



Educators and more since 1942
June 2026 Newsletter



One last message from President Lincoln

Have you ever had something to do that you just keep finding reasons to put off? That doesn't really happen to me very often, but this newsletter has proven to be one of them. Early in negotiations training they taught us that people make fewer deals than deadlines do. I thought that was nonsense, but it really is true. Today, I have no more opportunities to punt.

I am tentative to share all the things that are in my head as I contemplate retiring from a place that has been home to me my entire life. So bear with me as I ramble, which I so often do. I first came to East Detroit Public Schools in 1968 as a kindergartner in Mrs. Schubel's class. I remember the little sign with her name around my neck standing in the gym at Deerfield Elementary School. She thought I daydreamed too much. There is a housing development there now. I remember the first day at Oakwood Jr. High School when Mr. Olds taught us all how to open a padlock for our lockers. Miss Mathison thought I daydreamed a lot. She started to teach me how to write. There is a housing development there now. I remember my first day at the High School. I had a map to learn how to get from third old to third new. Hint, there wasn't a logical way to do it! Erich Homolka gave structure to my desire to dream. Fortunately that building is still here, although change is definitely afoot.

This week at the high school PLC, I shared that instead of celebrating on my last day in High School in 1981, I cried. I loved my life there. I was successful and was as happy as I could imagine being in high school. The people that taught and coached me made me feel special. I was in the senior hall of fame, one of a dozen in a class of 900 or so. This place gave me a great start in life.

Perhaps the tears came from the realization that never again in my life would I be so carefree and devoid of responsibility or duty. My parents had high expectations for me and those that prepared me for life pushed me to meet those expectations. East Detroit, as a part of my family, has given me so many things. It sheltered me as I grew, free from fear or want. I did not know how little we had compared to the world. I only knew we had enough. It gave me the opportunity to pursue my life in football after high school and prepared me academically to accept challenges that I didn't have any business thinking I should accept. Albion College was a great place to continue to grow but the world became a much bigger place very quickly. My interests and concerns rapidly expanded beyond my hometown silos, but my feet were always firmly planted here.

I was prepared to get up every day and go to work and do my best. I was prepared to show up and chop the wood til the job got done. My Dad took my brother and I to a Teamster picket line when I was small to teach us that we had to fight for our spot at the table. He would take me to work on his laundry route to pick up soiled linens and replace them with fresh ones. After killing myself with him on college spring break, he stressed to me that “B’s” weren’t quite good enough. There was always an opportunity to get better. He was not one to praise much. He bragged on us plenty, out of earshot, but not praise. My mother gave me my competitive nature, but my father taught me to work. He was very important to who I am. He was able to forge his own identity here at the school. First, with a second job with the Police department and then as a security guard here for 20 years after I got him to retire. As I chose a different path with praise, I hope to choose a more relaxing retirement than he did. He understood me and how to motivate me. I try to reflect so many of the qualities he instilled in me. He shaped who I am. I'd like to think it is much like East Detroit, consistent, hard working and reliable.

I mention these things as a guidepost to those that follow my work here. I will likely be around in some capacity with the Macomb Federation, but you as a union will need to make your way in an increasingly hostile world toward public educators. Everyone wants to tell you how to do your job and hold you responsible for failing to overcome the obstacles they have placed before you.

You can not passively allow whomever sits at my desk to fix things or rally you in an emergency. You must become more active advocates for your own well being. You must coalesce as a group to advocate for one another. Many of you are not career educators, at least not yet. I hope you decide to become one. This is not a job. It is a profession. It's one that defines who you are, not what you are. At least it does if you do it right.

This is a great profession. This is a great place to work. It can be as good or as bad as you wish to make it. You don't have to agree with everyone in charge. You don't have to be a robot checking boxes. In fact, I encourage you to be anything but that. If you give to these kids with your heart, you will get back more than you can imagine. It is the one benefit the union can't negotiate for you, but it is the most important one to have. The union's job is to help you find your way, provide for your family and protect your back as you search for the career you deserve.

Go get it.

I worked from the first day I graduated from college. I subbed in this district every day in the Spring when I got out of school. I coached football here, but got a job at DeLaSalle teaching high school seniors at 21 years old. I worked for \$12,350. I couldn't spend it all. I had checks in my wallet for weeks at a time. That frugality would serve me well over the years of cuts, kids, life, union budgets, negotiations and the list goes on.

I took the job in East Detroit the following year. I was laid off 5 times early on. Twice in one year, but I was always called back. I had opportunities to leave, but I always came back. It still felt like home. It was home. It still is.

Our district has been in peril for a long time. So many factors have played into that peril. Things ranging from residency laws for public workers in the city of Detroit to embezzlement and financial malfeasance by trusted members of the school community and the Board of Education. Declining enrollment, phases of residential flight, School of Choice controversy, failing test scores and the tragedy of death in the pool all seemed to write an apparent epitaph for this district; my home. Each of these crises required the hard work ethic and determination I felt I had developed to find a way through. That, coupled with a sense of service that was hammered into me as a developing soul, led me to try to find a way to make things better. The kids in this community deserve better than we were providing. They were, and are, challenging, but they need us to help them. They need us to give our best effort to provide them with the opportunities to succeed that I had. The opportunities each of us had.

Not all of your stories are like mine, Some are, some are far more like the kids we have today. The reality is that we all have taken a journey that has meandered like a great river through the countryside that ultimately leads us directly to this place. A place that requires all of the experiences we thought were senseless hardships, diversions and delays. We each bring our collective experiences to this terribly difficult, wonderful job in an effort to help these children prepare to make a positive impact on this miserable, beautiful world we live in. They seem to challenge every opportunity we give them and reject every lesson offered. However, when it's all said and done, some kid you hardly remember in class crosses the stage or sends a letter, or drops in and says, "Thank you, you made a big difference in my life."

This is not a job. It's a career. It is not what you do, it should be who you are. If it's not, then you won't last long here. It's too hard. It's not always rewarding. Sometimes it doesn't feel like it's worth it. I have felt all of those things over the last 40 plus years. I have failed at sooooo many things. I did not take EDHS to a state football title. Major disappointment. I wasn't even close. I was fortunate to be able to coach Track and Field for 35 years and coach several state champions though. At some point, friends thought that the self confidence, the drive to not back down from a fight and the inflated superhero complex would play well in the union. Actually Jim Palonis pushed me hard from the earliest days of my career. Children and coaching brought needed humility and empathy. I'm not so sure I have really acquired either in adequate levels.

My opportunity to represent members as a building rep and then to be trusted by Dara Knill to take on negotiation duties changed the arc of my career. The people that supported my learning and curbed my ego and temperament as I matured, and then when I ascended to the presidency, are wholly responsible for any success I have had in this position. My wife Debbie; my first spouse Natalie; my kids Victoria, Joshua, Cayla, Ashley and Matthew; my parents and mother in law all shaped how I think and what I prioritize. Here at work Brigid Koszewski, John Costandi, Linda Clinton, Lois Johnson, Bill Rohloff, Art Miller, Terry Booth, Barb Mayer, David Hecker, Randi Weingarten, Marina Russo, Ryan McLeod, Christy Gibson, Mike Mayer and Doug Ulmer, as well as many others, were all so important in helping me to develop the scope of vision and understanding I needed to service all the different needs we have as a staff.

I have had to make many decisions in this job that have not been popular. Even in my own household. I believe that the least compensated need to be cared for first. I hope our members have been able to understand that. I have always believed in the need to protect insurance in lieu of salary. That is something I hope you take to heart as choices present themselves in the future. Lost benefits NEVER return. None of us makes the money we deserve, but we are amongst the most affluent members of this community. I do believe we are paid as much as the district can commit to over the long term. The environment is never perfect. In fact, it is far from it. I challenge you all, however, to manifest the changes you desire. Demand professional pay and treatment with professional conduct and performance. As we have risen to that standard, we have improved our standing and reputation.

This district is in desperate need of renewed purpose and place. The things that made East Detroit so memorable stemmed in large part from the city and schools being so closely connected. Entertainment and vocational programs had shared space and purpose. Leaders worked together to provide programs that provided child care thru parks and rec play and summer basketball school and junior olympics. Those, as well as adult education programs, vocational education, music in the parks and school centered cultural activities ranging from concerts to big time wrestling and a teen center that hosted activities nearly every day made this place special.

The schools were the center of the community. Twelve elementary buildings, three junior highs and a gigantic high school. There are fewer people and kids in the community, but if they all came to our schools, we would be a major high school in this area. I challenge all of our community and district leaders to come to find a way to make schools the center of the community again. It is the best way I can think of to solve the ailments we suffer from.

Working here is never going to be easy. Anything worth doing seldom is. Continue to demand excellence from your students, the administration, the union and yourselves. East Detroit/ Eastpointe has been my home for more than 60 years. It gave me identity, it gave me the security to care for and protect my family. It gave me, a skinny kid with a lisp and a st. st. st. stutter, the opportunity to meet four Presidents of the United States and several State Governors. I had the honor to testify on educator's behalf in Congress and to speak to thousands of people from the Capitol steps. All this while having the joy of yapping about my love of history every single day to the joy and admiration of thousands of bored to death kids for forty years. This is the place I grew up, started my family, bought my first home and laid my father and daughter to rest. What you do with it after I leave this week means a great deal to me. My brother and mother still live here and I will always be somewhere in the shadows cheering for each of you to fall in love with this place; like I did.

All of my best to each of you and thank you for allowing me to be a part of your lives and lead your union. It has been one of the greatest honors of my life.

Fraternally yours,
Linc

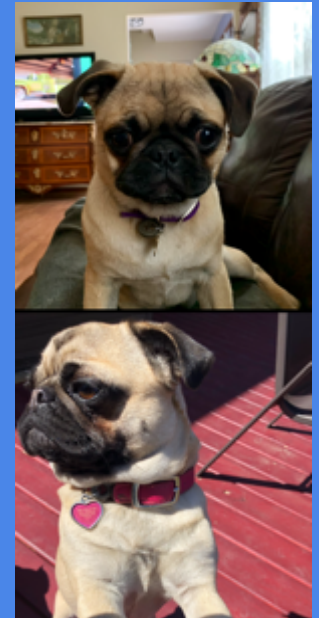
Merit Pay comin & new Leadership in tha Union

By Bella Bear Stocks and Briton Warrior Stocks
Hey there Shamrockers,

This is Bella Bear & Briton Warrior Stocks with r final entry to edgeamacate you guys before we take the old man to the couch for retirement. Hezza bit old and thinks his bodyz gonna hold up to golfin and grandkids. We got some news...couch potato is the way to fo.

Friends, you got some new peeps in charge of tha union. Stephanie and Lauretta and Kimberly and Ed and Kelly are all pretty kool. Just hopin they arent cat people cuz ya know those cats just sneak around so much. Swat you on the head outta know where. Im thinkin Stephaknees is... oh boi. Where wuz we?

There is a new idea to get some BONUS PAY. It is a Merit Pay Grant. It DOES NOT AFFECT YOUR NORMAL CONTRACT. You Need fill out a survey that came in your email from Superintendent Gibson ASAP.



I hope you do it. You gotta do it. Thaz the only way to git the grant. The new leaders will work out fair rules to use so that everybody getz a chance to earn some extra money. Maybe for the type of job ya have or the extra work you do or how good you teach them little snot lickers to read or count. When you finally git the money you dezerve be shure you dont git crazy and forget how hard everyone iz workin to keep you in this job. Nobodi iz gittin up to make life tuffer on you than itz gotta be. Try to assume that the bossis are tryin to do there best just like you r.. The kidz dont alwayz wanna be there but if they are there, itz a choice to respect so givem yur best shot at gittinem smartur.

The job you guys have is a gud 1. Trezure yur chance to be a part of thos kidz lives and help em make the wurld a better place. Britty and me will be watchin you and maybe dad 2.

C u at a futbol game maybee in the booth.

Bella & Brit

The Elementary buildings are lowering class size

This year's staffing demonstrated a new district commitment to lowering class sizes in the elementary buildings for next year. Several new positions have been added, using 31a funding, to each building in an effort to lower class sizes and increase test scores.

The administration is hopeful that the decline we experienced this year in several areas can be turned back around and we can experience the growth we had demonstrated over the past several years. Certainly the switch to K-5 buildings experienced some growing pains. Perhaps the additional staff will help get things back on track.

There is some controversy regarding how and which I-ready growth scores are being used for evaluation. A team of elementary leaders sat down with administration to sort out how the data is used. More work has to be done for next year, but scores used for this year will remain.

EFE Officer changes for the upcoming school year

President: Stephanie Jovanovski- High School

Secondary VP: currently open

Elementary VP: Laretta Fischer- Forest Park

Treasurer: Kimberly Mitchell- Multiple elementary buildings

Secretary: Ed Craine- Bellview

Negotiations Chair: Kelly Burg-Pleasantview

Negotiations team: currently open

Elections Chair: Karen Nardone- Cresentwood

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 better paying jobs. This is the Teach for America model and it will kill the profession of teaching and destroy our education system through incompetence. Teachers know that the attrition rate for teachers is high in part because it is a difficult job, comparatively underpaid and most certainly under appreciated. An underlying cause is actually the feeling of isolation teachers have that leads to a sense of professional disappointment as compared to the dreams they had when they entered the field. It's hard to make a career out of being a teacher these days, and it always has been. This country's highlighted teachers are all to 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

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 unite 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 experience it, creating 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 who feared something they knew nothing about. We must not allow educational reform to be driven by those who 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 Mr. Ditto from, "Teachers." 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 who 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 shooting stars won't fulfill our

dreams. It will take comets. I don't want us to burn out in a flash. I want us to succeed and endure. We have been losing faith that retiring as a successful educator is even a possibility. I was once taught the Star of Bethlehem 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 our profession to develop a comet's tail to show we are here and we are worthy of notice. Combine our collective substance and blaze a trail of success through the sky for all to see. Finally, 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

I leave you all with this thought. I have confidence that you can do the job that is at hand. Blaze the trail necessary for your students to be guided to success. They deserve your light and you deserve the thanks!