

DFT Mobilizes its Members

Low morale. Increased testing and paperwork. Annual evaluations. Teachers are getting a lot of piling on, especially in Detroit. They are under an Emergency Manager who doesn't ask for their input, reward them with raises, or praise their work.

To discuss all this and find solutions, the DFT held mobilization meetings in May. More than catharsis, the meetings helped identify issues facing DFT members and what can be done about them.

"The main thing everybody in my school is taking about is salary," said Bow teacher Judy Furlow. "I've been teaching for 35 and a half years but I feel like I'm making what I did 30 years ago."

Mark Moroni, a DFT Executive Board member, suggested becoming the voice of what is going on in the district, both positive and negative. He said it is a bad time in Michigan for all teachers, not only in Detroit.

"Morale is down because the public doesn't like us," he said.

AFT organizer Jodie Easley is assisting the DFT in strategic planning with three goals:

1. Assessing and engaging the majority of members.
2. Raising Political Action Committee funds so we're ready for the 2014 election.
3. Engaging members through more committees.

Nikhol Atkins, an AFT Michigan organizer, said what helps with morale is building commonality, sharing best practices and supporting other members.

"I'm not looking through rose-colored glasses," said LaShawn Sims, a DFT Executive Board member, "but I think we need to look at what is good."

"A year ago we were in a much worse place. I'm looking at the [right-to-work] law and now it's a little clearer that you have a three-year time frame. It was a



AFT Michigan organizer Nikhol Atkins

huge sigh of relief. They can't run us through the wringer."

But in order for the DFT to be a viable union next year, Easley said, a lot of groundwork has to be done this summer.

"We need to have things to take away from here to do."

Rewarding Students Who Overcome Hardship

As a Detroit school social worker, Kathy Hemingway doesn't get shaken easily. But recounting the difficulties of six students strained her speech and made her eyes well up. One of the students, the eldest of five, could never do right by her mother.



Kathy Hemingway, Iresha Spears, Christhawn Miles, Elizabeth Gonzalez, Tiffany Henderson, Delvonta Pinkston, and Curtis Stout.

"She was the scapegoat for everything," Hemingway said. Still the girl persisted in getting a diploma and acceptance to a university. Others have lost parents, dealt with serious health issues, or are responsible for younger siblings.

"Your heart is really, really sad when you stop and

think about it," Hemingway said. She and eight Detroit social workers interviewed teens to award the Mildred Ellis scholarships, named after the first African American to head up the DPS Office of School Social Work Service.

The scholarships go to students who have overcome hardship.

Each year Hemingway doesn't simply hear stories of hardship. Those students are sitting in front of her, asking for a scholarship.

"It just goes to show you they have met insurmountable odds," she said. "They had every reason to use an excuse to quit. But somehow they learned to stand on their own two feet."

This year the committee awarded \$1,000 scholarships, funded entirely from Detroit school social workers and their supporters, to six recipients. They are: Elizabeth Gonzalez of Cass Technical High School, Ibrahim Hamilton of Northwestern High School, Tiffany Henderson of Cass Tech, Christhawn Miles of Cass Tech, Delvonta Pinkston of Northwestern, and Iresha Spears of Detroit International Academy for Young Women.

The Mildred Ellis Scholarship Fund has funded \$225,000 in scholarships. Next year it celebrates 25 years of giving.

WHY IS DPS KILLING OFF THE NEIGHBORHOOD HIGH SCHOOL?

The number of high school closures and schools turned over to the Education Achievement Authority (EAA) over the past few years has destroyed the concept of the neighborhood high school. The schools and their impressive heritage are being discarded.

Consider the closures: Redford, Cooley, MacKenzie, Northern, Southwestern, Chadsey, Murray-Wright, Kettering.

And the schools turned over to the EAA: Central, Denby, Henry Ford, Pershing, Southeastern, and the brand new, \$54 million Mumford.

President's Report



Keith Johnson

It should be noted that Henry Ford (\$20 million), Denby (\$18 million), Central (\$60 million), and Southeastern (\$60 million) all underwent

major renovations totaling \$158 million since 2004. Detroit taxpayers have paid \$212 million for these renovations and the new Mumford that are no longer part of Detroit Public Schools.

The facilities that once harbored Murray-Wright (Frederick Douglass) and Northern (Detroit International Academy for Young Women) are still utilized but are not traditional comprehensive neighborhood high schools. The brand new East English Village Preparatory Academy, on the site of the former Finney High School, is a merger of Finney and Crockett high schools, and is scheduled to become an application school once the current student body graduates.

The neighborhood high school is in danger of extinction due to the decisions made by the DPS leadership. The only neighborhood high schools left are Western International High School, the schools at Cody and Osborn.

The latest to fall victim to this ill-conceived plan is Northwestern High School, which is scheduled to become Detroit Collegiate Preparatory@Northwestern beginning this fall. This will become another application/theme school, joining Cass Tech, Renaissance, Martin Luther King Jr., Davis Aerospace@Golightly, Communication and Media Arts High School, Ben Carson Academy of Medicine, and the Detroit School of Arts.

So where does the average student go to high school if he has no interest in the theme schools and doesn't qualify for the application schools? DPS is becoming a K-8 school district except for application and accelerated-learner high schools.

High schools do more than complete the k-12 learning experience.

For many students, their high school becomes their identity. While we embrace the concept of schools of choice, we also must uphold neighborhood high schools.

With this reconfiguring of DPS, many students will have no choice but to look to a charter or an EAA school for high school. This further reduces the number of students in DPS, reduces our funding, and inhibits our ability to maintain stability and pay off our crippling debt.

Where does a student who lives on Warrington and Six Mile go to high school since Mumford, Pershing and Central are EAA? Where does a student who lives on Tireman and Beechwood attend high school if he doesn't qualify for Northwestern?

Where does a student who lives on Beaconsfield and Mack attend high school if he doesn't qualify for East English Village? The answer: either EAA or charter. Too many families in Detroit don't have the resources to transport their children from one section of the city to another to attend high school. We are not meeting the needs of our customers when we deny them access to a comprehensive high school IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD!

There is nothing wrong with schools to meet the needs of accelerated learners. However we cannot do that at the expense of those students who may not establish their academic and career goals until after high school.

Despite losing more than 100,000 students over the past 10 years, this district is too large to forget about the critical mass of students who receive their k-8 education in DPS and are entitled to complete their education in a DPS HIGH SCHOOL!

The community has supported this school district for too long, especially in dark economic times, to settle for anything less. They should not have to depend on failing charters and an untested, underfunded EAA to complete their education.

These actions are an insult to the sacrifices of this community and they need to be corrected, post haste.

THE DETROIT teacher

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Are We Ready?

By Edna Reaves
DFT Executive Vice President

In light of the tornado in Moore, Oklahoma, one has to ask, “Are we ready?”

Does DPS have a plan? No one plans to have an emergency, but we should be prepared for one. We cannot anticipate every

Updates . . .

Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: **Wendy Newberry** and **David Sweeney**. If you have retired within the past six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

Detroit Celebrities at MacKenzie Career Day



Sheryl Taylor, above center, pulled off a spectacular Career Day at MacKenzie School on May 23. The school counselor brought in 38 speakers, including several Detroit stars. Career Day speakers included WDIV meteorologist Andrew Humphries, WJLB radio personality Foolish, and the Detroit Police Department Swat Team.

type of crisis that may occur, but we can implement a few basics steps to help.

The fire department advises each home to have an evacuation plan in case of a fire. They tell you to have a meeting place if you evacuate the home so that everyone can be accounted for. How confident are you that your school is ready for a crisis? Do you have a meeting place if you have to evacuate your school?

Do you have lockdown procedures if a gunman enters your school? What do you do in the case of a bomb threat? How would you prepare for a tornado? Where would you go? Do you take fire drills seriously? Have you practiced these potential situations with your students?

These are questions that most teachers can't answer. I would venture to say most administrators can answer these questions. Do we have a plan from central office to assist schools in these situations?

I visited the DPS website searching for a safety plan and could not find one. The closest I came was a Frequently Asked Question page under the Detroit Public Schools Police Department. According to the DPS Health and Safety Plan, every principal is required to have a safety plan in place. It must be available if a parent asks to see it. Have you seen your school's safety plan?



Edna Reaves

The DPS Health and Safety Plan form suggests schools have eight fire drills, two tornado drills, and two lockdown drills per year. I've been with this district 25 years and have not had more than three fire drills per year. On many occasions the only reason we did was when some mischievous student pulled the alarm. Before we could evacuate, someone was over the PA announcing false alarm. I can't recall having a take cover drill or a lockdown drill.

Are we ready? I would venture to say no. On the couple of occasions of a bomb threat at one of my schools, staff wasn't notified. If we found out, it was because we saw custodians and security personnel looking in lockers, someone leaked the information, or we overheard conversations on a walkie-talkie.

What are the criteria for determining the credibility of a threat? When is the staff notified? Who makes the call to evacuate?

We often learn from school-related tragedies about a heroic teacher who put herself on the line for her students. We know it is instinctive in each situation, but we should at least know what to do, what not to do, and what to look for in a given scenario.

This is tornado season, who is monitoring the weather during the school day? Do they know the difference between a “Watch” and a “Warning”? Where would you take cover?

Moving forward, we all should urge principals to produce a safety plan and practice that plan so both staff and students know how to respond in the event of a crisis. Let's not become the Monday night quarterback and say what we should have done.

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

Reading More Than a Million Words

By William Bowles
Western International
Media Specialist

Lucero Perez, a ninth-grader at Western International High School, won an award from the Detroit Public Schools' Office of Literacy and Media for reading the most books and scoring highest on quizzes on those books during a contest.



Western International teacher Tara Baker and student Lucero Perez

based learning and evaluation tool for reading and math. It is a critical supplement that strongly enhances student performance.

So far this year, Lucero has read and passed a quiz for 29 books. She has read over a million words and is close to achieving her goal of two million words. Western students overall have read 822 books for leisure reading. Many of Baker's students have read over 10 books this year.

Lucero's class entered the contest along with all other DPS high schools and elementary schools. Lucero read more and tested better than all other high school students in the district. Her teacher, Tara Baker, was on hand when she received her prize – a new Kindle.

The program, Accelerated Reader, is the reading component of Renaissance Learning, a computer-



Little Dresses and Pants for Africa

For four years, Spain School teacher Maryann Luke worked with her preschoolers to teach them how to give. She learned of a program called "Little Dresses and Little Pants" for children in Africa. The dresses and pants are sewn by volunteer senior citizens from pillowcases collected from the children and their parents.

After they collect and sew the items, they are shipped to a representative for Little Dresses for Africa, Luke said.

"This year we collected 67 pillowcases and made 20 dresses and pants that will go to an orphanage or school in Malawi," she said.

Luke says the program is hugely successful with her students.

"We're changing lives one little dress at a time," she said.

Information about the program can be found at www.littledressesforafrica.org.

Former Detroit Teacher's Program Goes National



Joe Marwil

Joe Marwil has been teaching 4-year-olds Spanish and phonics at the University of Detroit Mercy Special Programs for three years. The programs are offered as a community service by the University of Detroit Mercy.

The former Detroit teacher designed the program for the preschoolers. Now it has been picked up by the Institute of Reading Development.

Marwil, whose family founded the Marwil Bookstore on the campus of Wayne State University, is thrilled with the success of the reading comprehension and language skills program.

"They're using a format of my program all over the country," he said. "It's an honor to me."

Marwil credits his alma mater – Mumford High School – with teaching him to speak and read Spanish. He also speaks Hebrew.

"I love it," he said of teaching preschoolers. "I see the reward in the children, in seeing people learning. It's the reward of giving back to them and the thank yous I get."

THE DETROIT NEWSMAKERS

Exotic Books and Animals at Ronald Brown Academy

Ronald Brown Academy celebrated March Is Reading Month by holding its annual Family Reading Night on March 27. This year's event, spearheaded by Instructional Specialist Myrina Scott, was one of the best ever. In addition to making thousands of books available to families at no cost, teams of teachers conducted literacy activities centered around children's books.

The school's Title I parent involvement group worked with Neighborhood Legal Services to bring the Exotic Zoo as part of the festivities.

"It's all about bringing our families and the community together to enjoy time together while instilling in our students the importance of reading," said principal Damon Sewell. More than 200 people attended this year's reading night. Families rotated to 30-minute sessions on literacy and listened to stories, took part in lively discussions, and arts and crafts. Several

staff members even dressed as storybook characters for the day.

With the aid of Neighborhood Legal Services, the Title I Parent Initiative brought in the Exotic Zoo, which featured a 15-foot python that kids and adults observed and touched. The zoo featured a tortoise, lizard, and many other exotic animals.

The two-hour event included raffles for literacy games and gift cards, and families picked out several books from the "lunchroom library" to take home to add to their collection. Some even brought blankets

and camped out enjoying some quality reading time together. A large number of the books were donated by the Kiwanis Club.

"I received some great feedback about this event," Scott said. "I don't know how we'll top this next year. But we'll try. We want our children to become lifelong readers who look forward to embracing a good book."



Second grade teacher Valerie Reed dressed as Pippi Longstocking with fourth grade students Zariah Culbreth and Valerie Duncan and Zariah's mom Deleisha Culbreth.

Davison Schools Honored as Pure Green in Michigan



OFFICIAL MICHIGAN
Green School



By Tony Shopinski
Retired Davison Teacher

Davison Elementary and Middle School was honored May 1 at a "Green School" ceremony at Wayne County RESA. Davison was one of 128 schools in the county recognized as a "Michigan Green School." Davison qualified by fulfilling a number of related activities such as recycling, saving energy, gardening, and promoting other environmental friendly policies.

Holding up the banner are Maria Jones-Foster, who coordinates Davison's gardening program, and Tom Barnes, Davison's physical education teacher and archery instructor who is in charge of the school's "go green" program.

Is the ESP Right For You?

By Patrick Falcusan
DFT Retirement Counselor

Since the ESP was announced, the DFT office has been flooded with phone calls. Because the ESP had been developed in secret by DPS without any knowledge of or input by the DFT, it was difficult to answer members' questions. Now that more information on ESP is known, it is easier for members to decide if the ESP is right for them.



Patrick Falcusan

The amount of the ESP incentive has caused confusion. Some members thought the incentive was 65 percent of their 2012-13 base salary (around \$42,422 for most at MA maximum) times five for a total of \$212,111 over a five year period. It is not.

The total incentive is 65 percent of a member's 2012-13 base salary (around \$42,422) divided by 60 and paid out in 60 monthly installments over five years (\$42,422 divided by

60 = \$707 per month for 60 months.

Anyone who had already planned on retiring or resigning at the end of this school year but had not yet notified the district should take the ESP. Everyone else has to consider their own situation.

For members not eligible for a pension, taking the ESP means you are quitting. Being eligible for a pension means you are over 55 with 15 years of service credit or over 55 (46 with

MIP) and have at least 30 years of service credit.

Your pay and healthcare will stop and your pension will not begin. You will be living on \$707 a month minus taxes and penalties for taking the money out of your TSA.

For members eligible to retire but who planned on working a few more years, the decision to take ESP is still difficult.

If you have MIP, have more than 30 years of service and are over 57, then taking ESP is probably a good idea. MIP pensions have a cost of living and by the time ESP ends, your Social Security will start.

If you are over 55 but less than 60 with more than 15 years of service credit but less than 30 years you are eligible for an early reduced pension. The reduction is forever and might cost you more than ESP is worth.

If you have Basic, you have a fixed pension and if you retire several years ahead of schedule, your pension will always be less and this lost pension income might be more than the ESP is worth.

If you had planned on buying time with your TIP money and sick day money (which you don't get with ESP) not buying the time would reduce your pension and the lost pension income might be more than the ESP is worth.

If you had planned working a few more years, how much more money would you have made by working vs. being retired? How much more money would you have put in your TSA?

Everyone considering taking the ESP has a lot of homework to do. Go to the DPS run workshops. Go to the individual counseling sessions. Do the math. Ask questions. Talk to your financial advisor. Retirement is a major life changing decision. Don't be rushed into it.

DFT Supports the Moratorium

DFT members wore blue on May 9 to protest the rush to implement Common Core standards. Jerry L. White Center High School staffers wearing blue (right) are Lenore Ellery, Sharon McFadden, Lisa Almeranti, Delphine Horton, Shelia Glass and Marcus Walton.

AFT President Randi Weingarten called for a moratorium on assessment-driven sanctions tied to Common Core State Standards until solid implementation plans are embedded in schools and proven effective through a year or more of field testing.

The key is high-quality implementation, a deliberate and thoughtful plan of action for introducing new standards into schools and making sure they are embraced by schools and the community at large, Weingarten said.

Educators need to "unpack" the standards and fully understand what they are. They need a curriculum tied to the Com-



mon Core, and the time and support necessary to adapt their teaching to these ambitious new demands. Those prerequisites are still missing in schools across the nation, Weingarten stressed, and that makes it imperative for Americans "to put our foot on the accelerator of high-quality implementation and put the brakes on the stakes."

Mark Twain Goes International

Mark Twain students are anxiously awaiting Global Connections Field Day in June. Students selected a country to research and learn about the social, economic and historical connections to the United States. After gathering information about other cultures, the students prepared reports and presented their research to the entire school. Students get exposed to other ethnic groups and learn about the fascinating cultures worldwide, ending in May with a culminating celebration – the Parade of the Flags and International Taste Fest.



Art teacher Lorraine Jeter helps students create masks for Global Connections Field Day.

Art teacher Lorraine Jeter worked with all of the students, from kindergarten to sixth grade, on international art projects. In addition to the curriculum, students gain an international mindedness.

In kindergarten, the students made the American Flag out of tissue paper.

They learned how many stripes were on the flag and what the stripes represented.

First-graders learned where the country of Mexico is located and discussed the language spoken in Mexico. They learned about the Huichol Indians who are indigenous to Mexico and believe that art is meant to ensure prosperity and health. This culture likes using beads, yarn, and wood in their highly creative and imaginative art.

First-graders worked on the project Ojo de Dios or “Eyes of God,” which was made with Popsicle sticks and yarn.

Second-graders learned about Jamaica and discussed the Jamaican culture and beliefs. The students created a Jamaican mask as their final project.

The unit for third and fourth grades was Asia and ended with the students making their own kimonos out of colored paper.

Fifth-graders learned about France and some of its icons like the Eiffel Tower. The final project was building the Eiffel Tower with Popsicle sticks.

Sixth-graders learned about the continent of Africa and the many countries located there. They talked about the many cultures infused throughout Africa and their influences in African-American culture. A big discussion centered on the many masks, which came from different countries like Jamaica, Australia, France, Mexico and Japan. The students designed an African mask and learned that the masks have symbolic meaning.



Success is Helping People

After explaining that HAP is not a storage facility but a health maintenance organization, HAP representative Darryl Hibbett explained ingredients of success to students at Greenfield Union School.

“My job is to find out what other people’s lives are like, what their needs are,” Hibbett said at the school’s May 23 Career Day.

“I listen to their wants and needs and try to help them.”

Hibbett, a HAP labor liaison with unions like the DFT, UAW and AF-SCME, helps negotiate health plans for labor organizations.

Speaking to sixth-graders who want to pursue sports, Hibbett talked about his own football career in high school and college at Howard University in Washington D.C.

“In order to be a football player you have to go to school, right?” he said. “If you can’t be a football player – not that you won’t – what else would you be?”

Hibbett said the lifespan of a professional football player is three to five years, so even superstar athletes need to have a Plan B. With his characteristic gentleness, Hibbett underscored the importance of caring for others whatever job a person does.

“I have to respect everyone I come in contact with,” he said. “That’s part of my job.”



Where is the State's Accountability?

By Mark O'Keefe
DFT Controller

Many controversial laws enacted by the Michigan legislature in the last two years were passed with the intent of improving public education through greater accountability. The state has made teachers accountable for things they have no control over, while exempting itself from accountability for financial mismanagement.



Mark O'Keefe

Teachers are happy to be accountable for things they can control. They object, however, to having their jobs depend on improvement in student test scores when they are forced to teach in overcrowded rooms with inadequate inventories of text books, and no conse-

quences for students who miss an average of more than one day of school per week.

If the state legislature believes in accountability in public education, it should start with a look at its own record in running public schools. Under the guise of providing improved financial management, the state took over Detroit Public Schools in 1999. When it returned control to the school board, the state had turned a \$93 million dollar surplus into a \$120 million deficit.

The second takeover began in March 2009 and continues to this date. On paper the district's deficit has been reduced from \$219 in March 2009 to \$78 million today. Unfortunately, the reduction was achieved by borrowing \$249 million. The fact is, DPS has incurred an operating deficit of \$108 million during the second takeover.

With combined operating deficits of \$321 million during nine years of running DPS, the state has convincingly demonstrated a complete inability to financially manage a school district.

Good business practices would dictate that the state be held accountable. We should prohibit them from taking over and

financially destroying any more school districts. Instead, we are doing the opposite. The state is appointing more emergency managers to other districts, and even started its own school district, the EAA.

The state provided further evidence of its inability to handle school district finances when it failed to provide funding for the EAA. There was no money to build, buy or rent facilities, and the ability to meet payroll was dependent on receiving millions of dollars in donations from charities that would certainly want something in return for their financial support. A school district that "depends on the kindness of strangers" is essentially in the same business as Blanche Dubois.

With no money for schools, and no district willing to give up its schools, the EAA convinced DPS to give it 15 schools and charge a dollar a month for rent. This could never have happened unless the State of Michigan was running DPS and EAA.

Any corporate board that turned over its assets to a competitor would be ousted. It's time for Detroit to hold the State of Michigan accountable before its schools, students, and money are all gone.

Carver School Hosts Shark Tank

A dozen students at Carver Elementary School sat nervously May 23 outside the media center before entering its version of the ABC program "Shark Tank."



Tricia Barnes and Jeannie Jones.

nance these businesses."

Five fourth-graders created the Fashion Boutique and took their product into the Shark Tank – dozens of sparkly headbands they made by hand.

Although the panel of Detroit business professionals and en-

Like all the schools in Detroit, Carver participated in Lemonade Day in its own way.

"Tricia Barnes is a fan of 'Shark Tank,'" said Karen McEwen, academic engagement officer. "She thought let's take it a bit further and see if these people are interested enough to fi-



trepreneurs grilled students on their business models, it also supplied kudos.

"They were nice and made it easy to understand their questions," said Shelby Moore, who established the "My Sisters Beauty Room." "They gave me ideas about what I should put on my business card and how to get more clients."

Then one panelist offered a comment she treasured.

"You've been doing hair since you were 10. You're good at it."



DPS Officer Claudette Williams and martial arts entrepreneur Richard Plowden attended Cooke School's Career Day.

Speaking to Generation E

Detroit mayoral candidate Lisa Howze became a Certified Public Accountant and lived a corporate life. But she wanted to be a motivational speaker. Speaking to Cooke Elementary School students for Career Day May 15, she said the best jobs are the ones you create yourself.

"You never have to be jealous of what anyone has," she said. "You just have to do it yourself."

Richard Plowden, a martial arts entrepreneur, awed students when he said he grew up without a microwave, fax or cell phone.

"Everything starts with an idea," he said. "One of you might develop a car that runs on water."

The speakers – organized by teacher Dionne Brantley – reminded students that all jobs start with a high school diploma.

"Anyone interested in being a police officer?" said DPS Officer Claudette Williams. "Starting today you can't get in trouble any more. And you have to finish high school and college."

Williams said officers need to pass two tests – written and physical – and exercise every day. Besides the discipline required in becoming an officer, there's more to the job.

"You have to care about people," she said. "That's why I like teachers. Because it takes special people to be teachers."



Detroit Teachers Compose Lemonade Day Song

While teachers across the country prepared for Lemonade Day – the day in June students explore their entrepreneurial spirit – two Detroit teachers caught the entrepreneurial bug themselves.

Richard Cross and Anita Alef at the Turning Point Academy took five students to the Collective Recording Studio in Oak Park on May 8 to record a song about Lemonade Day.

"I noticed they didn't have a jingle in here," said Cross, a music therapist, about the Lemonade Day curriculum, "so I wrote 'Lemonade Day' to help promote it."

They recorded six versions of the song on a 7-minute CD – including a favorite jazz version – in two hours.

It was quite the learning experience for the students.

"They only see the end product of these rappers," said Alef, a language arts teacher. "But this is a process and they have a lot of takes. They couldn't talk in the beginning or the end."

The students participated in the set up and sat through the whole ordeal with patience.

Alef believes students need to think about innovative ways to make money. So far her students have come up with ideas, including a handy man service and a food truck.

"I think we have to encourage more people to make their own money," Alef said. "I'm trying to get them to say, 'Hey I can make some money this summer.'"

Cross and Alef modeled what a true entrepreneur has to do. After composing the song, they took students in their own cars to the studio. They also picked up the \$150 tab for the recording. The CD includes a national radio promotion and a Detroit Public Schools promo. They hope an educational organization is interested in the song.



Teachers Richard Cross and Anita Alef with Turning Point Academy students at the recording studio.



By Mershira Oliver
DFT Labor Relations
Administrator

New Grievance Procedure at DPS

The grievance timeline has been shortened dramatically. With the district's slow movement, I am not sure why it would shorten the timeline for submission. In the past, contract language stated a grievance must be submitted within 60 calendar days from the time the event took place or the member became aware of the conditions.

The new contract states grievances shall be submitted within 20 calendar days from the date of violation. This is a major change and a loss of 40 days to file a grievance. The loss of that time takes away latitude at the building level for members and administrators to correct possible violations. This change was made without input from the DFT and was imposed by people who have not worked in a school.

Administrators also will have less time to respond to grievances. The last contract allowed administrators 10 school days to respond to grievances. Now they have 14 calendar days. Normally 14 calendar days is the same as 10 school days. When there were 10 school days, breaks and holidays did not count. With the new limit, a grievance filed on June 10 must be responded to by June 20 but under the old language a response was due Sept. 10. So administrators may actually have less time to respond.

DFT members will have to be diligent when faced with contractual violations. As soon as you are a victim of a vio-

lation, you should file a grievance immediately. The vast majority of members attempt to resolve violations by meeting with administrators hoping a correction will be made without a formal grievance. With a shortened timeline, you cannot afford to wait to file.

Throughout the year we receive many calls from members about contractual violations that occurred more than six months previously. We cannot afford to wait six months. Grievances not filed in 20 calendar days will not be heard.

Members with similar grievances at a school or work location should file a class action grievance.

A beautiful piece of language was removed by the District in the new contract. It allowed members three years to file for errors that occur in computation of wages or fringe benefits. That language was in place and served members well over the years. Now errors involving money are also subject to the 20 days.

Please be diligent. Keep good records. And be sure to file Step 1 grievances at the building level within a week to ensure you are within the abbreviated timeline.

We're on
Facebook!

Check us out at

www.facebook.com/DFT231

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

June

- 6 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 13 Last day for students**
- 14 Last day for teachers**
- 18 Retiree Chapter, 11:30 a.m.**

August

- 26 First day for teachers**
- 29-30 Schools closed, Labor Day**