

GREEN SHEET

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER • DEARBORN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS • AFT LOCAL 681, AFL-CIO

May 2007

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Dearborn, MI

General Membership

Future meeting dates

May 22 O.L. Smith 4 PM

June 6 is the annual end of the year party at Park Place beginning at 3 pm.

Tentative Contract Agreement

The DFT and DPS Board of Education have reached a tentative agreement on Tuesday, May 15, 2007. President Harris made the contract presentation to the membership Thursday, May 17, 2007 at Edsel Ford H.S.

A Q/A is scheduled for Monday, May 21, 2007 at Dearborn H.S beginning at 4:15 pm. President Harris will answer members questions regarding the terms of the proposed contract. A ratification vote is set for Wednesday, May 23rd in the buildings.

Homecoming

It's hard to believe but the school year is almost over and summer vacation is just around the corner! With that, we think of barbecues, the beach, vacations and of course, the Dearborn Homecoming!!! As always, Homecoming is scheduled for the first weekend in August – which means it will be August 3rd through August 5th.

Volunteers are needed to staff the DFT booth at Homecoming! If you would consider helping out and having a little fun while you're at it, please call Tracie Lake-Kinnaird at Henry Ford Elementary at X74706 or e-mail me at kinnait@dearborn.k12.mi.us.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Credit Union

Dearborn Schools Credit Union to become Member Focus Community Credit Union

May 9, 2007 - Dearborn, Michigan - Effective July 1, 2007, Dearborn Schools Credit Union (DSCU) will officially become Member Focus Community Credit Union to reflect the credit unions expanded area of service. Founded in 1935, DSCU was initially established to serve the employees and family members of Dearborn Public Schools. On August 24, 2004, DSCU established a community charter allowing the credit union to service any person who lives, works, worships or attends school in western Wayne County. The credit union wanted a new name that reflected its growing and diverse membership but that did not abandon its mission of member service. The name change will not affect any of the credit unions products or its excellent member service.

Member Focus Community Credit Union is a federally insured, nonprofit, member-owned, full-service financial institution that has been headquartered in Dearborn, Michigan since 1935. Any person who lives, works, worships or attends school in western Wayne County, Michigan is eligible to join. For more information, visit www.dscu.org.

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IDEA, Inclusion and School Violence

An excerpt from "Educating Eric" by Robert Tomsho and Daniel Golden

The milestone 1975 law now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act brought more special education students into public schools and, wherever possible, regular classrooms. By mixing with non-disabled children, the theory went, special-needs students would learn more, behave better and gain social acceptance. By 2005, about 54% of special-education students were educated in "fully inclusive" settings -- spending 80% or more of the school day in a mainstream classroom -- up from 33% in 1990. A special-education student costs nearly twice as much to educate as a regular student, according to the Center for Special Education Finance, a Palo Alto, Calif., research firm.

But, like the 1970s push to deinstitutionalize mentally ill adults, educational mainstreaming has produced troubling side effects. While many benefit, some special-needs students flounder in regular programs. Lacking adequate federal funding, public schools often are reluctant to pay for the services such students need. In many districts, mainstreaming has contributed to high teacher turnover and classroom commotion.

Perhaps most alarming, evidence is mounting that special-education students account for a disproportionate share of school violence and disciplinary problems.

In January, John Odgren, a sophomore with Asperger syndrome, a form of autism, was charged with stabbing a freshman to death at Lincoln-Sudbury High outside Boston, where he had been mainstreamed. That same month, Douglas Chanthabouly, an 18-

year-old with a history of mental illness, allegedly shot and killed a classmate at Foss High School in Tacoma, Wash., where he mostly attended regular classes.

In Texas, Missouri and Minnesota, special-education students are suspended at roughly twice the rate of regular students, state reports indicate. In large school districts in Dade County, Fla., and Fairfax County, Va., they are suspended four times as often as other students, according to state data.

In Massachusetts, special-education students account for 17% of enrollment, but were responsible for more than half of all incidents involving weapons, assaults or physical threats in the 2005-06 school year, state data indicate. In Pennsylvania, 883 special-education students were removed to alternative settings for weapon or drug violations in the 2004-05 year, more than twice the total five years earlier, according to that state.

When the matter was studied by the federal government in 2001, the General Accounting Office found 50 incidents of serious misconduct -- such as violent behavior or bringing weapons to school -- for every 1,000 special-education students in middle school and high school, compared to 15 for every 1,000 general-education students.

Students suffering from learning disabilities or emotional, mental and physical disorders make up 14% of the public-school population. Specialists say most students with learning or physical disabilities make progress, and pose little threat. But difficulties can arise when students with severe emotional or behavioral problems are mainstreamed without specially trained teachers and aides, or precautions to avoid overstimulation, they say.

Source – The Wall Street Journal May 12, 2007

Price of Higher Education Keeps Rising

College students and their parents know the price of higher education keeps going up. But right now some in our state fear those costs could go even higher.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proposed two separate college budgets -- one for the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University, and another for the other 12 public schools in the state.

Opponents of the plan say putting money into two different pots will hurt those other 12 schools.

Paying for college has become the No. 1 concern for Central Michigan University senior Jason Nagy. "When I first got here, tuition wasn't a concern," he said. "Every year since then, tuition has gone up." And some fear it could get even worse if Granholm's idea of regarding separate budgets to fund public universities becomes a reality.

State Rep. Bill Caul is vice chairman of the House Higher Education Committee.

"The administration wants to separate out and provide even more dollars for those three universities than it does for the other 12 and it will be harder to find the appropriations to make sure CMU and the others can continue to grow," he said.

According to a budget office spokesman, separate budgets are necessary to recognize the "uniqueness" of Michigan, Michigan State, and Wayne State's research activities. Caul says that doesn't make any sense, and CMU argues they are also doing groundbreaking real-world research.

"We have a cancer drug right now that will go after cancer cells with pinpoint accuracy," said CMU spokesman Steve Smith.

"We are developing synthetic blood cells on this campus. We are doing nationally recognized research for Huntington's and Parkinson's disease."

(source—WJRT)

Contract calls for Drug Testing

Hawaii's public school teachers ratified their controversial new contract that calls for random drug testing.

The teachers approved the measure with 61 percent voting for the new contract and 38 percent voting against. Voided votes counted for 0.5 percent of the total counted. Hawaii State Teachers Association officials originally said the 1,900 absentee ballots that were due by May 2 would determine the outcome. The vote was too close to call last week after about 8,000 of the 13,000 teachers cast their ballots. The contract calls for an 11 percent raise over two years. In addition, about 2,000-3,000 teachers who work after school, like coaches or band instructors, will get an extra 25 percent pay hike.

Many teachers have expressed objections with the drug testing clause and the hike in health care premiums. "I think it's going to have a negative effect on the (Department of Education) recruiting teachers from the mainland. People are just not going to be willing to come into a school district that is going to drug test its teachers," HSTA Executive Director Joan Husted said.

"I'm glad we got the raise, but I guess a lot of people didn't like the drug testing. I mean I think it's a good idea to drug test, but singling out teachers -- I think that's wrong. If they want to test us, they should test all the state workers," Washington Middle School teacher Lance Iida said.

KITV—Honolulu

Michigan's Education Time Bomb

Michigan's school retirement system is riddled with loopholes and slipshod policies costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and driving the state's public education system toward financial crisis.

The impact could be devastating to public education in Michigan, the only state that makes its schools bear the entire burden of retiree pensions and health care. This year's bill -- an estimated \$1,015 per student -- is more than schools spend on books, buses, computer technology and building maintenance combined.

The retirement assessment -- set by the state but paid by individual school districts -- is now at a record high of 17.74 percent of each district's payroll. That rate is expected to jump to 30 percent by 2020 -- a level that all sides agree would break the backs of Michigan schools.

Phil Stoddard, head of the state office that administers the retirement fund, defends the system.

"I wouldn't say that it's too generous," said Stoddard, executive director of the Office of Retirement Services. But Tom Clay, former director of the state's Executive Budget Office, disagrees. "It's a time bomb," he said. "It's a train wreck. Use whatever term you want. And it hasn't reached (the worst of the) crisis yet."

An analysis by The Detroit News of data obtained through the Freedom of Information Act found:

- An estimated \$2 million per year in taxpayer dollars is spent on retirees who qualify for lifetime health care through a loophole. People who worked in state public schools for at least 10 years earlier in their careers can

return to work for 102 hours -- about 13 work days -- at age 60 and receive taxpayer-funded health care for the rest of their lives.

- Hundreds of "retired" school administrators are collecting pensions and retiree health care while continuing to collect a salary working the same jobs as contract employees, increasing the retirement burden. The practice, which one critic calls "a scam," costs taxpayers about \$25 million a year.

- As much as \$1 billion could ultimately be lost through a program that sells early retirement at a discounted price. School employees can buy up to five years of service credit, paying the state so they can retire after 25 years instead of 30. But the purchase price of those years of service factors in the cost of pension benefits but not retiree health care. More than 23,000 school employees have purchased a total of almost 100,000 years of service. At current health care rates, that would cost school districts \$1 billion -- as much as the state spends on road construction and repair each year.

Schools may shave \$30,000 from their payroll a year by replacing a veteran teacher with a teacher straight out of college, but that retiree will cost the overall state school retirement system about \$50,000 a year. "They're saving money now but paying more later," said former state treasurer Doug Roberts, now director of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at Michigan State University. "There's no advantage to it."

- Michigan pays for lifetime health care for employees who, in some instances, work as few as five years in public schools. That health insurance is considered to be a premier plan with excellent benefits and low co-pays, according to a health care insurance analyst.

The schools paid \$634 million in medical bills for retirees and their spouses and dependents in 2006.

Rob French—Detroit News, May 10, 2007