



Happy New Year! We hope that everyone had a wonderful break and that 2023 treats us well.

DFT681 Executive Board Members

We would like to take a chance to introduce all the DFT681 Executive Board members. At the end of the Greensheet you will find an introduction of each member along with their contact information.



AFT-MI Information

There's been much talk about this November's State election. Now that Democrats have control of all three branches for the first time in 40 years, many people are hoping they can undo the damage that has been done to education.

First and foremost, as public employees, we are not only impacted by "right to work", but also by the Federal Supreme Court case Janus v AFSCME. This case prohibits us from bargaining contract provisions that require employees to pay dues or an agency fee.

However, we can hope to see the repeal of "right to work" and the restoration of payroll deduction of dues. We should also see the right to bargain issues like teacher discipline and evaluations, privatization, and hopefully much more

Here is David Hecker's (AFT-MI President) breakdown of how/when the possible new laws can take effect: Finally, a note on when all these positive changes are likely to become effective. Generally speaking, laws go into effect 90 days after the legislature adjourns at the end of a calendar year (usually the last week in December). That means whether repealing "right to work" (or anything else) happens next week or in November, it will become effective sometime in March or April of 2024. Laws can be passed with "immediate effect," but this requires super-majorities of both chambers, something that might be hard to achieve on many of our priorities.

PAC Donations

Elections matter!! Thank you to everyone currently donating to PAC!!

Donate via Bill Highway—Cora can help dft@dft681.org or 313-584-5311

Recommended Amounts:

\$2/pay for Members

\$5/pay for Building Reps

\$10/pay for eBoard Members



AFT – MI Union Building Institute

AFT Michigan's Union Building Institute will take place on February 4, 2023, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, at UM-Dearborn Fairlane North. Sessions are designed to help all members develop skills to build power at their worksites and unions. With a morning and two afternoon sessions, participants will have the opportunity to design their own UBI agendas by selecting up to 3 workshops from [14 sessions](#) being offered to develop their knowledge and skills around organizing, team building, bargaining, and social justice.

Please reach out to Meenakshi Mukherjee (mmukherjee@aftmichigan.org) with any questions.

[Register Here](#)

[Descriptions of all sessions](#) (the following page has a description of the sessions)

Justice Leaders Collaborative

The Justice Leaders Collaborative (JLC) Core Course is open to all AFT Michigan leaders passionate about issues of equity, inclusion and social justice. Learning will focus on issues of privilege, oppression and inequality along lines of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Participants will come to understand their own social identities, biases, and prejudices; increase their knowledge about the histories and present realities of various social identity groups; and begin considering how to incorporate this knowledge and awareness into building strong unions.

Our next cohort of the Justice Leaders Core Course will run 6 consecutive Mondays, 6:00-8:00 pm, starting January 30. Nearly 100 AFT Michigan leaders from all constituencies have now completed the Core Course.

[Register for Justice Leaders Course](#)

Session 1

Planning & Running Inclusive Meetings

Just because your principal or department chair runs boring meetings doesn't mean you have to; come learn how to plan and run union meetings that rock! In this session participants will:

- Analyze types of meetings and their purpose in union building
- Review facilitation skills that promote a democratic process, invite member participation, and lead to member-driven decision making
- Reflect on existing practices and identify strengths and areas for development that will lead to more member participation and engagement in union meetings

Worksite Leader 101: Problem Solving in Your Building/Department

Did you know that when you're acting in your role as worksite steward/rep, you're the "legal equal" of the principal or department chair? This session covers ways worksite leaders can help members navigate issues at the worksite and help create solutions that make it a better place to work and increase member engagement.

Disinformation and Right Wing Attacks on Education

Join Progress Michigan to learn about how local fights around CRT, LGBTQ+ books, and other issues impacting marginalized students and communities are directly connected to broader national politics. Taking a look at some of our very own battles in Dearborn and Onaway, we'll discuss their root causes and how unions can respond to help build up our communities.

Session 2

Building Strong Teams

Effective unions require groups of people working together toward common goals--from worksite-level union committees to Executive Boards--and nothing drives people away like toxic relationships. This session covers strategies for creating effective teams, including communication, task allocation, and accountability.

Using Google Sheets for Organizing

Good organizing starts with a great list! Join AFT Michigan's very own list makers to learn how you can create and use Google spreadsheets and Excel for organizing your worksite. Participants will walk away with skills and resources to help them manage and use lists strategically to help build membership, increase communication, and build union power!

Using Gender Neutral Language to Build Inclusive Unions

Strong unions are inclusive unions that value the identities and experiences of all members. Learn about the work AFT Michigan's Queer Caucus has done to push for gender neutral language in our unions' communications, contracts, and beyond.

Why School Boards Matter for Educators and Communities

Who's your boss's boss? School boards play an important role in setting policies and conditions that impact educators, students, and communities. Join us to learn about the ins and outs of school boards from recruitment and endorsement to accountability and advocacy.

Session 3

Planning for a Secure Retirement

Whatever our job, and whether you have access to a pension or not, we all deserve a secure retirement. Whether you've been planning for years or avoiding the topic completely, this session will introduce you to the basic principles and concepts you need to take control of your future.

Contract Enforcement 101

We work hard to win strong contracts, let's make sure we enforce them! Knowing your contract and understanding the process of handling worksite issues can help members find solutions and build power. In this session, participants will define grievances and work their way through a case study to help demystify the process of contract enforcement.

Examining Bias in the Workplace

How does bias show up in our workplaces? In this session with Justice Leaders Collaborative, we'll take time to understand how implicit and explicit bias impacts workers and the communities they serve. Participants will work to understand and identify bias in the workplace and practice interrupting and standing up for a more equitable workplace.

How the Labor Movement Can Build Power to Improve Workers' Lives

The Huron Valley Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, brings together some 50 union locals representing 18,000 union members in four counties of SE Michigan. In recent years, it has worked to unite unions and community organizations around campaigns that improve life for working families. Come learn what HVALF has accomplished, what it aims to do next, and discuss what you can do in your own backyard.

President

Kathi Martin
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I'd like to start by thanking all the members who have faith in my ability to represent the Union of the third largest school district in Michigan. I am truly humbled to be the first Arab, Muslim, and Ancillary staff to be elected President. Although I was not raised in Dearborn, I graduated from Fordson High School and went on to earn my Masters Degree in Elementary Education and Speech-Language Pathology from Eastern Michigan University. I spent several years subbing in Dearborn while I was earning my degrees. I was hired into Dearborn in 2003 and I've been here ever since. I was so excited to join a union as I grew up with family members who were a part of the UAW and I saw first hand how a strong union can empower its members.

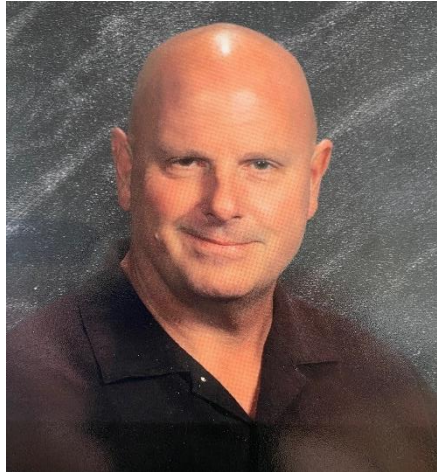
In Dearborn, I've worked in every setting; Cotter, elementary buildings, K-8 buildings, Howe, and I even covered for colleagues on leave from high school positions. After 20 years, I've seen many changes. I was here when we gave concessions contract after contract. I was part of the group that was frozen for 3 years while being told we were "lucky to still have a job". The salary schedule after the pay freeze had many members losing tens of thousands of dollars. Many of us survived the lean years. Well, the pendulum is finally swinging in our favor. It's time to win back the concessions we made and MORE. I see a united local where ALL members are seen, valued, respected, and heard. We will all work together to create a learning and working environment that not only attracts new staff to fill our vacant positions, but retains the great ones we already have.

During my first few weeks, I look forward to visiting buildings and meeting everyone face to face. I also hope to have members sign up to be part of our bargaining team in one way or another. I'm excited to see what we can all accomplish together.

In service & solidarity,
Kathi K. Martin

Executive Vice - President

Dave Adkins
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My name is Dave Adkins. I have a BS in Ed. and a MA in Ed Leadership. I have taught secondary Language Arts for 29 years, mostly at the high school level. I joined the exec board of DFT681 in the early 2000's and have been on the negotiations team for every contract since 2002. I have two sons in college, my wife who retired from DPS in 2020, and a German Shepherd rescue.

Vice President of Affiliations

Muna Mashrah
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Thank you to all who participated in the elections! I am humbled to be elected as your Affiliations Vice President. I am immensely honored to add to the diversity of the executive board as a Yemeni, Muslim, School Psychologist. I immigrated to the USA as a young child and was raised in Dearborn. I earned my Bachelor's degree in Psychology from University of Michigan- Dearborn and my Master's degree in School and Community Psychology from Wayne State University. This is my 10th year as a School Psychologist within the district. I have worked across various buildings, preschool through 8th grade, in collaboration with general education and special education staff. I have been a dues paying member since joining the district. I am involved in advocacy work through caucuses such as SEAM (Special Education Advocacy Movement) and the Caucus of Yemenia Educators. I firmly believe that advocacy is fundamental to making positive changes and continuing to grow as a union. Our union needs to continue to empower their members, and focus on effective communication and increasing membership engagement. This is more important than ever as we head into contract negotiations. I look forward to representing our diverse union body in our fight for better working and learning conditions for all!

Secretary

Kathy Laurus
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Hello! My name is Kathy Laurus. For close to two decades I have dedicated myself to early childhood education. The last 9 years have been serving Dearborn Public Schools, in our GSRP (Great Start Readiness Program) as a departmental teacher. I am proud to have been a DFT 681 building representative for 5 consecutive years. This position has provided me with insight from fellow DFT 681 members that has been crucial in being an effective building representative. Growing up I came from a long line of hard workers who had unions representing them every step of the way. I was able to witness the ways having a strong union was able to help better the working conditions of employees through my parents and grandparents eyes. I know first hand the power a strong union voice can have for its members. Early in my career, I worked for a charter school where we did not have a union. I experienced the negative impact of not having a strong union. From pay decreases, extra working hours, unsafe working conditions, and countless other unfavorable working conditions my experience without a union was heartbreaking. I take pride in my notes and recording as a current building representative as well as recorder/note taker/communicator for staff meetings, PLC committees, and district/building level committees. This has helped me learn and have a deep understanding of how having clear and open lines of communication can help the collective whole. My goal is to continue to help more and more members find their voice and find ways within their comfort levels to make their voices heard. We are stronger together. Serving our local as secretary is my next step. I am excited and ready to support all members of our local DFT 681. Together we can achieve so much more.

Treasurer

John Bayerl
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I have been a teacher in Dearborn since 1998. I was hired originally to teach Science at Fordson. As I progressed in my career and added a Master's in Geographic Information Systems and a PhD in Technology, I eventually moved to Career and Technical Education at the Michael Berry Career Center, first as an Information Technology Instructor and eventually in my Current role as the District CTE Coordinator and CTE Grant Supervisor. I have been involved deeply with the DFT since 2005, first as a building rep and eventually as a Executive Board member and my current position as DFT Treasurer. I have run our Community Outreach and Contract Campaign Committee for over 10 years, and have been very involved at the state level with pro-teacher political actions over the year.

Elementary Representative

Nicole Wozniak
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Greetings DFT members!

My name is Nicole Wozniak and I serve on the Executive Board as one of two Elementary Representatives. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself to all the members. I have been active in our union for about 5 years. I began my service as a building representative for Maples. Two years ago I was elected to the Executive Board. My main responsibilities include serving as a liaison between the teachers and both Administrators and the Executive Board. I attend monthly meetings with the Board, a building meeting with my principal and I also hold building meetings for my members. I also assist other building reps with issues they may be having in their buildings.

Being active in the union is very important to me. I grew up in a UAW family and I saw firsthand how the union builds positive relationships between labor and employers. Through these positive relationships the union can negotiate contracts that provide optimal working conditions for its membership and see that the contract is upheld. This is what I strive for as your Representative. I have gained extensive knowledge of our contract over the last 5 years as well as built positive relationships with administration. I look forward to continuing to serve you!

In Solidarity,
Nicole

Elementary Representative

Bruce Leipe
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I am Bruce Liepe, current Dft681 Rep at Large who is changing to the Elementary Rep position. I am the father of six children-five boys ages 29, 27, 22, 15 & 14 and a 22 year old twin girl. I'm a second generation Dft681 member, third generation DPS graduate and have had four children attend DPS for elementary, middle and high school. I come from a family of educators with past and current MDE staff of Superintendents, Principals, Teachers, and Paraprofessionals throughout the state of Michigan. My education includes a B.A. (Eastern), a M.S.Ed in Early Childhood (Oakland University), an English as a Second Language & Reading Recovery Endorsements (Wayne State) and have completed coursework for Administration Certification (Michigan State University). I have taught at the Elementary, Middle School, and Prekindergarten levels. In my 21 years as a Dearborn teacher I have had the pleasure of working at Salina, Woodworth, Oakman, Miller, Cotter and Whitmore Bolles. My experiences at the different levels and schools in Dearborn and my experience on the Executive Board for the past 14 years have given me much insight into the workings and politics of Union Leadership. In addition, I have been an AFT National Delegate at three conventions, a Michigan AFT delegate at six state conventions and have represented Dft681 eight times for Lobby Day in Lansing. I regularly bring concerns, questions and inequities to the Dft681 meetings. I have learned over the years that an amicable relationship is much more effective in implementing positive change than an adversarial one. A Union is only as strong as its membership. Our Union works together with administration to try and get things done that are both good for the students and good for teachers. I believe that it is important to remember that the power of a union is in it's numbers, and that our goal is to do what is best for all of us.

Looking forward to continuing to represent the membership as Executive Board Elementary Representative!

Secondary Representative

Denise Tomlinson
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I always loved being a student but never planned on being a teacher. In law school, I clerked at the US Attorney's Office in Manhattan and was hooked! But a government hiring freeze sent me to a large firm where I worked on cases ranging from breast implants to abandoned gold mine groundwater contamination. Sadly, litigation didn't leave a lot of time to raise 5 kids, so I stayed home for awhile and watched my twins tie themselves up with dental floss and another one climb into the red panda exhibit at the zoo. And somehow, I pivoted to teaching and being surrounded by kids all day. Up until my move to DPS, I worked in Bloomfield Hills, Berkley and Royal Oak at all levels, elementary through high school. In my position as a teacher consultant I've gotten to meet so many of you in almost every building. Your dedication, professionalism, and commitment to student improvement are inspiring. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to represent you on the DFT Executive Board. I'm confident that working together we can secure a contract that will serve the needs of both staff and students and make Dearborn the place where we all want to stay.

Secondary Representative

Joe Sicheneder
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My name is Joe Sicheneder and I'm in my third year of work at Fordson High School, ninth year teaching. I've been Secondary Rep on the DFT-681 Executive Board. I've been busy with several tasks in the union, including working on setting up and running the hybrid meetings and helping prepare us for bargaining a new contract this year. I'm excited to continue working with both existing and newly elected members of the eBoard in strengthening our union and negotiating a great new contract.

Representative at Large

Ammerah Saidi
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My name is Ammerah Saidi and I am your 2023 Rep-at-Large for DFT681.

As far as my research shows, I am the first Yemeni-American elected to this e-board and I could not be more honored by the privilege to serve my colleagues in this space. My parents immigrated to this country from Yemen--my father in the late 60's and my mother in 1982 while pregnant with me. My parents grew up in a small agrarian village in Ibb and success meant caring for your family and your neighbors. My parents brought these values with them here and instilled them in their children. Growing up, my siblings and I were not only tasked with caring for our education but also tasked with caring for our community. We were enrolled in Muslim organizations and campaigns that advocated for human rights, near and far. I hope to further nourish this legacy and elevate our union to one that not only fights for every single member but for our community as well.

Having come from charter and private schools, I can tell you what working without a union feels like firsthand. For advocating for students and colleagues, I was constantly disciplined. In each instance, I had no protections and no way to demand due process. As a member of DFT681, I have cherished our protections, and I have never taken for granted what having a union means.

As a building representative at Edsel and Salina, I have fought alongside colleagues to strengthen our collective solidarity. Together with a dedicated team of energized members, we have seen our union grow in member engagement and power. We have taken DFT, AFT-MI, and LaborNotes trainings that expand what it means to be a union member. I have attended workshops and joined book clubs that center on worker solidarity and powerful rank-and-file engagement. We have learned about and implemented innovative ways to gather rank-and-file member voices via surveys, contract action teams, building Whatsapp groups and our member-created union FB page.

When we each build our capacity and involvement in our union, we exponentially grow our strength. As your representative at large, I will continue to ensure that these opportunities to learn and engage will continue to be made accessible and available to all members.

Representative at Large

Shelby Liebler-Kukuk
liebles@dearbornschools.org



Thank you all for your votes. I am excited to serve as your Representative at Large. We are going into some exciting times and I am believing in huge success for us as a union in the 3rd largest district in the state. I have been an ELA teacher for 15 years. I spent the first 9 years of my career at Cesar Chavez Academy Middle School in Southwest Detroit. It was there that I helped unionize the largest charter district in Detroit. We came together as a people and won. It was historic and really showed how powerful your voice can be when you work together for the good. I have now been at Unis Middle School for 6 years. I'm a building representative there because I think all members of our building deserve to be heard, respected, and valued. I want to amplify their voices. I also am very involved in PBIS within my school. I truly believe implementing the PBIS system will create a better environment for both students and staff. I enjoy the creative energy I can pour into both the PBIS system, my classroom, and my coworkers. I'm looking forward to serving you all and seeing what successes we have ahead. As Cesar Chavez once said, si se puede!