



Local 698

*East Detroit Federation of Teachers*

*Educators and more since 1942*



*A Union of Professionals*

March 2011

## Let's be proactive!



Let's be proactive instead of being reactive. That's a mantra we hear from people all the time. Honestly, I can't imagine sitting around waiting for someone to determine my fate if I believed there was something I could do about it. I guess that is the real reason I chose to take on this role as president.

I did, however find out recently why reaction is more common than proaction. The answer is that it's easier to react. It's easier to identify an adversary after they have harmed you instead of anticipating a problem and convincing others it's coming. It's easier to field

complaints and say I'll try to fix it than it is to go on a limb and fix a problem that folks don't understand looms around the corner.

I guess it's part of politics that you have to be careful how far in front of the curve you get if you wish to remain comfortable with your surroundings. I have learned the lesson of proactive reform and the price you pay for it as we've discussed the changes in the elementary program. Perhaps I'm a fool, but the lesson has not dissuaded me from that course. We need to continue to reform or we will be consumed by the movement to do it for us.

I have in large part staked my reputation as the leader of this union on my understanding that we need to change some fundamental elements of our educational program if we are to be successful in the future. What we are doing now must change because we are beginning to fail substantially. Nobody is as steeped in tradition as I am, but a need to cling to that old model will, in my opinion, result in our complete destruction as a district.

We've remodeled the elementary structure and the day to facilitate curriculum improvement, intervention flexibility and professional collaboration all designed to improve student learning. This is our ultimate goal. It is why we are in business and must guide all of the decisions we make. As a labor leader, I can't protect our economic interests without the success of the students as they are our clients.

Moreover, NONE of us believe that the failure of our students is acceptable, so we must do something to change the results we now see. It's a sad acknowledgement, but the sky is falling, the world is upside down and we're not in Kansas anymore. It's time to get on the reform train or be run over by it!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could afford to react to every situation and compel correction that we felt were necessary to make us happy? Perhaps there was a time when that was a possibility, but that time isn't now. We are under attack from many sides. As a union, as teachers and as professionals, we are under fire. Politicians have demanded reform and have the votes and the energy to mandate it. They don't know what they want, just that they want change and accountability. Those things are not inherently wrong. The key is that if we allow people that know NOTHING about education the opportunity to define the change, it will fail. We MUST take control of our profession and our educational system to fill the void of sanity within the reform movement. If we can do that, we will be able to make reform that at least has a chance of success. If we are to be evaluated including achievement, we MUST define what achievement is and identify the best way to document it. If we are going to be held responsible for kids grades, we MUST be able to create an environment that's as flexible as possible to identify their needs and address them immediately to help ensure their success. The old models no longer work. We're attempting to create a new one that will improve student learning. A model that will hold teachers fairly accountable, but will not violate our right to a fair and equitable contract or expectation. All of this will require proactive change. It won't be popular to advocate for it before it is mandated, but I will continue to do it, because it is what's right for all of us.

## UNION SHORTS

### General Membership Meeting

The EDFT will hold a general membership meeting at East Detroit High School auditorium on Wednesday, April 27, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. The office will send out a complete agenda a week before the meeting.

We will discuss upcoming changes in the district, the moving process, negotiations and important legislative issues that will affect us this summer and next year.

It is critical that all members try to be in attendance. Your understanding of these matters is critical to our success in the future.

### EDFT Officer Elections

The EDFT will hold its officer elections on Monday, May 9, 2011. The positions of President, High School Vice-President, Middle School Vice-President, Elementary Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer are the offices members may contest for.

If you wish to run for office another member must nominate you. The nomination must be signed by the candidate and delivered to the union office by April 26 at 4:30 p.m.

Nominations may also be made from the floor at the general membership meeting scheduled for April 27, 2011.

Candidates must be present at the meeting to accept the nomination.

Ballots must be cast at the union office between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on that day. The office is at 18223 E. Ten Mile Rd. Suite 200. It is the first building on the left off of Ten Mile.

### Restructuring Questions

The superintendent has organized a flow chart to help field questions regarding the schedule and details on restructuring at the elementary level. If you have concerns on what is happening next you are instructed to forward your questions to Kim Bussttil at [kbussttil@eds.misd.net](mailto:kbussttil@eds.misd.net). She will get your answers and forward them to you.

Kate Dankovich and Sally Cairo are also responsible for publishing a monthly newsletter that is going to be sent home to parents. They will also share those newsletters with staff. The first one is scheduled for March 21.

## American Values Campaign

Tim Woelkers and Anthony Kiner helped sponsor a tail-gate at the boy's basketball Regional Finals game on Wednesday March 16. They fed teachers, coaches, students and parents from EDHS and even some opposing fans. It was great to see the Green and White spirit and the crowd no doubt helped the boys to victory.

# Evaluations to change

One of the most significant and difficult elements of the Race to the Top legislation passed last year is the need to evaluate teachers every year and include student achievement as a significant part of that evaluation. This is not an easy issue to tackle. Student achievement seems to be an obvious measure to the politicians, but not to those that are involved in education.

Finding a fair and consistent device to accurately measure students is one issue. The other is how to fairly tie those measures to the performance of a teacher and evaluate that teacher using the information. This concerns value added measures, standardized testing and teacher specific rubrics that are all valid measures in many regards. The catch is, which ones are best, and how do we address all the exceptions in education to be fair to everybody that will be affected. The AFT-MI has addressed this issue with a cutting edge solution to the problem. It is a comprehensive guide that assists districts in doing four things.

1. Developing a fair evaluation tool that complies with the law concerning student achievement and improves teaching and learning.
2. Helps determine how to score the evaluation using a Charlotte Danielson style format and defines behaviors that indicate performance goals for each rating a teacher receives.
3. Guides stake holders in determining who plays what roles in the evaluation system including combinations of peer mentoring and administrative observation within a continuum of cooperation.
4. Finally, it assists in linking the evaluation to professional development to ensure that teaching improves which will in turn improve student learning.

AFT-MI President David Hecker and the K-12 education committee chairman Lincoln Stocks introduced this guide to Michigan State Legislators on Tuesday, March 1, 2011 at a news conference. "The objective is to let legislators know that the union is willing to come to the table with solutions not simply object to their attacks on tenure and evaluation." said Stocks. Nate Walker, AFT-MI staff

member worked hard to put together this guide with assistance from locals across the State. It is a 30 page document that is backed by a great deal of data and research. Walker said, "It's a strong proposal to show real reform and create fair and transparent accountability on the part of districts as well as teachers." Although it does not address student accountability independently, it is an inherent part of the process of creating the evaluation tool. Other measures are yet to be determined as the MI-SASS court case remains in the judicial system, but the AFT-MI also addressed the reform of tenure, which is at the core of the drive for the changes in evaluation.

Tenure, as many understand, is not a job for life. It is simply the assurance of due process in a dismissal case. It requires that administration have just cause for firing a tenured teacher. The process in Michigan is not as cumbersome as some other states, but it can take an extended period of time to accomplish, all while a teacher is on paid leave. The AFT-MI has offered a reform model that reduces the time it takes to fire a substandard teacher by 40%, while not violating the teacher's rights to due process. It has also presented an option to replace Administrative Law Judges with an arbitration panel of experts that would substantially reduce the cost to both the district and the teachers going through tenure proceedings.

These reform proposals are strong signs of the commitment the AFT-MI has to improve teaching and improve student learning. It indicates the union's understanding of the legislature's concerns over the cumbersome nature of the tenure process, but retains the rights and protections that tenure does and should afford to teachers.

## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Wednesday, April 27, 2011

4:00 to 5:30 p.m. at the

High School Auditorium

Agenda includes, officer nominations, negotiations & plan of action for 2011-12.

## Staffing set for March 30

Administration will be doing staffing earlier than normal this year in an effort to help teachers prepare for the need to move to new buildings as a result of restructuring. March 30, 2011 is the day that the staff will be assigned to new buildings and classroom assignments for the 2011-12 school year.

The union office is scheduled to receive the staffing report on the following day and will have several days to review it and look for apparent mistakes. The list will be published after the Board moves on Thursday April 14, 2011, following Spring Break.

Staff will be able to review the staffing list and must communicate to the union office immediately if they feel a mistake has been made.

## HS School Improvement Team pitches United Way

On Tuesday, March 8, 2011 members of administration and the High School School Improvement Team made a bid to secure more than \$1million in aid. The General Motors Schools of Excellence Fund handled by the United Way heard the team, which included administration and union leadership, describe why they felt East Detroit High School should receive the funding.

Included in the program is assistance in identifying struggling English and Mathematics students and creating high level interventions as early as possible at the high school level. Several intervention plans were studied by the team which ultimately went with the talent development model which focuses on a school within a school format and career specific curriculum pathways.

Also inherent to this plan is a more specialized 9th grade program and a move to block scheduling. The high school has investigated many ways to increase immediate remediation options as well as avenues to increase graduation rate and enrichment opportunities for students. The talent development model promises to achieve all of these goals and improve student test scores in reading and math substantially. Professional development would be provided through the grant monies as would the creation of many other important social and community assets to aid the district in its transformation.

No word if EDHS won the grant has come from the United Way as of yet. It is possible that further interviews may be necessary before the money is awarded to any of the 15 schools that applied.