

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

February 2008

Dearborn, MI

Membership Meetings

2007—2008 Meetings

February 2008

26 General Membership 4:00 P.M. Lindbergh

March 2008

25 General Membership 4:00 P.M. Stout

April 2008

22 General Member 4:00 P.M. Bryant

May 2008

27 General Membership 4:00 P.M. EFHS

June 2008

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

2007 Dues

Full time DFT members paid \$59 monthly for their 2007 dues, for an annual total of \$590. Those working less than full time paid \$29.50 monthly, for an annual total of \$295.

Bi Weekly Pay Checks

Pay checks will begin to be issued on a bi-weekly basis starting in August 2008. The projected date for this transition is Friday, August 29.

Members who are on a 12 month pay schedule will receive their last 2007-08 paycheck on August 20th.

Beginning on August 29th, all members will receive their first installment of their 2008-09 salary. Paychecks will then be distributed every other Friday throughout the 2008—09 school year.

Transfers

Transfer request a for the 2008-2009 school year must be submitted to Human Resources by April 1, 2008. Transfers requests can be submitted beginning the opening of school to April 1 of each school year. As outlined in the DFT contract, the transfer procedure applies only to primary vacancies which become officially known between the opening of school and June 30. Your transfer request must be received in Human Resources prior to the posting of a position to be considered for that primary vacancy.

Retirement

New school employees would become eligible for partial post-retirement health insurance benefits after 10 years of service under legislation adopted by the House and Senate as part of 2008 budget negotiations. An individual would first be entitled to 30 percent of the post-retirement health benefits after 10 years on the job and earn 3 percent for each additional year of service. The lengths of service and eligibility requirements are more stringent than under the previous benefit plan. The benefit would begin only after age 60. It would also increase the premiums that new employees must pay if they choose an enhanced retirement program with more benefits and would limit the purchase of "service credits" that allow a school employee to retire early with a full pension.

Senate Bill 0546 passed the House in a 65-44 vote and the Senate in a 21-17 vote, both on Oct. 1. Senate Bill 546 was originally introduced by Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, in May.

Mandatory Health Care?

On the campaign trail and in congress, mandatory comprehensive health insurance is a very hot issue. Comprehensive health insurance is more than the catastrophic coverage that would cover someone that is diagnosed with a very costly illness or who is hurt in a severe accident. Comprehensive coverage covers routine or preventative care.

Funding for this type of coverage would be paid for by bringing in the young and healthy into the insurance pool. 56% of the 47 million that are uninsured are adults aged 18 – 34. According to the Commonwealth fund study, these young adults need minimal health care. \$1,500 a year on average. In most states, including Michigan, young adults buy health insurance and are charged premiums that reflect low medical needs. A 20 year old male living in Dearborn can get “Young Adult Blue” PPO from Blue Cross/Blue Shield for a premium of \$47.14 per month. A 50 year old male in Dearborn can get “Value Blue” PPO from Blue Cross/Blue Shield for \$171.70 per month. These plans offer the same if not identical coverage. The 20 year old saves almost \$1500.00 per year compared with the 50 year old. (see ehealthinsurance.com).

Democratic Senator Ron Wyden and Republican Senator Bob Bennet have unveiled the “Healthy Americans Act”. Within 2 years of enactment, States must create a system as outlined in the bill to provide individuals the opportunity to purchase Healthy Americans Private Insurance (HAPI) plan that meets the requirements of the Act. Everyone that is not on Medicaid or another government program must buy coverage.

The act, nor the plan being proposed by Hillary Clinton, allows such price breaks for the young. This forces the young to subsidize the health insurance coverage for the middle aged.

Young people already pay to support Medicare recipients. Do we want to lower our premiums by compelling the young to pay more?

47 million Americans are uninsured. Almost 10 million of those 47 million have household incomes of at least \$75,000. Some people are not interested in purchasing insurance. 14 million of the 47 million are already eligible for government programs such as Medicaid (for low income adults) and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program. The nearly 24 million left do need some type help. Do we want young adults to foot this bill?

Sources: Commonwealth Fund, ehealthinsurance.com, U.S. Census, Wall Street Journal

U.S. Students Trail Peers in Science, Math

U.S. students are lagging behind their peers in other countries in science and math, test results show,

The test, the Program for International Student Assessment, was given to 15 year olds in 30 industrialized countries last year. It focused on science but also included a math portion.

The 30 countries, including the U.S, make up the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which runs the test.

The average scores for U.S. students were lower than the average scores for the group as a whole.

U.S. students also had an average science score that was lower than the average science score in 16 other OECD countries. In math, U.S. students did even worse—posting an average score that was lower than the average in 23 other leading industrialized countries.

Source: The Wall Street Journal

Ohio Settles Defamation Case

AP-Three teenagers who sued over their lengthy suspensions from school for calling a teacher a pedophile on a Web site have reached a settlement with the school district, attorneys in the case said Thursday.

The boys were suspended in November from Taylor High School for the maximum 90 days for the Facebook posting that included the face and last name of the teacher and referred to him as a member of the North American Man/Boy Love Association, which supports sex between men and boys.

The teens, who argued that the Facebook entry should be considered protected speech because it was a parody, served 10 days of the suspension in December before a federal judge ordered school officials to let them return pending a court hearing.

Terms of the settlement between the teenagers and the Three Rivers School District near Cincinnati weren't immediately released by attorneys.

School board member David Shuey said the settlement would allow the boys to avoid expulsion. The teens also would do community service, he said.

Ohio law gives school boards the right to discipline students for out-of-school conduct that is harmful and is directed at school employees, he said.

"Everybody could agree that this was hurtful speech," said Ralph Gary Winters, an attorney representing the district. "The question was, whether the state has the power to control it."

Marc Mezibov, an attorney representing the students, said he believes the deal will allow the boys to get the credit for their school work. He said the teens are satisfied with the proposed settlement.

The students have already written a letter of apology to the teacher, he said.

Report Finds Better Scores in New Crop of Teachers

Prospective teachers who took state teacher licensing exams from 2002 to 2005 scored higher on SATs in high school and earned higher grades in college than their counterparts who took the exams in the mid-1990s, the report said.

On the other hand, the report found that those attracted to the profession continued to make up a strikingly homogeneous group — prospective teachers were overwhelmingly white and female — at a time when the proportion of public school students nationwide who are black, Hispanic or other minorities was nearly half and rising.

The most successful educational systems in the world, like those in Singapore and Finland, recruit teachers from among the top third of their college graduates. By contrast, some studies over the years have found that the United States recruits from the bottom third.

Dr. Gitomer said he and his colleagues at the testing service based their conclusions on a comparison of the academic profiles of 153,000 aspiring teachers from 20 states who

took licensing exams from 2002 to 2005, with the profiles of about 140,000 teachers from the same states who took the licensing exams from 1994 to 1997.

The testing service, based in Princeton, N.J., produces a series of teacher licensing exams, known as the Praxis tests, which assess academic competency in more than 100 subject areas. Dozens of states have adopted the Praxis tests as their teacher licensing exams, Dr. Gitomer said.

The average SAT verbal scores of prospective teachers passing the Praxis tests to teach English, science, social studies, math and art from 2002 to 2005 were higher than those of prospective teachers in the mid-1990s — and were also higher than the average SAT scores for all college graduates, the report said.

The SAT scores of prospective teachers who took the licensing tests in elementary education and physical education, however, were significantly below the average for all college graduates, it said.

The college grades of prospective teachers has also improved. About 40 percent of the prospective teachers taking the licensing tests from 2002 to 2005 had a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on the traditional 4-point scale during college, up from 26 percent in the 1990s, the report said.

The percentage of candidates earning lower than a 3.0 G.P.A. decreased to 20 percent from 32 percent.

Sam Dillon—New York Times

Michigan Standards in Science and Math among lowest in U.S.

The Northwest Evaluation Association, a national non-profit organization that provides research-based assessments, professional training, and consulting services to improve teaching and learning, has concluded that testing done on behalf of NCLB varies greatly from state to state. Among the states studied, Colorado, Wisconsin, and Michigan generally have the lowest proficiency standards in reading, while South Carolina, California, Maine, and Massachusetts have the highest. In math, Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin have the lowest standards, while South Carolina, Massachusetts, California and New Mexico have the highest.

Who is the Professional?

“A good deal of what passes for ‘professional development’ in schools is a joke...radically under-resourced, brief, not sustained, designed for ‘one size fits all’, imposed rather than owned, lacking any intellectual coherence, treated as a special add-on event rather than part of the natural process, trapped in the constraints of the bureaucratic system.”

Matthew Miles, Senior Research Associate
Center for Policy Research

Grievances

According to Vice President David Atkins, one grievance is pending on behalf of the teachers at Dearborn High and the new 7th period.

Jeffery Oshnock , Editor

Weingarten Rights: Do You Know The Rules?

If the Union had only one opportunity to make a point with its members, it would have to be about their “Weingarten rights” - the right to have a Union representative present if they find themselves in a situation where they may be disciplined.

The member’s Union representative can be another member, their Building Representative, or a Union official. It is the members choice as to who this representative is. The important thing is that the members know they have the right to make this request, and Administration must comply.

Why is this important? There are many reasons, but most importantly, many members get very uneasy when questioned by their supervisors. They tend to get rattled, go into long explanations that offer too much information, apologizing and often give administrators ammunition to sustain a disciplinary action.

Unlike Miranda Rights, where law enforcement must give suspects a list of their rights, employers do not have to tell members about their rights. Members have to ask for them, and in some cases demand them. It is the member’s responsibility to request Union representation, administration cannot provide it for you.

The following guidelines are a brief description of the use of Weingarten Rights:

The member must make a clear request for Union representation before or during the interview. Members cannot be punished for making such a request.

The administrator must either grant the request or postpone the questioning until Union representation arrives; deny the request, but end the interview at once, or give the member the choice of continuing without representation or ending the interview immediately. It is the opinion of the Union that members never agree to continue without proper representation. In our contract, hearings can be postponed for up to one day. (Article XXV, J,2)

If administration denies the member’s request for Union representation and continues to ask questions, they are committing an unfair labor practice. Members can legally refuse to answer questions. If the administrator obeys the law and waits for the Union’s representative to arrive, then the following rules apply:

Once the representative arrives, the administrator must inform them about the subject matter of the interview—the type of misconduct under discussion.

The representative and the member should be allowed to talk privately before questioning begins.

The Union representative can speak during the interview and, if necessary, ask that questions be clarified. The representative cannot bargain over the purpose of the interview.

The Union Representative can advise the member on how to answer any or all questions, can object to improper questioning, and has the right, once questioning is ended, to provide additional information. The Union Representative cannot tell members not to answer questions, or to give false answers.

Weingarten Rights do not extend to meetings where no questioning is involved, but rather just one-way communication, from the administrator to the member, or a discussion— without the threat of discipline— about job performance.

Remember, members do have the right to call Weingarten into play if they have a reasonable expectation some disciplinary action may result from the meeting. The key word here is **may**. If there is the slightest concern that the meeting could turn disciplinary, **ask for your Weingarten Rights to Union representation**.

At October’s Building Rep meeting, all building reps were given business sized cards with the Weingarten Rights printed on one side and brief outline of the implementation of the right on the other. If you have not received one, see your building rep. We have given out all we currently have and are ordering more. Knowing your right to representation can help you avoid future headaches. Keep your Weingarten Rights card in a safe place. Knowledge is the ultimate power.

Why Do I Need to Make A Political Contribution?

Elected Officials:

Decide the amount of money coming to your district that is available for raises, health care and professional development.

Decide who is certified to be a teacher and what it takes to continue to be certified.

Decide how much you will receive in your retirement check and how much you will pay for retiree health care.

Make rules covering special education, alternative education, and health and safety regulations.

This is only a short list. The people we elect to the State Legislature, State School Board and the Governor's office make decisions that affect every aspect of our working life. The union can bargain the greatest contract ever, but if the Legislature doesn't send the district the money it doesn't matter, and the best contract doesn't address retirement, retiree health care, or special education rules.

We can have a voice in those decisions being made in Lansing, but only if we participate in the political process. We need to elect people who support public education and understand the issues of school employees. We need to elect our friends, and it takes money to do that.

Why do you need to make a political contribution?

Because you can go along and let others decide how you will do your job, or you can make a stand, and help elect those who will support you. It is that simple.

POLITICAL ACTION CONTRIBUTION

To: Dearborn City School District

This authorizes you to withhold from my compensation _____ every payroll up to \$_____, and to periodically pay the amount withheld to the Dearborn Federation of Teachers/PAC. This authorization is for the calendar year ending on December 31, 2008.

Name (Please print): _____

First, Middle, Last

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Contributions to the committee listed here are not deductible as charitable contributions for either federal or state income tax purposes.

Affirmative Consent to Political Contribution - Section 55(6) of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act provides that a corporation, a joint stock company, a domestic dependent sovereign, or a labor organization "may solicit or obtain contributions for a separate segregated fund established on an automatic basis, including but not limited to a payroll deduction plan, only if the individual who is contributing to the fund affirmatively consents to the contribution at least once in every calendar year. Recommended Payroll Deduction Form