



Detroit Federation of Teachers



MIGNON PIERCE: **inspiring** **kids to dream** through teaching and learning

MY DREAM FOR MY STUDENTS is for them to be leaders and to go as far as life will take them. As a first-grade teacher, I believe that even at an early age, children need to be motivated to see beyond what's around them. I try to get my kids to think about their future and the various opportunities that exist. My goal is to expand their ideas about what is possible.

When I first started college, I thought I would become a pediatrician. Then I completed a questionnaire that indicated that I would enjoy teaching and working with young children, and that has been true for me. I found my craft working with children in the early grades where the curriculum is fun and there's laughter, singing, movement and a chance to engage in a meaningful way with children.

First-graders learn something new every single day, but without support at home it's difficult for them to retain what they've learned. They can't keep up. So many of the problems I see have to do with poverty. Before we can teach, we have to feed kids who come to school hungry.

It's time to invest in kids and their dreams

In the late 1990s, Detroit Public Schools had a surplus and our kids' test scores were up. Suddenly, the cut scores were raised and we had financial emergency managers who put us deeper and deeper into debt. It makes me believe the goal is to dismantle public education in order to make a profit at the expense of our students.

The state needs to pay the debt and return our schools to local control. Let's see what we can do together to make our schools work for our children. I would love to invite lawmakers to come into our classrooms and see what's really happening on the frontlines so that maybe they can make better decisions about our schools.

With all of the challenges that the teachers in DPS are facing, most of us have not walked away. We are dedicated, and most of us love the job. This job is a calling. It's about love.

Mignon Pierce is a first-grade teacher at Emerson Elementary-Middle School.