

DFT Building Reps Get Updates

The DFT Building Representatives got briefed about district issues over the summer at an Aug. 29 meeting.

“Our focus this summer was to make sure the settlement agreement as the result of the lawsuit over the fraudulent evaluation process was adhered to,” said DFT President Keith Johnson. Johnson said he believed most people on the lay-off list would be placed this fall.

Johnson met twice this summer with Jack Martin, the new DPS emergency manager. He shared with Martin the culture of working under Roy Roberts and the hope that the era of controlling people, and not educational quality, is over.

“I gave him some examples of administrators who promoted that culture of fear,” Johnson said. Johnson also discussed with Martin the mandatory two-hour staff meetings.

“It’s difficult to inspire people,” Johnson said, “when you don’t respect them as valuable employees instead of replaceable parts.”

Johnson said the DFT is joining DPS in its campaign to improve educational opportunities and eventually return the EAA high schools to the district.

“Despite our differences, the Detroit Public Schools and the DFT are partners in the education of Detroit children,” he said. “We met with them during the course of the summer to help retain the students we have and attract the students we lost.”

This was the first year, Johnson said, where mass chaos did not mark the start of school. He commended DFT members for continuing to deliver quality service during trying times.

“I want to express my pride and gratitude to you,” he said, “because these last four years have been tumultuous.”

Detroit Federation of Teachers Gets Cash for Counselors

The DFT negotiated for high school counselors to get paid several days during the summer, when the district asked them to come to work early.

The counselors were asked to work several days before the official Aug. 26 start date to do scheduling. They were unable to do that scheduling at year’s end because of systemic glitches.

At one point in the negotiations, the district offered to give the counselors compensatory time for the days worked. The DFT held two meetings with the counselors to seek their opinions but did not want counselors to make their own deals with administrators.



“We disagree with you making your own individual arrangements with your principal,” Edna Reaves, DFT executive vice president, told the counselors.

Several people saw the danger in accepting comp time. It would need to be pre-approved by the principal.

“I don’t like the comp time because they have amnesia,” one high school counselor said. “I say I have this day. They say you used it already.”

Reaves said she wanted the counselors to get extra pay but “it will only work if we stand in unity.”

In the end, the district agreed to pay the counselors the workshop rate for all days worked.

More Stability and Less Chaos is a Positive Start

Do I have a job? Where is my job? What will I teach? When will I get recalled? Why didn't I get recalled? Where is this school and do I have a choice?

These are the questions DFT members have asked for the past three years. With everyone receiving layoff notices, attending senseless interviews, then waiting to see if they were selected, there was mass chaos and no stability in DPS.

The state legislature eliminated seniority and teacher placement as subjects of bargaining. DPS closed and merged schools and issued layoff notices to all teachers. This created havoc and left many schools without sufficient teacher service when students reported. The past three years HR was scrambling to recall teachers and fill vacancies as school began.

Not knowing where they were assigned, teachers couldn't ready their rooms, didn't know what they would teach, and had no time to

prepare. They spent the better part of the school year playing "catch up."

Fortunately, this school year is a 180 degree turnaround. Teachers did not receive layoff notices. Principals could not pick and choose who they kept and who

they didn't. Most teachers knew where they would report and what they would teach before the 2012-2013 school year ended.

The exceptions were those teachers at schools that closed or merged, and teachers who were victims of the fraudulent evaluation process. That process resulted in the DFT filing suit against DPS and DPS settling the lawsuit and bringing those teachers back to work.

While not all of those issues were resolved (approximately 60 teachers have yet to be placed), it is a far cry from what we've experienced the past three years.

Teachers spent the last days of summer break going to their schools, preparing their rooms, attending professional development at the Renaissance Center and other venues, and getting physically, mentally, and professionally prepared to begin the new year.

A benefit to DPS that wouldn't have been possible the last few years was our support of the district's aggressive drive to recruit students back to DPS. Hundreds of teachers went door-to-door in their schools' neighborhoods, encouraging parents to keep or return their children to DPS. This would be hard to do if you don't know where you're going.

ELIMINATING THE "CULTURE OF FEAR" IS THE NEXT STEP

We are cautiously optimistic that the change in leadership at DPS will bring a change in leadership style at the central office and school level. In my first meeting with the new Emergency Manager, Jack Martin, I shared my concerns about the "culture



DFT attorney Marshall Widick, DFT President Keith Johnson and DFT Labor Relations Administrator Terrence Martin walk the 2013 Detroit Labor Day Parade.

of fear" that existed under the previous regime.

I told him that no one provides the optimum output when they are subject to threats and intimidation. Mr. Martin agreed that power is not about control, it is about influence. You cannot expect employees to advocate for their employer when they're treated as disposable parts and view the employer as their oppressor.

I shared with him that on numerous occasions I was told by his predecessor that he didn't have to collaborate when he had the power to bring the changes he wanted.

This doesn't appear to be the style of Mr. Martin. He has repeatedly said and has backed up his words with actions by having the union at the table as we move the district forward.

Mr. Martin knows what he doesn't know and is not embarrassed to ask questions he needs to know, not what people think he wants to hear.

I shared with him specific examples of principals who have threatened, intimidated and bullied teachers. Mr. Martin was emphatic that he wanted any future instances of such behavior to be brought directly to him.

We can only do this if teachers stand up for themselves and make us aware of these transgressions.

As we begin this new school year I want to thank you for the honor, privilege, and responsibility to serve as your president. I want to thank you for all you do in and out of the classroom to make these children the next generation of success stories from the Detroit Public Schools.

Your work and commitment is greatly appreciated. WELCOME BACK AND HAVE A GREAT SCHOOL YEAR!

President's Report



Keith Johnson

THE DETROIT
teacher

The Detroit Teacher is the official publication of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, American Federation of Teachers Local 231, AFL-CIO. Member of the Union Teacher Press Association, International Labor Press Association & Michigan Labor Press.

Editor — Margaret Weertz
mweertz@dft231.com — 313-875-6776

50 Years Later



Edna Reaves

At a time when the state of education and our students' futures are under attack by those who want to profit from public funds, I wonder what is happening to civil rights. I'm not just speaking of racial equality, I'm talking work equality.

Unions have helped bring racial, economic and gender equality to the work place. When we talk about people of different races and genders being paid unequally, that's not true for unionized workers.

The 50th anniversary of Dr. King's "I Have A Dream" speech reminds us that his dream has not been fully realized. Let's talk about education. After all, equality in education was one of Dr. King's focal points.

Instead of obtaining educational equality for all, we have gone backward. The political moves in this state have further segregated our communities, not integrated them. Dismantling the Inkster and

Updates . . .

Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Christine Abood, Earlene Carter, and Franco Iaderosa. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

Retired Detroit Librarians to Meet

A group of retired DPS librarians has begun meeting twice a year. Meetings are held at local restaurants in the fall and



Shirley Britton, Keith Johnson, Evarnie Mouzon and Michael Harper.

spring. At a recent meeting, DFT President Keith Johnson was the guest speaker. Johnson shared stories of his experiences in school libraries.

As the librarians plan this fall's meeting, retired

media specialists who would like to be included may contact one of the following persons to receive an invite, connect with other Detroit media specialists, and be kept informed on plans to serve literacy causes.

- Shirley Britton sbritton3@yahoo.com
- Michael Harper michaelibrisa@comcast.net
- Evarnie Mouzon tubzon@aol.com

For additional information please call Charlene Smith at 313-340-1034 or 313-605-6670.

Buena Vista Public Schools, stripping Detroit of 15 of its schools, making communities educationally unstable, have me wondering if our politicians were on earth when that speech was delivered.

Before Dr. King was assassinated, he joined the sanitation workers in their fight for union rights. Fifty years later we are engaged in a similar battle. Michigan politicians parade their educational decisions as in the best interest of children, but we all know they're about union busting. What do seniority and payroll deduction of union dues have to do with learning? Both have to do with the rights of working people.

If having the best teacher in front of every student was of utmost importance, then the evaluation process would have been the priority, not eliminating seniority. Quality of instruction is what matters, and in every other profession, experience is prized.

Isn't it hypocritical that the government allows employers to deduct taxes out of your paycheck to pay the salaries of your political representatives but will not allow deduction of dues to pay your union representatives?

I too have a dream! I believe that we shall overcome the attacks on unions and public education. I know this is possible because I walked proudly with our members this summer as we knocked on doors and invited parents to bring their children to DPS.

Why did we do this? Because we believe in ourselves. We believe in supporting one another. We do it because we know we have some of the most caring, highly qualified and highly effective teachers in the nation.

Detroit has teachers who make the best of every situation, regardless of the poverty, crime and other factors outside of the classroom. Our teachers know that good working conditions are essential for learning. Our teachers fight for the right to collectively bargain those working conditions and fight for a student's right to receive a free (not "for profit") public education.

While we reflect on Dr. King's message, I leave you with a quote from Congressman John Lewis who was there 50 years ago and still with us today. "If you're not hopeful and optimistic, then you just give up. You have to take the long hard look and just believe that if you're consistent, you will succeed." Brothers and sisters, I believe we will succeed!



DFT Attends AFT TEACH in Washington D.C.

DFT members attended the AFT TEACH conference in Washington D.C. in July. They heard from U.S. Congressman John Lewis, a civil rights leader and activist. Pictured with Lewis is DFT treasurer Kurtis Brown and DFT executive vice president Edna Reaves.

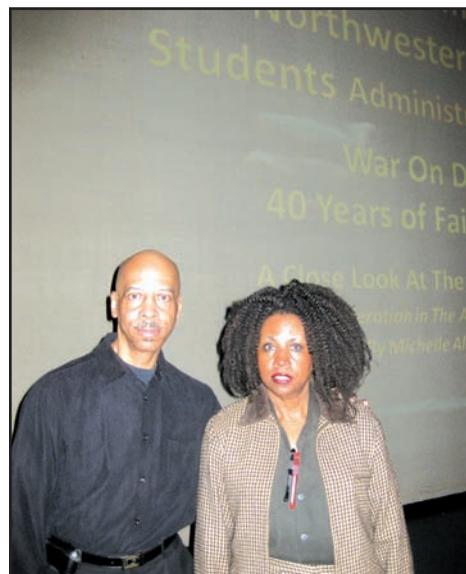
THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

America's Longest War— Against Drugs

By Charlene Smith

Last winter Nikki Griffin wanted to enlighten students and staff at Northwestern High School on the enormously expensive and failed War on Drugs. She was successful and this year Griffin is looking to expand that discussion.

In February, the Northwestern teacher invited consultant Josef White to Northwestern. White brought the 2012 Sundance Film Festival's Grand Jury prize winning film, "The House I Live In," to use in a learning experience for students.



Josef White and Northwestern teacher Nikki Griffin

"The House I Live In" is a documentary on America's longest running war, the War on Drugs. Over 40 years, the War on Drugs has accounted for more than 45 million arrests, made America the world's largest jailer, and damaged poor communities at home and abroad.

Yet for all that, drugs are cheaper, purer, and more available today than ever before. Filmed in more than 20 states, "The House I Live In" captures heart-wrenching

stories from individuals at all levels of America's War on Drugs.

From the dealer to the grieving mother, the narcotics officer to the senator, the inmate to the federal judge, the film offers a penetrating look inside America's longest war, offering a definitive portrait and revealing its profound human rights implications.

Following the screening, Northwestern's students and faculty participated in a frank discussion on the effects of the War on Drugs. This event proved to be a positive problem-based approach to learning that students and staff look forward to participating in again. Griffin has already begun to look for other opportunities to bring this type of learning experience to Northwestern.



Multicultural Day at Blackwell

William Dechavez at Blackwell School of International Studies pulled off another extraordinary Multicultural Day on May 29. Dechavez invited 32 speakers including a deputy consul of the Japanese Consulate. The students were introduced to accents, ethnic food, dance and customs of many cultures.

"The students were so eager to learn, asking all types of questions and engaging in conversation," said David Serio, an educator at the Arab American National Museum. "This is the second year I've been there and each time I loved being able to interact with the students."

The speakers talked about their ethnic background, culture and traditions, what it was like to be an immigrant and other issues.



Proud to be Union

DFT members proudly carried their banner in the 2013 Labor Day Parade, the first since Michigan became a Right to Work state in a closed door session by a lame duck legislature. Marchers reminded us that Michigan was the birthplace of the labor movement and that unionization is the only guaranteed protection for racial and gender pay equity.

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

Fun Day at Carver S.T.E.M. Academy

In May Carver S.T.E.M. Academy celebrated its annual Fun Day in grand fashion. SVS Vision Mobile Bus traveled all the way from the Sunshine State of Florida to serve over 100 students from Carver, Gardner and Dixon schools with free eye exams and glasses on the spot.

Radio Disney personalities surprised the Pre-K thru fifth-grade students with an assembly with games, prizes and music for the festivities. Students were treated to face painting, tattoo stations, bouncy houses and plenty of great food. Bess the Book Bus also made the trip from Florida and gave out hundreds of great books for students to enjoy all summer long.

This event was organized by Communities in Schools on site coordinator Brenda King. The kids had a blast and kudos go to everyone who helped make this event a success.



Lessons from the DFT's Past

By Mark O'Keefe
DFT Controller

Next month, I hope to be writing about the successful completion of the sale of our building. In the meantime, I have spent many hours purging decades of old files in preparation for our relocation.



Mark O'Keefe

It is not possible to peruse thousands of grievance, arbitration, and lawsuit files without gaining a deep appreciation of how our union has been

there to help our members when they needed it most.

Many of our members get through their entire careers without having someone at the DFT handle a problem on their behalf. But for many others, through no fault of their own, they have needed and received critical assistance.

Dozens of members were named in lawsuits. After worrying about how they would manage their legal bills, they were relieved to learn that their union membership includes liability insurance that covered their legal expenses.

Hundreds of files were for members who needed assistance in getting paid properly. In many cases it was for longevity pay, lost preps, or over-class size pay. In other cases, members were

not on the correct salary step, or were not paid for their master's degrees. Time and time again, DFT got the members the pay they were entitled to.

One member had to fight to get paid for a day spent in court, even though she was there to testify against a student who assaulted her in the classroom.

Another member endured false allegations made by a student who resented being disciplined. DFT representatives were present at the teacher's disciplinary hearing and helped set the record straight.

So many good teachers who may never have called their union before were happy to have a union when they needed it most. We are dedicated to doing all that we can to ensure your union will still be here when you need it.

Thank You for the Sick Days

Dear Detroit Public School Colleagues:

I would like to thank all of you for the days you donated to me while I was out on medical leave. I want to express my appreciation for your generosity and support. Your personal sacrifice was incredibly helpful in allowing me to recover without the worries of losing my benefits.

Now that I am heading down the path of recovery I am looking forward to returning to work in the fall. Your contribution has meant so much to me, but even more to my entire family. Thank you from all of us. I am truly proud to be a part of the Detroit Public School System -- a family within a family.

Thank you once again for your generosity, prayers, calls and cards.



Sincerely,
Kimberly Leverett

MOBILIZING AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

9th Annual Conference
Saturday, Oct. 19

Conference Location:

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

313 East Warren, Detroit

313-494-5800

Conference Theme:

"Standing on the Shoulders of Giants"

Teens Only Registration 8:00-8:30 a.m.

Continental Breakfast 8:00-8:30 a.m.

Pre- Registration Required

Questions? Call (313) 544- 6689

How Schools Can Teach Respect

By Ron Seigel

Back in 1998 Detroit and Highland Park proclaimed October "Respect Month," a time for adults with influence on kids to talk with them about respect.

Educators know that youngsters who cause trouble are the ones who lack respect, whether outright delinquents, class clowns, school bullies or cliques hurting kids through secret cruelty.

Sadly, disrespect has become fashionable. Kids often seek respect by denying it to others.

Teachers can use Respect Month as an occasion to counteract this by emphasizing areas in their subjects that deal with respect. For free suggestions, call (313) 728-2350. Of course, there is no law against using these ideas all year long.

October 30 was proclaimed "Respect Your Neighborhood Day," a time to show respect for our communities by acts of service. Teachers can initiate such activities as class, school or individual projects for extra credit.

The Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute, founded by the mother of the civil rights movement, is working to get federal officials to make "Respect Month" and "Respect Your Neighborhood Day" national occasions. To support this, call President Obama's comment line at (202) 456-1111.

Workers Earn Less Now Than 30 Years Ago

Gongwer Michigan News Service

A Michigan League for Public Policy study says workers do not have the same earning power now, with similar wages, as they had 30 years ago, and said that was especially true for African American workers.

The study said workers have seen a decline in the earning power of their wages, and those earning the median wage in 2012 (\$15.89 per hour) can purchase 7 percent less than median wage earners could in 1982. Meanwhile, those earning the 90th percentile wage (\$38.25 per hour) can purchase 22 percent more than their 1982 counterparts.

In 1982, the state's median wage was the 4th highest in the country, and in 2012 it was 24th highest. The study also says most states experienced gains in their median wage even when adjusted for inflation, but Michigan's median wage fell by 7 percent, making the state second-to-worst in the nation.

And the difference between the state's median wage for white workers (\$16.85 per hour) and that of African American workers (\$12.65 per hour) is the widest it's ever been since the data began being collected 30 years ago, the study said. Also, between 1982 and 2012, the white median wage declined by only 1 percent when adjusted for inflation while the African American median wage declined by 24 percent.

"Wages are an important gauge of the health of an economy. We all want Michigan to be a state where hard work is rewarded," said Gilda Jacobs, president of the MLPP. "When wages are low, the economy suffers, putting a strain on public assistance programs while generating less revenue to maintain public structures and needed services."

The study suggests gaps in education levels and the concentration of African American residents in high-poverty areas with little access to employment are among reasons that may be driving the growing disparity. Solutions include increasing the state's minimum wage and making postsecondary education and training more accessible.

"For us to prosper we need an economy that works for all," Jacobs said. "Growing wage disparities threaten the economic health of all of us."