

Mackinac Center creates union Contract Database

Union contracts for all local school districts in Michigan — including 170 that will expire this year — are now available in an online database hosted by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, publisher of Michigan Education Report.

All collective bargaining agreements covering teachers, janitors, bus drivers, mechanics, secretaries, librarians and a multitude of other positions are available on the Center's Web site as PDF files. At www.michiganschoolsdatabases.org, users can select "District Collective Bargaining Agreements" and choose a school district name to view a complete list of contracts.

"The collective bargaining agreements in the Center's unique database reveal important details about local education policy," said Dr. Ryan S. Olson, the Center's director of education policy. "State and federal governments issue scores of mandates and laws that constrain school districts, but local boards and employee unions still bargain many substantive issues. These include automatic salary increases and health benefits, as well as lesser-known policies such as calendars, class sizes, professional development, sick days, classroom assignments and how a teacher's work performance can be evaluated.

"This database will serve several purposes," Olson continued. "Analyzing other districts' contracts can help school leaders negotiate meaningful improvements to local policy. Direct access to contract language can help reporters trying to cut through the bargaining cross-fire. The contracts should also be interesting to Michigan taxpayers, since more than \$19 billion was spent on Michigan K-12 public schools last year."

Also at the database site, users can access information about expenditures and revenue for every conventional public school district and public school academy in Michigan, as well as information about categorical grant funding in each district. The site also features the "District Checkbook Register Report," a link to Michigan school districts which make

their check registries available online for public examination.

Michigan Education Report

Homecoming

The Dearborn Homecoming is August 1st, 2nd, & 3rd this year. As always, the DFT is sponsoring a booth (The Lollipop Pull) all three days. If you will be available during any of the days during Homecoming, would you consider volunteering 2 or 3 hours of your time? It's a lot of fun and a great way to stay involved in the community!

If you would like to volunteer a few hours of your time, please call Tracie Lake-Kinnaird at Henry Ford Elementary (X74706) or

kinnait@dearborn.k12.mi.us .

Grievances

A grievance remains on behalf of the Dearborn High staff and the new "seminar" period. The original response administration sent was received but the DFT has not agreed with it. The administration has drafted a new response for the Union's consideration. Gail Shenkman, principal at Dearborn High School has told her staff that there will be no "seminar" next year.

A grievance concerning an elementary school administrator scheduling meetings during teacher prep time remains. An administrative response is due back by June 9, 2008.

A final grievance has been filed on behalf of high school teachers who the Union believes have been improperly surplused from their building. This group grievance will be scheduled at the Superintendent's level to be heard. The outcome of this action could effect not only surplus, but layoffs.

Jeffery Oshnock , Editor

GREEN SHEET

Official Newsletter • Dearborn Federation of Teachers • AFT Local 681, AFL-CIO

15250 Mercantile Drive, Dearborn, Michigan 48120 • 313/584-5311 • FAX 313/584-3232

May 2008

Membership Meetings

2007—2008 Meetings

May 2008

27 General Membership 4:00P.M. DFT Bldg

June 2008

4 Year-End Celebration 3:00 P.M. Park Place

Summer Reading

The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future

This shocking, lively exposure of the intellectual vacuity of today's under thirty set reveals the disturbing and, ultimately, incontrovertible truth: cyberculture is turning us into a nation of know-nothing.

Can a nation continue to enjoy political and economic predominance if its citizens refuse to grow up?

For decades, concern has been brewing about the dumbed-down popular culture available to young people and the impact it has on their futures. At the dawn of the digital age, many believed they saw a hopeful answer: The Internet, e-mail, blogs, and interactive and hyper-realistic video games promised to yield a generation of sharper, more aware, and intellectually sophisticated children. The terms "information superhighway" and "knowledge economy" entered the lexicon, and we assumed that teens would use their knowledge and understanding of technology to set themselves apart as the vanguards of this new digital era.

That was the promise. But the enlightenment didn't happen. The technology that was supposed to make young adults more astute, diversify their tastes, and improve their verbal skills has had the opposite ef-

fect. According to recent reports, most young people in the United States do not read literature, visit museums, or vote. They cannot explain basic scientific methods, recount basic American history, name their local political representatives, or locate Iraq or Israel on a map. *The Dumbest Generation* is a startling examination of the intellectual life of young adults and a timely warning of its consequences for American culture and democracy.

Drawing upon exhaustive research, personal anecdotes, and historical and social analysis, Mark Bauerlein presents an uncompromisingly realistic portrait of the young American mind at this critical juncture, and lays out a compelling vision of how we might address its deficiencies.

About the Author

Mark Bauerlein is a professor of English at Emory University and has worked as a director of Research and Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts, where he oversaw studies about culture and American life.

From Amazon.com

Teacher of the Year Awards

Congratulations to all of our teachers who were nominated for the 2007—2008 Alberta Muirhead Teacher of the Year Award. This award goes to one teacher in elementary, middle school and high school level.

This year's winners were;

Dale Donelson—Haigh Elementary

Ryan Cook—Lowrey Middle School

Eleanor Shepard—Michael Berry Career Center

The DFT would like to congratulate the winners.

Demand for Teachers Up

The job market for teachers is showing signs of slow but steady improvement, according to a survey of education school officials.

The need for educators increased last year in half of the 64 fields studied, concludes the American Association for Employment in Education in its annual study of educator supply and demand. That marked the second straight year overall demand for educators has grown, after declines in 2002 and 2003, the AAEE says.

The trend paralleled the nation's economic growth and improved state and local revenue collections over the past two years, the study notes.

Shortages varied widely by subject area, however. The career center directors and school of education leaders surveyed by the AAEE reported "considerable" teacher shortages only in mathematics and six special education fields, including severe disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, and learning disability.

Twenty-two fields, meanwhile, fell into the AAEE's "some shortage" category. Those included other special education areas, physics, chemistry, and bilingual education.

Supply and demand were evenly balanced in 31 other fields, such as language arts, elementary education-middle school level, and music. Job candidates in these fields, according to the AAEE, "can have realistic expectations to obtain desirable positions, ... [but] may not find the exact position they seek in the exact location they most desire."

Surpluses of teachers were reported in elementary education-primary level, physical education, health education and social studies. No field, however, had a "considerable" surplus.

Demand for teachers also fluctuated by geographic region, the AAEE's data shows, with

the greatest shortages appearing in the Mountain-West area, the Plains, and the Southeast.

Anthony Reboria - Teacher Magazine

15 Students per Teacher

According to Alan Krueger of Princeton University, who served as chief economist for the U.S. Department of Labor in the Clinton administration, lowering class sizes in Tennessee narrowed the achievement gap between blacks and whites by 38 percent.

In a four-point plan to ensure that all children are educated to their full potential, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching President Ernest L. Boyer called for reducing class size to "no more than 15 students per teacher" for the early elementary grades. The National Association of Elementary School Principals has revised its class size policy statement from a student-teacher ratio of 20 to 1 down to recommending a student-teacher ratio of 15 to 1.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, "A growing body of research demonstrates that students attending small classes in the early grades make more rapid educational progress than students in larger classes, and that these achievement gains persist well after students move on to larger classes in later grades."

Given the strong support of parents and teachers — and the demonstrated effectiveness of smaller classes — Americans should urge their elected representatives at all levels to support continued class size reduction. It's education reform that works!

From the NEA

New HS Graduation Requirements Create Need for Change

As Michigan raises the bar on high school coursework, public school districts are spreading safety nets to catch students who can't quite reach it.

Schools have always offered help to struggling students, but academic assistance and credit recovery, or make-up courses, have taken on greater importance with Michigan's new high school graduation requirements. With every student required to complete four years of math and English, including algebra, geometry and algebra II, and three each of science and social studies, one failed class can derail graduation.

Adding time to the school day or shifting to a trimester schedule are two of the most popular responses to the new high school curriculum.

Under the most traditional high school schedule, the school year is divided into two semesters and students take six classes per semester, or 12 per year. A trimester plan splits the year into thirds, with students taking five classes per trimester, or 15 per year.

Under the semester plan, students earn one math credit by taking algebra for a full year; in the trimester plan, they earn one credit by completing algebra in two-thirds of a year, leaving them one-third of the year to take a different class. That class could be an elective, or, for struggling students, a time to catch up.

Students who complete algebra or English in two-thirds of the year spend less time on it than they would under a semester schedule, but other educators said they believe students will learn just as much. Since there are only five classes per day, each class period is slightly longer.

At the same time, those students now have room in their schedules for more electives.

From the Michigan Education report

Negotiation Update

As of May 22, the administration has not responded to the proposal submitted to them by the DFT.

Constitutionally, if a tentative agreement is not reached by Wednesday, June 4, 2008, negotiations will be continued throughout the summer months with a resolution being brought to the members in the fall.

AFT—Michigan Convention Update

DFT delegates attended the 70th annual AFT—Michigan Convention held at the Sheraton Detroit Riverside Hotel on May 2 and 3, 2008.

May issues were discussed at this convention, including the reading and passage of a number of resolutions. These resolutions included opposition to the fair tax ballot proposal, P.A. 112, to promote quality early childhood education, repealing of NCLB, Health care for Michigan campaign, Michigan green schools, opposition to "Right to Work" to name a few.

Also, the DFT delegation stood in unity against a mandatory dues increase that would of ended up increasing DFT members dues by \$5 per month beginning in September 2008, and an additional \$2 a month in September 2009.

Because of our delegations efforts, the DFT Executive Board has decided that member dues will not change for fiscal year 2009. The AFT—Michigan increase, along with the eventual AFT National increase will be absorbed by the DFT. The current dues structure will be review in mid 2009 to determine what, if any, dues changes need to be made.

DFT convention delegates will travel to Chicago to represent us at the AFT National Convention beginning July 10th and going through July 14th.