

WE'RE ALL IN *Putting Your Kids in Your School*

Kendra Lincourt could send her three daughters to a school near her home in Livonia. But they wouldn't hear Spanish every day. They wouldn't speak or write it.

Those daughters attend Academy of the Americas where Lincourt teaches art. And indeed they are becoming bilingual in elementary school. Studies show the optimal age to acquire a second language is birth to seven years old.

At Academy of Americas, 14 staff members send their children to school there. The reason: their kids will be bilingual.

"It's funny to hear them," says Lincourt. "They write well in Spanish." Her two oldest children, she says, are almost fluent in Spanish.

Although studies show bilingual adults have sharper brains, Jose Ramirez believes there is substantial pressure for immigrants to assimilate and not continue speaking their native language. Oddly, that was true in the 1900s and it is true today.

Ramirez is the physical education teacher at Academy of Americas and has his children attend the school.

"If you lose your language, you lose your heritage," he said. "When you have a Hispanic last name but you can't speak Spanish, you're embarrassed."

Adriana Williams, the assistant principal, enrolled her daughter at Academy of Americas.

"She's half Mexican and half black,"



Williams said. "The language and the culture is very important to me."

Principal Nicholas Brown sends his second-grade daughter to Academy of Americas.

"I wanted her to be bilingual and to keep her Spanish and English just like

home."

Although Spanish is a huge draw to Academy of Americas, Lincourt says it's not the only reason to put your kids there.

"The staff is awesome," she said. "They care for the kids like their own."

DFT Hosts All-Member Cookout

In balmy temps Sept. 12, the DFT rolled out the barbeque, cranked the noise, and raffled off prizes during a cookout for its members. Hundreds of members attended to enjoy hotdogs, dancing and the camaraderie of fellow teachers.

Several vendors loyal to the DFT supported the event, including HAP and Darryl Hibbett, Bettermade Potato Chips, NTA Life Insurance, McDonalds and many others.

"It was such a success, we're hoping to make this an annual event," said Edna Reaves, DFT executive vice president.



The Cooks - Detroit teachers Victor Gibson and Eugene Hackett manned the barbeque at the DFT cookout.

Federal Investment in Blight Removal is a Start Toward Recovery

In response to the perceived eminent collapse of Detroit, President Obama sent top members of his cabinet to Detroit to address the challenges facing one of America's largest and most important cities.

President's Report



**Keith
Johnson**

One of the critical issues is blight. I was fortunate to receive an invitation to sit at the table and offer my perspective on what the federal government could do to help Detroit in the area of education. Federal dollars for education have very specific and stringent rules, so a bailout of DPS was not an option. There is, however, a connection in the area of blight.

In my presentation at the table I addressed how Detroit Public Schools, with the support of the DFT, convinced the citizens of Detroit to support the \$500.5 million capital improvement bond initiative.

The bond allowed for the construction of eight new schools and the renovation of ten others. Unfortunately Roy Roberts turned over four schools to the EAA. While it was significant that many of our students could now attend brand new, state-of-the-art schools, too often they have to walk through neighborhoods scarred by vacant or burned-out homes and businesses.

At Samuel Gompers K-8, for ex-

ample, this beautiful school, with a full playscape, basketball court, and manicured landscape is surrounded by blocks and blocks of blight. Trash and tire-littered vacant lots, houses stripped to their frames, completely gutted burned-out homes with collapsing porches, decorate the path our students take to school.

In essence we have told these children we will build you a beautiful edifice for learning, we just hope you can survive the route to get there. Good luck!

Thanks to the President's interest in Detroit's recovery, \$150 million in federal aid is coming to address the blight. While those of us who live and work in the city are appreciative, make no mistake, this is only a down payment, not a complete answer, to the dilemma. This city is HUGE; 147 square miles from 8 Mile and Vernier, to 8 Mile and Telegraph, from Jefferson and Alter Road, to Fort Street and Visger.

Along with blighted houses and vacant lots, schools closed by DPS have fallen victim to "urban miners," stripped of everything, even the bricks. The former Andrew Jackson Jr. High on Marlboro, which later

served as Ronald McNair Middle School and the temporary home of Finney High School when it was demolished to build the new Finney (East English Village Preparatory Academy), is now a pure eyesore, a shell of a once majestic building.

DPS must contribute by leveling these abandoned schools. They inhibit potential investment in the neighborhood. But eliminating abandoned and burned out buildings is not enough. No one wants to live in a house that is surrounded by empty lots, even when they are maintained.

It is not cost effective to provide full service to a "neighborhood" that has only a dozen homes within a three square mile radius. People want to live in neighborhoods where they have neighbors, not just urban gardens.

Our students need to attend schools where they don't have to duck predators and vermin in abandoned homes, schools and businesses.

The Obama administration's investment must serve as the beginning, not the end, of the blight discussion and our recovery from it.

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

Updates . . .

Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Anna Curtis, Lesa Moore-Clark and Orenda Grady. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

Tuition Incentives for Detroit Teachers

Concordia University – Portland is a non-profit regionally-accredited institution that has been educating teachers for over 100 years. Its online Master of Education (M.Ed) programs can be completed in just one year and include 17 concentrations to choose from. It also now offers Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) programs completely online.

*Because you've been referred by DFT, enroll in one of our programs and receive the following exclusive referral benefits:

M.Ed. students:

- \$2,000 Educator Scholarship and an additional District Leadership Grant equivalent to 10% off the remaining tuition
- Apple iPad plus free textbooks to enhance the learning experience

Ed.D. students:

- District Educator Dean's Grant equivalent to 20% off tuition
- Apple iPad plus free textbooks to enhance the learning experience

Learn more by visiting <http://education.cu-portland.edu/detroit/> or calling us at 1-800-239-1722. **Classes start October 6th!**

Doing What it Takes to Make it Work!

As a classroom teacher, I knew if I worked hard with my students, I would make a difference in their lives. I was certain that somehow what I was teaching them would have a profound impact on the decisions they made in their lives.

Being a leader of a union is no less challenging. It takes a toll on you mentally and physically because our decisions impact the livelihoods of our members and their families. Last spring, I, along with the leadership team, had to ask you to make a very gut-wrenching move.

We asked you to accept what was, by our own admission, a very lousy contract. As difficult as that was for all of us, we are now starting to see the advantage of having something tangible in hand that defines our working conditions. With just a few weeks into the school year this contract has prevented some principals from walking over our rights as workers.



Edna Reaves

- A number of principals decided to shorten the teachers' lunch period to 30 minutes. We were able to say, "No, no, no, we have a contract that mandates the length of a teacher's lunch period."
- A couple of principals demanded that teachers eat lunch with their students as a way of bonding with them outside of the classroom. We were able to say, "No, no, no, the contract calls for a duty free lunch period."
- Other principals wanted to extend the school day for daily meetings. We were able to squash that idea because of our contract.

So to you, I say "thank you" for at least having a say in your working conditions.

Thank you also, on behalf of every teacher who was laid off and is now back in the classroom. Many of you walked with me this summer as we joined the district's door-to-door campaign and asked parents to bring their children back to DPS. Because of your work, we enrolled more students than projected and the vast majority of our teachers were recalled. Some of our schools are jammed.

Jack Martin promised parents physical education, art and music classes during his door-to-door campaign. So we fully expect the few remaining laid-off teachers in those categories to be recalled. We hope the district will live up to its promises to parents.

DFT members went out and asked for these students, but not with the intent of 30, 40, and 50 students in the classroom and certainly that was not our parents' expectations. Parents are expecting administrators to level classes so students will receive that individualized instruction and teachers will be effective in their delivery of instruction.

Our members consistently do their part to make this district work. It's time for the district to do its part. Teachers and parents are counting on it.

As simple as these words seem, they say a lot: thank you.

We're on

Facebook!

Check us out at

www.facebook.com/DFT231

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

New Sports Equipment, Playground Slated for Marcus Garvey

The foam footballs are pockmarked and faded. The plastic Frisbees are duck-taped together. The physical education equipment in the gym at Marcus Garvey Academy has seen better days.

On Aug. 29 phys ed teacher William Hoover and principal James Hearn shared their vision for increasing opportunities for the students to exercise, learn sports, and play on a proper playground outside. Two weeks later, thousands of dollars in equipment arrived, thanks to a joint project by General Motors and the United Auto Workers.

GM and the UAW also announced its support for a new playground at the school. Marcus Garvey teacher Sue Dropiewski and engineer Davida Green helped design the playground with Hoover and Hearn.

"This city, state and country was here for GM during our hard times," said Jim



Marcus Garvey teacher Bill Hoover (in red) with GM and UAW officials at the Sept. 12 equipment giveaway at Marcus Garvey.

dents and how well they took care of their school. Hoover said he would take care of the equipment just as well.

"We are incredibly lucky," Hoover said. "We aren't owed any of this but we are very happy."



A student holds a worn football.

Glynn, GM vice president of labor relations. "We want to give back and help in any way we can."

The GM-UAW team was "very impressed" by the phys ed program at Marcus Garvey and the enthusiasm of Hoover.

They also were impressed with the stu-

Constitution Day at Carver

Students in middle school at the Carver STEM Academy took on the role of legislators on Sept. 17 and wrote a 28th amendment to present to Congress. Some amendments involved allowing 16-year-olds to vote as well as housing breaks for the poor. This was all done by Social Studies teacher Rita Lockridge in honor of Constitution Day, which commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution on Sept. 17, 1787 by 39 brave men.



An Alternative to Alternative Schools

By Mark O'Keefe
DFT Controller

Administrators, teachers and parents have limited options in dealing with young students who have chronic behavior problems.



Mark O'Keefe

After several short-term suspensions that result in students falling further behind, the last step is to do an administrative transfer to another neighborhood school.

The receiving school is very similar to the sending school, and the be-

havior of the child transferred is frequently unchanged. Once the child reaches sixth grade, transfers to alternative schools become an option. But why do we wait until a child is 12 years old to try something different?

By the time a child reaches sixth grade, bad habits and bad attitudes are much harder to change. And during the time these behaviors are becoming ingrained, other parents have pulled their students from our schools. Ask a parent why they no longer send their child to DPS schools and you will hear many concerns about safety and disruptive students and very little about test scores.

So we have students who need a different education model, parents taking

other students out of the district, and dozens of empty school buildings. All of these problems point to the same solution: open alternative schools for children in first through sixth grade.

This is an idea I first proposed when Dennis Archer was mayor. At the time, it fell on deaf ears. I recently learned, however, that Hutchinson principal Stan Johnson is advocating a similar program.

Placing students in a setting designed to address their issues and prepare them to return to neighborhood schools would be good for them and good for the neighborhood schools. Stan Johnson summed it up nicely. "If we open alternative schools for the younger students, you might not need alternative schools for the older students."

Grants . . .

Detroit Literacy Grants

The locally based Bookstock Fund is offering ten \$250 grants for Detroit Public School teachers of preschool through fifth grade. These grants must support literacy and reading initiatives. Information and grant applications are available at http://bookstock.info/bookstock_fund.html. The deadline is Nov. 15, 2013.

Science Teaching

The National Science Teachers Association is accepting applications for the PASCO STEM Educator Awards. The purpose is to recognize excellence and innovation in K-12 science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) teaching. Deadline: Nov. 30, 2013. For info, visit awards@nsta.org.

Tech and Engineering

The Foundation for Technology and Engineering Educators and the Pitsco/Hearlily Company are giving grants to encourage the integration of quality technology and engineering programs in schools. Applicants must be members of the International Technology

and Engineering Educators Association. Grants of \$2,000 are available. Deadline: Dec. 1, 2013. For info, visit iteea@iteea.org.

Health Education

CVS Caremark Community Grants focus on programs that provide health education for at-risk populations. Grants range from \$500 to \$5,000. Deadline: Oct. 31, 2013. For info, visit CommunityMailbox@cvscaremark.com.

Worthy Projects

The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation gives \$1,000 to \$10,000 grants to projects that are compelling and worthy. Deadline: Nov. 10, 2013. For info, visit www.mvdreyfusfoundation.org.

World in Motion

SAE International is funding the Gary Dickinson Award for Teaching Excellence to honor middle school teachers who effectively use the A World in Motion program in their classrooms. Deadline: Oct. 31, 2013. For info, visit awards@sae.org.

Literacy

The Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation provides grants in literacy and education. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. The foundation wants to support programs that provide books to lending libraries, schools, children with special needs and home libraries. Deadline: Oct. 31, 2013. For info, visit giving@buildabear.com.

Math and Science

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is taking applications for its Connecting Mathematics to Other Subject Areas grants for teachers of grades 9-12. Deadline: Nov. 8, 2013. For info, visit nctm@nctm.org.

Community Building

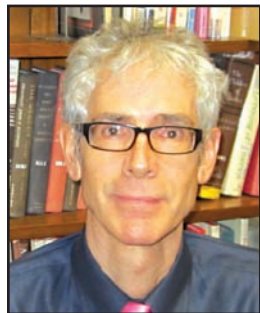
The Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation supports the Toolbox for Education grants to support the basic needs of struggling schools to benefit their school communities. Grants range from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Deadline: Oct. 15, 2013. For info, visit www.toolboxforeducation.com.

Lost Pensions and the Financial Crisis: *Nothing Cyclical About It*

By William Bowles
Western International High School

Often known as “the dismal science,” economics has now surged to the top of our national concerns. Detroit’s bankruptcy, with its certain pension losses, is simply the latest and arguably most catastrophic sign of how unequal and dysfunctional the U.S. economy has become.

There is nothing “cyclical” about it – our economy is not in a “correction,” soon to reset to a low unemployment, good wages and the expectation of a middle class living standard. That period, known as “The Great Prosperity,” lasted from 1946 until about 1980.



William Bowles

Then the bankers took over, buying off politicians through armies of lobbyists, who lowered corporate tax rates, cut social programs and decimated you know what – unions. This is the real “race to the top” – for CEOs.

Wages of CEOs, about 20 times that of the average worker in the 1960s, have now soared to 350 times average wages. Detroit teachers know in painful detail that middle-class wages and benefits have fallen with no prospect of increasing.

Causes for this sorry state are many: Internet technology and container shipping have made the outsourcing of good jobs a corporate priority, as employers glean poor countries for the lowest labor costs, taxes and regulation. But there is another more important cause that threatens the very foundation of our civilized society: the unregulated financial sector.

Last month marked the fifth anniversary of the start of the worst worldwide financial crisis since the Great Depression. Yet most educated people could not begin to tell you what went wrong with our economy or describe the parties responsible for these crimes. But let’s try: “SEC, CFTC, FDIC, OCC, Hank and John Paulson, the securitization chain, CDOs, CDSs, the Treasury, the FED, MBSs, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, Citigroup, Merrill-Lynch, Dodd-Frank, Tim Geithner.”

Got it? To discuss the financial crisis without knowledge of these terms – the very nodal points – is like trying to talk about baseball without knowing the meaning of “run,” “out” or “Miguel Cabrera.” A cottage industry of books, articles and documentary films has made investigating the crisis a painless if not joyful enterprise. Indeed, the story of the financial crisis is a Shakespearian drama filled with a rogue’s gallery of tragic and comic characters.

But reliance on the mainstream press for insight into our economy is nearly fruitless; it evokes Bob Dylan’s sardonic song *Subterranean Homesick Blues*: “Look out kid/They keep it all hid . . .” – especially as our local newspapers are owned by a corporate conglomerate whose mission is to entertain (poorly) rather than to inform, and, oh, to make money for its share holders. A future edition of *The Detroit Teacher* will include a list of some excellent sources on the financial crisis. But you might start with this short animated documentary by Jonathan Jarvis: *The Crisis of Credit Visualized*, <http://vimeo.com/3261363>.

The reason it is important to educate ourselves about this ongoing crisis is because the next one will be much more severe, more painful and cause a further dismantling of the institutions that make us a civilized society: schools, libraries, clinics and hospitals, roads, clean air and water. The value and spending power of the dollar will decrease precipitously as foreign countries forgo purchasing U.S. treasuries for

stronger currencies, such as the Yuan (China) and the euro. That we do not pay attention is attributable to what social scientists have called “normalcy bias,” a common human coping mechanism to impending disaster in which we convince ourselves “since a disaster has never occurred it will not occur.”

Too late, it’s already here. The tepid package of regulations known as Dodd-Frank proposed after the crisis has been stalled and watered down by battalions of Wall Street lobbyists whose outsized campaign contributions effectively drive policymaking in Washington. No financial regulation = the next financial crisis. Some things are just that clear cut.

Two warning signs of the next crisis have already happened: the bankruptcy of hedge fund MF Global in 2010 and the “London Whale” loss of \$6 billion by JPMorgan on a risky bet in 2012. These cases are proof of the toothless “regulation” of banks in the wake of the financial crisis and a harbinger of future catastrophe.

The best-known component of the crash is the mortgage crisis. In the late 1960s, the financial world invented a new way of making home loans. If you’re old enough to remember the Dylan song it’s likely your parents bought their house with a “plain vanilla” mortgage from a commercial bank under the “3-6-3” model. Your parents got 3 percent interest on their deposits, the bank loaned out that money at 6 percent (the approximate mortgage rate), and the bankers were on the golf course by 3 p.m. The bank held your parents’ mortgage, earning interest, until your parents paid it off.

How quaint the mid-20th century. In the new, high-risk model, a mortgage lender sells mortgages to overextended and unqualified buyers with a tantalizingly low initial interest rate set to “correct” (spike) in 2-5 years.

The lenders do not care a hoot whether the buyer is able to pay the mortgage. These subprime mortgages became known as NINJA loans: no income, no job, no assets. No matter. The lenders even falsified thousands of loans and infamously robo-signed them as qualified and sound. They also sold a whole lot of home equity loans, which, as long as housing prices increased, fueled consumer spending in a time of flat wages and continued job loss.

Mortgage lenders and banks sold these mortgages almost immediately to investment banks like Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, who paid corrupt credit agencies for AAA ratings before selling them to unwitting investors throughout the world. These included pension funds and sovereign wealth funds (the treasuries of foreign countries), many in Europe. When the housing bubble burst, as any fourth-grader could see coming, mortgage payments stopped and all cash froze. The banks, having lent profligately to each other, and holding on average less than 3% of the value of their portfolios in cash, stopped lending. We had a crisis.

But bankruptcy was out of the question. Back in 1999, bowing to intense pressure from the financial industry, President Clinton’s Treasury secretary and former Goldman Sachs chief, Robert Rubin, along with economic advisor Lawrence Summers, led a repeal of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act, which had separated risk-taking investment banks from mortgage-offering commercial banks and led to 30 years of economic growth without a financial crisis.

There was a prosperous middle class. Those days are over. A fascinating hour-long documentary of this critical turning point is available online from the PBS Frontline series:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/warning/view/>

Can we turn to Bob Dylan again? Nuclear war was the subject of “A Hard Rain’s a-Gonna Fall.” But unbridled banks could end up wreaking more damage.

The DFT Meets the Mayoral Candidates

At a DFT membership meeting Sept. 12, the two candidates for mayor of Detroit addressed more than 200 members.

“We’ve got to have a mayor who can do a financial turnaround,” said Mike Duggan, who credited his experience as CEO in the financial turnaround of the Detroit Medical Center. Duggan said the city was on the verge of losing the major hospitals during that financial crisis and decreased entrance to the emergency room to 29 minutes.

Duggan, who also ran the SMART bus system, said he will work to get the street lights on, the buses running, and the abandoned buildings bulldozed.

“If we do not have a strong Detroit Public School system, we will not have a strong city,” he also said.

His opponent, Wayne County Sheriff Benny Napoleon, said he has a strong labor background.

“I paid union dues,” Napoleon told the membership. “No one is going to work harder to protect the benefits you worked for and what you’ve rightfully earned.”

Napoleon said his priority as mayor would be to focus on re-invigorating the neighborhoods.

Both candidates spoke for five minutes and then mingled with members at the DFT’s Back-to-School Cookout.

DFT President Keith Johnson said the next mayor we choose is critical.

“Don’t make this an us versus them, a black versus white thing,” Johnson said. “Detroit will not always be under an emergency manager and it’s important that we have a mayor who can transition from where we are to where we have to go.”



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.

October

- 4 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 10 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 15 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.

November

- 7 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 11 Veterans Day, Half day of school
- 14 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 19 Retires Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 28-29 Thanksgiving Holiday, schools closed