



East Detroit Federation of Teachers



A Union of Professionals

Local 698

November 2011 Newsletter

Shooting Stars & Comets



Have you ever spent an evening in the countryside looking at the stars when it is so dark it seems like you must be able to see forever? I taught my kids to make a wish when they saw a shooting star, and we would always hope we would get to see one. I must confess I still star gaze, but now I want to see some comets. Shooting stars are great and they bring excitement to the night, but they are fleeting and the promise

they bear exists only in the form of wishes, which are as fleeting as the star itself.

This is much the way I see the assault on our profession by those that believe teaching is something anyone can do and everyone should try. Legislators and reformers across this nation are pushing to make the entry into teaching a fast track to get the "Best and the Brightest" from business to donate a small portion of their career to education and then go to make their fortune in "real" professions and well paying jobs. This is the Teach for America model and it will kill the profession of teachers and destroy our education system through incompetence.

Teachers know that the attrition rate for teachers is high because it is a difficult job, comparatively underpaid and most certainly under appreciated. The underlying symptom is actually the sense of isolation teachers feel that leads to a sense of professional disappointment as compared to the dreams they had when they entered the field. It is hard to make a career out of being a teacher these days, and it always has been.

This country's highlighted teachers are all too often the shooting stars of education. They appear on the scene for a brief shining moment and then retire away to become educational reformists or seek careers in more lucrative fields. The problem is that in the short term a shooting star or two can give us inspiration and dreams of better days, but they don't often stand the test of time.

I want to see some comets in this district. Shooting stars burn out and cease to exist. Comets are much more enduring.

Continued on pg. 3

UNION SHORTS

New Board Members

Election Day 2011 proved to be very dramatic in Eastpointe. Two new members were elected to the School Board and will be sworn in this January. Dena Trocino and Jon Gruenberg will replace Carol Corrie and Matt Vroman, while Craig Brosowski and Margaret Podsiadlik retained their seats.

The new members of the Board have joined the current members at the Board table until the New Year, although they do not have the ability to take part in the discussion or votes. They are participating in the Strategic Planning process that the Board is working on.

Lunch with Lincoln

During the weeks of November 28 and December 5, EDFT president Lincoln Stocks will be visiting each of the buildings during lunch hours to listen to your concerns and answer questions you may have of union leadership. Each Vice-president is assembling questions from all of the buildings to allow everyone's concerns to be addressed in each building.

Individual building concerns and questions can be discussed after common concerns are covered. If you have any issues you want to have addressed just forward your question to Jodi, Mike or Doug by e-mail. You can also hold out and just ask in person when you get to lunch. No topics are off limits so check your e-mail for the schedule and share you lunch with Lincoln and hear it straight from the horse's mouth.



EDFT gives away 150+ turkeys

By Summer Bear Stocks

Are you kiddin me? My dad came home this past week all excited and

bragging that the EDFT gave away more than 150 turkeys to families in need in East Detroit. All I can say is, "What about me?"

People don't understand that I don't make my own money and I have to rely on others for food. Dad and his friends gave away turkey and I didn't get one. I saw two in the fridge, but did anyone ask me if I was hungry?

Wait, wait, wait...I remember, this is about Thanksgiving. Let me alter my position. I'd use facebook, but I've heard you have to be careful about what you post there. I am amazed and proud that the teachers worked so hard to connect with students across the district. They are good kids and the gifts you guys gave this Thanksgiving were much appreciated.

I know this because I had a hot dog party at my house with about 50 of them after a Kelly football game last month and they were excited about that little gift.

Everything you do to touch their lives in a positive way outside of the classroom makes your job easier inside of it and lets parents know how important you are to them. You will need that some day!

Special Ed Millage Fails, Budget faces an overhaul

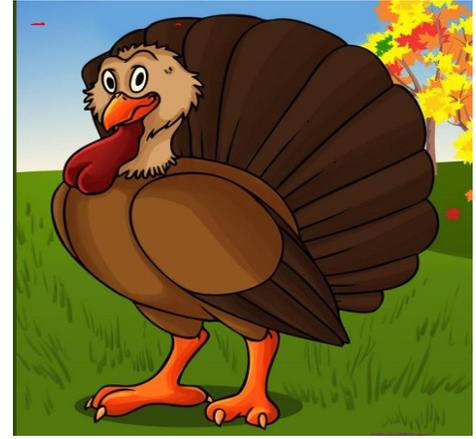
Macomb County voters failed to pass a countywide millage proposal targeted at supplementing special education funding in the MISD. The proposal was actually passed in the East Detroit District, but failed in large part due to a lack of support in the northern part of the county, especially the Utica district.

East Detroit Schools had felt confident enough with the proposal that they actually factored the expected funds into its budget for 2011-12. The failure now requires the district to adjust the budget to account for a loss that could top \$800,000 for the school year.

This loss, coupled with the loss of revenue due to a drop in enrollment of about 350 students, forces the district to revise the budget and the DEP with the State. An announcement on how this will be done is expected in early December when the Board approves a new budget.

It has been tough economically so far this year on everyone associated with teachers. We have had to cut back at my house and I'm sure you've done so also. Being of Chinese heritage I'm big on philosophy and I know someone said, "It is wise to save for a rainy day, even when its raining." If they didn't, I just did. Congratulations on a great job with the Turkey giveaway and remember me if you ever find a need to be generous with any other food items. btw, Did I tell you, "I Love Hot Dogs!"

American Values



State Board of Education considers changing teacher certification rules

This month the Michigan Department of Education has held a series of hearings to listen to input from various groups on proposed changes to the teacher certification guidelines which affect teacher preparation, original certification and re-certification in the State. Issues most critical to EDFT members focus on re-certification. The changes would require teachers to get three consecutive evaluations of at least effective, or four out of five years as rated effective to simply be ELIGIBLE for re-certification.

This system would potentially overstep the recent changes in the Tenure Law. Even if a teacher showed success and improvement and the district rated them effective at the conclusion of a school year, and wished to retain them, their license would be revoked under the new guidelines. The MDE also included a denial of any appeals of the ruling. Another proposal restricted the accumulation of credits for recertification as only being valid if they are acquired from a four-year university. This recommendation seems punitive for current teachers as the State alters preparatory programs to make entry to the profession from outside traditional programs easier and less expensive.

The rules would also require teachers that are unemployed to maintain the same levels of Professional Development as employed teachers if they are to retain their certificate. AFT-MI and the EDFT believe these changes are unacceptable, President Lincoln Stocks represented both organizations at the public hearing to encourage the State to step back from such policy. State superintendent Mike Flannagan issued a letter indicating that he did not favor inclusion of these measures in the final draft of the program. Critics at the hearings were concerned that such ideas should never have been included in the draft of the revisions if that were the case. It also seemed to indicate potential future revisions by the State if Flannagan were to be replaced.

Other changes to recertification focus on the process by which the recertification is done. According to a statement released by the MDE, they have created a new system for educators to renew their certification. The new Michigan Online Educator Certification System (MOECS) is a fully secure, role/function based web application. Educators will use MOECS to apply for certificates, renewals, duplicate certificates and pay their certification using a credit card.

As of November 2011, educators who have earned SB-CEUs prior to the Secure Central Registry (January 1, 2010), MUST enter "old" SB-CEUs into MOECS to renew their certificate or license. MOECS won't allow renewal unless you've earned enough credit. The MDE has added the ability to manually add the SB-CEUs earned prior to the Secure Central Registry (SCR) into MOECS. An "ADD" button is now located on the "View/Update my SB-CEUs" screen in MOECS. MOECS will now add all credits together (college credits + SB-CEUs from the SCR + old SB-CEUs). These have to total the number of credit hours required for renewal to allow completion of the renewal process. You can access MOECS at <http://www.misd.net/comm/sb-ceus.htm>.

Once there, scroll down to the bottom of the web page and click on the *Frequently Asked Questions* hyperlink.

Continued from pg. 1

Even though they are not always as brilliant, they are lasting and dependable. They often toil for years in the dark, unnoticed and unappreciated, but when the light of the sun exposes them, they show up and perform with consistency and dependability. We need to end that isolation and bring you together to create a new constellation to be amazed by.



When shooting stars cross the sky, we can't measure their substance. The trail they leave is a fleeting image that disappears as quickly as it came. A comet has a tail. It is visible and it is measureable. The more light it gets, the more substantial its mark is. Although it too can offer inspiration, it doesn't offer false hope or bring rise to vacant dreams. It leaves an impression on all that see it and it creates a promise of things to come.

You may know that some once believed comets were bad omens. Those beliefs, like many of the attacks on our teacher comets, were just conclusions drawn from ignorance, made by people that feared something they knew nothing about. We must not allow educational reform to be driven by those that influence and lead others based on fear, faulty logic or misinformation. Education

ended those faulty beliefs and those in education can end these misguided efforts as well. We in the classroom must blaze the trail for the future of those that will follow and for those that are in this journey with us now. We must not allow the current trend of reform to continue without a more educated and informed foundation and student centered objectives. We, like the comet, must set a course to follow that we know will take us to where we have to go, and we must pursue it until we are successful in our objective to educate our students.

People form their ideas of teachers based on life experience and the media. Life tells us that there are teachers that inspire us to be great, and some that fail to do so.

Everyone of us aspires to be that great influence on a young person, but all too often we never have the feedback to know which one we impacted the most.

We all see the media presentations of incompetence and union greed. Cameron Diaz just portrayed, "Bad Teacher" and we all remember Ditto! Many believe the union only exists to grab money and protect failures.

It is important to acknowledge the existence of some level of truth to these allegations, but also to inform the world that they are not an accurate representation of our profession.

Just as important are those positive portrayals of true greatness, which we aspire to. We all want to "Stand and Deliver." We all want to be that teacher that comes in and sets the world on fire and beats all the odds by turning the testing standards upside down. We resent those reformers that might then accuse you of cheating.

We must all realize that those goals are still within our reach, but it doesn't take a shooting star to

fulfill our dreams. It will take comets. I don't want you to burn out in a flash. I want you to succeed and endure and retire as a successful educator. We have been losing faith that that is a possibility.

I was once taught the Star of David was actually a comet. I don't know if that's true, but like the Christmas story it all boils down to whether you have faith in what you believe in.



I have faith in you! I know we can meet the immense challenges that lie before us. We will at times toil in isolation, but we need to make an effort to come together to have the combined strength and energy to overcome the obstacles to our success. Fight the discouragement of the cold journey through space and time and take this opportunity when the light is shining on your profession to develop a comet's tail to show you are there and you are worthy of notice. Combine our collective substance and blaze a trail of success through the sky for all to see and remember. We Can Do This Job.

Here is a great article on how to use teacher collaboration successfully.
<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/teacher-collaboration-strategies-ben-johnson>

"Failure is not always a mistake; it may simply be the best one can do under the circumstances. The real mistake is to stop trying."

--B.F. Skinner,
American psychologist, inventor and author

Royal Oak union leader offers views on certification rules

By Sid Kardon, president ROEA

It took decades to arrive at the point that we find ourselves today – an educational system in a state of chaos due to draconian legislation and the dismantling of the most fundamental rights of one group of citizens – those being teachers.

In 1983 a large group of respected educators and scholars produced a report called A Nation at Risk, which carefully analyzed deficits in the American Education system. The report was a result of declining performance on SATs and international tests. The conclusion of the commission was that curriculum needed to be broadened; high school diploma standards needed to be more rigorous; and all students should have access to equal educational opportunities.

In the same era, President Reagan denounced public sector services as inferior to private sector services and public employees as overpaid and entitled. This was in the service of enriching the already rich.

When President Bush authorized No Child Left Behind in 2002, it suggested that Reagan's public service mythology based on his political ideology now held sway in education over the fact-based opinions of the Nation at Risk Commission.

We have been supporting the mythology ever since – vilifying teachers and rapidly converting our public schools to corporate ones when data doesn't meet the standards of uniformed legislative mandates.

In 2009, President Obama authorized Race to the Top – essentially a reiteration of No Child Left Behind. It explicitly tied a teacher's performance to tests that were designed to help

inform instruction. RTTT also created an easy pathway to the chartering of schools – once again supporting the mythology that business works; the public sector and public employees do not. Michigan quickly embraced the myth in 2010 when Section 1249 became part of the school code – advocating data collection to the detriment of a broadened education and holding teachers responsible for all student achievement – irrespective of a student's natural abilities and the social and economic environment in which the student lived. Subsequently, standards for firing teachers were lowered by the legislature in 2011. Due process rights and just cause standards were eliminated. Today, the MDE proposes that it isn't enough to merely fire a teacher based on the corporate mythology, but that the teacher is permanently barred from their chosen career – without recourse to appeal or reinstatement. This can only mean that in the view of the MDE, data is meaningful in a very particular way; is irrefutable and not subject to interpretation. Moreover, all administrators are fair and unbiased.

The reality is that these rules merely continue the corporate mythology. By vilifying teachers, and depriving them of their rights as citizens, you announce to the world that justice and democracy is second to arbitrariness and corporatism in Michigan. You continue educational apartheid by adhering to data that will tell you that the poorest communities in Michigan, those with the highest minority populations such as Detroit, Benton Harbor, and Pontiac, will perform the worst on standardized tests and will thus be subject to takeover and charterization, which is an

infinitely poorer educational placement than a public school.

A strong public school system calls for reason, fairness, and opportunity for everyone. The proposed rules will further erode public education, equal opportunity for students, and the human rights of Michigan citizens.

The Not so Funnies

Lower Your Expectations



Education Bashing



Value Added Models

