed. Ortiz doesn't get paid for the extra support she provides. Six schools were impacted by the move, the protesters said.

The protesters met Errick Greene, special assistant to the emergency manager. But to no avail. Ortiz was moved to Maybury Elementary School where they already had a Spanish speaking secretary. In addition, the district hired a non-Spanish speaking secretary at Clippert.

"Not only are they taking away basic rights," Ortiz said. "But -- no offense to the people they hired -- we're being replaced by people who need extensive training in order to do a task that we all knew how to do."

And now they are making more than Ortiz. Ortiz has filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Why Do I Stay Here?

Glenda Booker was juggling several projects before the holidays. She got one English project done — "A new cereal on the shelf." Her sixth-grade students at John R. King Academy created new breakfast cereals based on a book they read. This creative book review was a hit and the colorful cereal boxes lined a shelf in her organized classroom.

Piled near her desk was another project — student autobiographies. The projects were extensive and photos of boys and girls at birth or dressed up for the holidays adorned the covers.

But there was a rush to get the next project organized. A few years ago, Booker's sorority adopted her school for a hat and glove giveaway to students. This year she did it on her own and in minutes students would be coming through the door.

Booker was hustling to get all the hats, ear muffs and mittens laid out when kindergartners and first-graders arrived to choose what they wanted. Many



of the students showed signs of real poverty.

"Do you see how needy they are?" said Booker, a teacher with DPS for 23 years. "That's why I love Detroit Public

Schools."

Booker says her young students have myriad needs. They are in need a lot of care. But, she says happily, she has so much to give.

Detroit Teacher Honors Native Americans

Jerry L. White teacher Patricia Moore decided to construct a Native American art exhibit with her students in honor of Native American History Month in November. It took her a month and a half working till 6

p.m. every night to get it just right. At the reveal on Dec. 16, there was a tepee, a wooden horse made by teacher Karen Kohfeldt, a campfire, and artifacts from Native American culture and history.



Moore focused on the Cherokee tribe.

"There are thousands of tribes but we just focused on a few of them," Moore said. "I'm Cherokee. We have students of different cultures in our classroom so they were more than excited to do this."

Moore brought in heirlooms from her mother. The cognitively impaired students did reports on Native American history. And were most happy dressing up like the first Americans.



Classroom assistant Diane Woods, Patricia Moore, and science teacher Karen Kohfeldt.

Marching 90 Miles to State Capital

Parents and community activists took shifts in December to walk 90 miles in nine days from Downtown Detroit to Lansing. They were met by hundreds of supporters on the Capitol steps Dec. 8 and the displeasure of legislators.

The marchers' message: their displeasure with 12 different, unaccountable entities controlling the public schools in Detroit.

"I'm marching because our schools, both charter and DPS, deserve to be democratic, accountable, transparent and equitable," said Wytrice Harris, a parent and organizer with 482Forward.



Capitol security guards and several

legislators were concerned when the marchers reached the Capitol Dec. 8, spoke on the Capitol steps, then decided to go into the building.

"You have every right to be here," the guard said non-convinced.

Indeed we do.



Letters to Lansing

DFT members and their students wrote more than 900 letters to Gov. Rick Snyder, Michigan legislators, and members of the education committees. Some took the extra step of writing to the state superintendent and their congressmen. Ivy Bailey, interim president, hand-delivered them to each office at the capital on Dec. 15.



DFT Retirees Celebrate the Holidays

Every year, more than 100 DFT retirees gather to chat, dine together, and celebrate the holidays. On Dec. 8, they enjoyed a feast prepared by Detroit Public School culinary arts students at Breihaupt Career and Technical Center. Pictured above are Ricardo Thomas, Michele Artt, DFT Interim President Ivy Bailey, Charlene Smith, Retiree Chapter Chair Jewel Hines, and Dr. Arthur Divers.

What It Takes to Win in Detroit

By Ann Mitchell
DFT Administrator

I knew the fight in Detroit for a great union and great public schools was going to be tough.

I haven't been disappointed.

Just two months ago, I hit the ground running as DFT administrator, after the union's executive board voted for a voluntary trusteeship by AFT. So began a terrific working relationship between our national union, AFT Michigan and the DFT leadership—especially interim president Ivy Bailey and executive vice president Terrence Martin—the executive board and DFT staff. But perhaps the most important relationships that I've made have

been with members as I visit schools with the local union leaders and engage in one-on-one conversations.

It didn't take long to understand members' deep and genuine frustration over numerous, long-festering issues and their desire to stop talking and start taking action.

In all my experience, I see Detroit as one of the toughest fights I've been involved in. But it's the kind of work that I've done for years with AFT. I direct the AFT's "locals in crisis" program and put together teams for local affiliates facing serious issues, whether it's



ANN MITCHELL
DFT Administrator

a contract fight or, as in the case of Detroit, school conditions that endanger the health and safety of students, school employees and anyone else who enters the school. All of those issues have been compounded by the fact that educators have had to make deep sacrifices, including a 10-percent loss in pay, no raise in six years, salaries that have been frozen for 10 years and rising health care costs.

But it's not just any one individual's fight or just DFT's fight. It's the members' fight. It's the parents' fight. It's our city's fight. Everyone wants the same thing—a voice that's respected when we speak out on important issues and action. Ultimately, we want a system of neighborhood public schools that guarantee our children the education they need and the respect educators deserve.

People have always been ready for the fight but the difficulty has been figuring out what the fight should look like and convincing folks that action will result in power.

This I know for sure: when members are mobilized and we have the community on our side, we gain power and leverage to get the job done. This is a fight that can only be won with an "all in" effort. It will take each and every member doing something, big or small, once or often, after school or over a weekend, coming to a rally or knocking on doors.

Through the union, our members are up for the huge challenges. A few years ago, we mobilized the members of our local in Washington, D.C., in a fight to counter the harmful actions of a mayor who controlled the schools. He was anti-labor, anti-public education, and hired the infamous Michelle Rhee to lead the school system. The Washington Teachers Union members and leaders, parents and community members worked as a united team

and we won that fight. Mayor Adrian Fenty was defeated and Rhee was run out of town. Working together, we showed Washington, D.C., what kind of schools everyone really wanted.

Similarly, we have put together teams of AFT staff, local leaders and members to coordinate fights in Pittsburgh; Broward County, Fla.; and in Central Falls, R.I., where they fired every single teacher who worked there—as if that would fix the schools.

No matter where the struggles are, I believe it takes the same formula to win: a union that's unified, members who are mobilized to build power, a community that works with the union, and a common vision for what great schools look like. And we will continue to work with the media to help them understand that the union is a force for good.

I'm committed to working together with our state affiliate, the teachers and school employees of all of the AFT Detroit affiliates, parents and members of this community, and officials to ensure strong, viable neighborhood public schools in the city of Detroit. This is hard work, and we can't let up for a moment before we achieve our goal.

As civil rights giant A. Philip Randolph said:

"At the banquet table of nature, there are no reserved seats. You get what you can take, and you keep what you can hold. If you can't take anything, you won't get anything, and if you can't hold anything, you won't keep anything. And you can't take anything without organization."

In solidarity, Ann

CALENDAR

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

February

- 4 Executive Board Meeting, 7700 Second Ave., 4:30 p.m.
- 9 Retiree Chapter Meeting, Michigan First Credit Union, 37000 Evergreen, Lathrup Village, 11:30 a.m.
- 9 Light Up the City Vigil, Cass Park, 5 p.m.
- 11 Membership Meeting, IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott, 4:30 p.m.,
- 15-19 Midwinter break, Schools Closed

March

- 3 Executive Board Meeting, 7700 Second Ave., 4:30 p.m.
- 8 Retiree Chapter Meeting, Michigan First Credit Union, 37000 Evergreen, Lathrup Village, 11:30 a.m.
- 10 Membership Meeting, TBD, 4:30 p.m.,
- 25-1 Spring break, Schools Closed