



Detroit Federation of Teachers

MITZI DAVIS: inspiring kids to dream through teaching and learning

MY DREAM FOR MY STUDENTS is that they be given the opportunities they deserve and get the best education they can get. When my kids come to me at the beginning of the school year in September, they become MY children. I'm here to make sure they get what they need and deserve.

Teaching is my second career. When I decided to become a teacher, after years of working as a logistics engineer, I knew I wanted to teach in inner-city schools. I have two biological children and two children I adopted from the foster care system. In many ways, that experience really made me want to help kids.

At the beginning of every school year, I look to get to know each of my students and to identify the ones who may need additional help. I want to ensure that kids who may be learning disabled, or those who just need extra attention, get what they need. Too many kids just get passed along.

It's really clear to me, as someone who lives in the suburbs, that students in the inner-city schools are not getting the same opportunities as kids in more affluent communities—like my own children. That's just wrong. For starters, the learning environments in our schools are not comparable to what children in suburban schools have. We are supposed to be offering children a clean, safe learning environment. But with just one custodian in our building, that's just not possible.

It's time to invest in our kids and their dreams

How can we say that we value children and their future, but then not respect, recognize and reward the work of the professionals who are educating our children? The truth is, it is hard to recruit and keep good teachers in this school district, because our salaries are not competitive. Teachers feel like we are being punished for bad management decisions.

I wanted to teach in Detroit schools and took a pay cut to do this work, and we continue to take cuts. The teachers who remain in our school district stay because of the students—our children. What I want for my kids is a clean school with all of the amenities suburban schools get—computers, textbooks, opportunities for exposure to different experiences. That's what they deserve.

Mitzi Davis is a second-grade teacher at Thirkell Elementary School.

