



# On Target

AFT Local #2569

January 2017



Clarence Teachers Make the Difference

- Rejecting Betsy DeVos

## **Sen. Debbie Stabenow rejects Betsy DeVos as education secretary**

Todd Spangler , Detroit Free Press Published 4:19 p.m. ET Jan. 5, 2017 | Updated 5:05 p.m. ET Jan. 5, 2017



(Photo: Associated Press)

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., sat down today with Betsy DeVos, President-elect Donald Trump’s west Michigan pick to be education secretary – but DeVos won’t be getting her vote.

“Our conversation reaffirmed my strong concerns about her nomination,” Stabenow said. “Betsy DeVos and her family have a long record of pushing policies that I believe have seriously undermined public education in Michigan and failed our children. Therefore, I cannot support (her).”

DeVos, a former state Republican Party chairman and wife of former Amway head Dick DeVos, has long been an advocate of education reform, promoting charter schools and private schools through vouchers and other means that critics say undermine traditional public schools.

DeVos has argued that public dollars should flow to families who then get to pick the schools they deem best, saying such a system would create competition and improve education overall. But public education supporters say that drains funding from their institutions and students, who are already suffering from too little investment.

Stabenow said she asked DeVos "a number of tough questions about her record in Michigan" during the interview.

Ed Patru, a spokesman for a group called Friends of Betsy DeVos, which is supporting her nomination, downplayed Stabenow's characterization of the meeting, calling it "a great conversation" and expressing confidence that the two can find "common ground" such as they have in the past on school financing when Stabenow was a state legislator.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee has set a hearing on DeVos' nomination next Wednesday. With rules requiring only a simple majority vote in the Senate and Republicans in control, DeVos' confirmation is likely.

Stabenow – who along with her colleague U.S. Sen. Gary Peters, also D-Mich., was expected to vote against DeVos' confirmation – also met today with U.S. Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., who was born and raised in Michigan, and is Trump's nominee to be secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Stabenow's not giving Price – who has called for repealing the Affordable Care Act – her vote either, saying, "We have very different views on how to improve care."

With confirmation hearings being lined up through the Senate in advance of Trump's inauguration as president Jan. 20, nominees were meeting with individual senators across Washington. Stabenow also was set to meet with Seema Verma, tapped as head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Peters also met with Wilbur Ross, Trump's pick to be Commerce secretary, and, as a new member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, met earlier with retired Gen. James Mattis, Trump's pick to be defense secretary.

"I appreciate having the opportunity to meet with Mr. Ross and discuss several issues that are critical to Michigan's economy, including our manufacturing industry, shipping and commerce on the Great Lakes, and trade policy," Peters said about his interview with Ross. "I look forward to questioning him further during his confirmation hearing on these and other issues, including how the Trump administration plans to grow our economy."

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POLITICS

## Chuck Schumer: Trump's Education Pick Would 'Single-Handedly Decimate' Public Schools

The Senate's top Democrat says he will vote against Betsy DeVos.

01/26/2017 07:00 am ET | Updated 1 day ago



[Laura Barron-Lopez](#) Congressional Reporter, The Huffington Post

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PHILADELPHIA — Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said in a scathing statement Thursday that he plans to vote against President Donald Trump's pick to head the Education Department.

Trump's nominee, Betsy DeVos, floundered during her confirmation hearing last week as Democrats took turns questioning her ability to lead the department. DeVos, a billionaire from a powerful Republican family in Michigan, has been dedicated to funneling money to "school choice" efforts — and away from public schools.

“Betsy DeVos would single-handedly decimate our public education system if she were confirmed,” Schumer said. “Her plan to privatize education would deprive students from a good public education, while helping students from wealthy families get another leg up.”

Earlier this week, Democrats urged Republicans to schedule a second hearing for them to ask DeVos more questions now that all of her paperwork has been released by the Office of Government Ethics. It’s unlikely to happen, but the committee vote on her nomination was postponed until the end of the month.

“The president’s decision to ask Betsy DeVos to run the Department of Education should offend every single American man, woman, and child who has benefitted from the public education system in this country,” Schumer said. “Public education has lifted millions out of poverty, has put millions in good paying jobs, and has been the launching pad for people who went on to cure disease and to create inventions that have changed our society for the better.”

Schumer criticized DeVos’ refusal to divest from companies she holds a substantial stake in, including one that uses biofeedback technology to help improve children’s performance in school.

“[It’s] all the proof one needs to know that she is in this for herself, and not for students,” he said. “I will vote no, and I will do it proudly.”

DeVos is one of the nominees Democrats have zeroed in on, hoping that the controversy surrounding her will convince enough Republicans to vote to block the appointment. So far, no Republicans have said they will.

January 27, 2017

## Trump policies set off health care alarms

Author: Liza Frenette

Source: NYSUT Communications



Caption: Psychologist June Feder, UFT, addresses council members. Photo by El-Wise Noisette.

NYSUT’s Health Care Professionals Council began the new year dealing with the grim news of what health care could look like with repeal of the Affordable Care Act; or, if Medicaid gets transferred to block funding.

Not only will these changes harm the people who have been covered by these types of health care, it reduce funding in schools, hospitals and institutions. It will affect the social workers, psychologists and care givers who work with people, said Paul Pecorale, NYSUT vice president who oversees health care.

“Repeal of the ACA will affect 20 to 30 million Americans; certainly our members and their families,” said Pecorale.

The New York State Labor-Religion Coalition reports that 2.7 million New Yorkers would lose coverage if the ACA is repealed.

“November 8 happened and this is all front and center,” Pecorale told the roomful of health care professionals, including school counselors, dental faculty, hospital nurses, a speech therapist, psychologist and a school nurse. “These are serious concerns. They are concerns permeating our national, statewide and local governments, organizations and unions.”

New York is also dealing with the challenge of the corporatization of the health care system, said Anne Goldman, chair of the Health Care Professionals Council and UFT vice president for non-Department of Education members.

“What we know is what we represent and stand for,” said Goldman. “It’s about refining who we are and what we are.”

The Women’s Marches that took place all over the world last Saturday -- in response to threats to women’s rights, health care rights, the rights of LGBTQ, immigrant rights and much more under the Trump regime – “was a powerful day embodying a movement and a culture,” said Goldman.

If the tasks ahead seem daunting, Goldman recommended looking for inspiration to the spirit of the recently deceased Sonia Basko, a former president of the Penfield TA and a NYSUT staff member who recently began working with the council.

Goldman said Basko, who was undergoing treatment for cancer, texted her three days before she died, promising that she’d be back.

“That didn’t happen,” Goldman said. “But that woman didn’t lose sight. Her vehicle was the union. Given that, who here can be tired or weary?”

“Nobody gets to rest here. We’re all part of the solution,” Goldman said.

. March Issue  
March 10, 2015

## **TRS: The 2017 Constitutional Convention Vote — what you should know**

Source: NYSUT United

**Q: I recently read that a state constitutional convention vote will occur in 2017. What does this mean, and how could it impact me?**

A: A constitutional convention vote could impact you, and every other New York state resident, a great deal. The New York State Constitution mandates that every 20 years voters decide whether to hold a statewide constitutional convention — basically a forum to tweak, change or radically makeover the state constitution.

Since the state constitution safeguards the fundamental rights you enjoy as a New York state citizen, including guaranteed pension benefits, the right to unionize and free public education, fiddling around with it is akin to opening Pandora's box. NYSUT is encouraging members to mobilize in 2017 to help voters understand what's on the line if a constitutional convention takes place. Voters rejected a constitutional convention in 1997 after concerned activists worked together to educate voters about the risks of opening the state constitution.

**Q: I got a letter recently from a company that said they could teach me how to max out my pension. Are solicitations like this legitimate?**

A: As the old saying goes, "buyer beware." Don't trust any New York State Teachers' Retirement System-related information that comes from sources other than your teacher-member NYSTRS representatives or the system itself. It's important that information you use to determine your future retirement plans not come from someone trying to sell you products or services. As your representatives, TRS reps will never tell you what you should or should not do; they only help you fully understand, and be aware of, the many retirement options available to you through the system.

### **DID YOU KNOW**

The New York State Teachers' Retirement System has an app. Available from the Apple App and Google Play stores, it provides access to NYSTRS.org and features a countdown to retirement clock and pension eligibility information.

## • C.H.S. Sleepout



## **C.H.S. SLEEPOUT TO BENEFIT THE POOR AND HOMELESS**

9 PM February 3 – 5 AM February 4

We urge all CTA members to join us in promoting this very worthy cause. Over the past twenty-six years, we have raised over \$460,000 to benefit the poor and homeless. Last year, we raised \$24,050, and this year, our goal is “Twenty seventeen (\$20,017) in Twenty seventeen.”

Proceeds go to The Friends of Night People, Habitat for Humanity, The Gospel Expansion Foundation, Community Action Information Center, Little Portion Friary, Hearts for the Homeless, Gerard Place, The Gateway-Longview Foundation, Family Promise of WNY, The Buffalo City Mission, The Meals on Wheels Foundation of WNY, and The Clarence Community Food Pantry.

### HOW CAN I HELP???

-Make a pledge to a sleeper. We expect to have over 100 students – and several faculty and staff members – sleeping out.

-Send a donation directly to the High School to the attention of Kevin Starr, Student Council advisor (checks payable to Clarence H.S. Student Council – Sleepout).

-Make a collection in your classrooms. Nickels and dimes add up, and your kids can feel that they're part of something very special.

***THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND YOUR GENEROSITY.***

# **Resolution in opposition to school vouchers**

January 18, 2017

WHEREAS, the first voucher program was created in 1990 and today, 12 states and Washington D.C. have voucher systems with approximately 147,000 students participating at a cost of more than \$850 million; and

WHEREAS, the reform movement has made vouchers and tax subsidies a funding mechanism for school choice, a term used for a wide array of programs that offer students and their families alternatives to traditional public schools; and

WHEREAS, in recent months, we've heard proposals to expand voucher programs that include diverting Title 1 funds to pay for school vouchers, which would threaten a \$20 billion education program for low-income schools; and

WHEREAS, school voucher programs grow to the detriment of funding public schools, which means they cannot provide all the resources and support all students need to in the classroom and beyond; and

WHEREAS, underfunded public schools are less able to attract and retain good teachers, a perpetual problem in New York City; and

WHEREAS, school voucher programs are thinly-veiled privatization schemes, funneling public into private hands and undermining the state's solemn duty to provide a free education to all children; and

WHEREAS, while public schools have as their mission the education of all children, many voucher schools pick and choose students based on whether they behave in school and how well they've performed academically; and

WHEREAS, vouchers have failed to significantly affect student achievement for students who moved from public to private schools; therefore be it

RESOLVED, the UFT stands opposed to voucher programs and will align with like-minded groups to ensure public funds go to public schools.

## Famous Dyslexics Means That

Levinson Medical Center

You are not alone and you can succeed.

### Ignorance often leads to failure

Dyslexia is a syndrome of multiple varied reading and non-reading symptoms affecting over **40 million American children and adults**. Many with dyslexia and related learning and attention disorders realize quite early that they are not like their peers. Their learning and coordination, or klutzy difficulties, often lead to impaired self-esteem, ridicule, being bullied and even bullying. They often feel dumb, depressed, and isolated. As a result, one can sadly wonder just how many gifted and creative dyslexics have been blocked from fulfilling their genetic destinies and potential. All too often, learning-disabled children grow up to be underemployed adults, shunted into routine, dead-end occupations for life. Some have difficulties maintaining families and raising children properly. Many drift into drugs and alcohol & even crime. Their loss and cost to society is incalculable. And tragically, this staggering loss was, and is, preventable!

### How You Can Succeed

Since dyslexia is often a self-compensating disorder that can often be overcome with time, effort understanding and especially treatment, it is crucial to provide dyslexics with success stories of well known individuals so that they don't give up and indeed persevere. Thus, for example, there have

been many dyslexics that have made tremendous contributions to mankind. They include famous entertainers, designers, architects, writers, athletes, jurists, physicians, scientists, political and business leaders.

These successful dyslexics learned to overcome or sidestep their hidden and frustrating barriers, permitting them to accomplish their dreams and desires. In fact, their disorder was often found to be a catalyst for success forcing them to develop and utilize hidden talents. Often, their most crucial “life-saving” characteristics were determination and perseverance along with a desperate need to prove that they were not as dumb as they inwardly felt. As a result, they never gave up no matter how difficult the task before them seemed. Their successful lives, despite dyslexia, show us that “compensatory miracles” can be accomplished so long as dyslexics are encouraged by loving parents, caring teachers, and “healers” to believe in themselves.

An inspiring sample of some self-compensated famous and successful dyslexics follows. But just remember for every famous or well-known dyslexic, there are thousands and thousands more who have made it, despite their disorder. Unfortunately, there are millions that have not that could have!

Because many famous so-called dyslexics (i.e., Einstein, Edison, Da Vinci, etc.) were apparently reported by error, wishful thinking or incomplete data, Dr. Levinson thought it worthwhile to include here only a few self-acknowledged individuals with this disorder and only one likely candidate.

However, it is important to note that the inner-ear or CVS theory of dyslexia could easily explain the valid existence of all the reported successful dyslexics even those that appear unsubstantiated or even false, e.g., Einstein, Edison, Da Vinci, etc. For those interested, hundreds of famous others with possible dyslexia have been noted but require further validation.

## The Power of Unpredictability

Because of all the non-dyslexic variables determining success or even failure, no expert is significantly able to predict the future of individuals even in those showing early talent. And reliable predictions are especially difficult to make in those dyslexics appearing “retarded” or just plain “lazy or stupid.”

## Pablo Picasso

Pablo Picasso became a famous, trendsetting art icon despite, and no doubt because of, his apparent dyslexia. He was born in Malaga Spain in 1881. Reported to have failed parochial school education because of reading and related academic difficulties, he was eventually encouraged by his father, an art teacher, to further develop his obvious innate artistic talent. Over the course of his career he developed a unique sense of beauty and style. Pablo painted things as he saw or really felt them — out of order, deformed or tilted. His paintings demonstrated the power of “dyslexic” imagination as well as raw or primary emotion and creativity within the human psyche. Some of his famous works include: *The Young Ladies of Avignon*, *Old Man with Guitar*, and *Guernica*.

## Tom Cruise

Tom Cruise grew up and succeeded despite poverty, frequent relocations, inadequate schooling and dyslexia. No doubt he was saved by his gifted acting ability as well as his dogged determination to overcome and thrive, come what may.

## Richard Branson

Richard Branson, founder and chairman of London-based Virgin Group, didn't breeze through school. In fact, school was something of a nightmare for him. His scores on standardized tests were dismal, initially pointing to a similar future. Despite the difficulties and challenges posed by his acknowledged dyslexia, his gifted interpersonal and business talents drove him to succeed.

**Many other CEO's have also acknowledged their dyslexia, including Bill Gates, Charles Schwab, etc.**

## Athletes with Dyslexia or LD

Famous Athletes like Olympians Bruce Jenner and Greg Louganis as well as auto racing star Jackie Stewart are self-acknowledged dyslexics.

Although Dr. Levinson demonstrated dyslexia to be caused by an inner-ear (CV) dysfunction that most often affects reading and writing coordination as well as related sensory-motor skills, it is crucial to understand that this impairment is function-specific. Thus, for example, Bruce Jenner admitted he couldn't read and write straight — but these motor coordination impairments

weren't tested in the Olympics. He could have even had a dyscoordinated stuttering and articulation speech impairment, which he didn't have, and still have been an Olympic champion.

The same holds for other dyslexic athletes who are gifted in certain motor skills while demonstrating impairment in others. You don't have to be a complete klutz to be dyslexic. And the vast majority are not — as also evidenced by the following athletes reported to be dyslexic or LD:

- **Henry Winkler**, Actor
- **Steven Spielberg**, Director
- **Mohammed Ali**, World Heavyweight Champion Boxer
- **Anne Bancroft**, Actress
- **Duncan Goodhew**, Arctic Explorer
- **Magic Johnson**, Basketball Hall of Famer
- **Bob May**, Golfer
- **Diamond Dallas Page**, World Wrestling Champion
- **Steve Redgrave**, Olympic Gold Medalist (rowing)
- **Nolan Ryan**, Pitcher for the Texas Rangers

## Gifted and Famous, Despite Dyslexia — Invaluable Insights

### Medical Treatment Enhances vs. Diminishes Gifted Functioning

Dr. Levinson has examined and treated many famous dyslexics in his practice. Their success is invariably inspiring, even before treatment. And most often, medical therapy significantly enhances their genius while eliminating or minimizing dyslexic functioning invariably improving self-esteem. Contrary to misguided fears, successful medical and related non-medical treatments do not hamper creativity. In fact, therapy enhances creativity. Even though many "experts" believe or fantasize that dyslexics are more creative than non-dyslexics and are "blessed" by their disorder, a majority of famous dyslexics instead feel dumb and/or ugly merely considering themselves impostors. They often feel like actors fooling the crowd into believing they're competent or "not dumb." Accordingly, many dyslexics disagree that they're blessed and desire nothing more than to feel normal rather than exceptional.

Interestingly, there are dyslexic artists with dysgraphia who can only draw calligraphy; doctors who can't read, spell and/or write well; lawyers who can't calculate; even mathematicians who can't mentally add, subtract and multiply; musicians unable to read music; athletes who are clumsy and accident-prone in non-gifted areas; and even dyslexia experts who fail to understand dyslexia.

The study of gifted dyslexics, past and present, reveals crucial insights often scientifically overlooked and/or misunderstood:

- The part of the brain responsible for causing dyslexia (impaired CV functioning) is different from the brain structure responsible for gifted functions in individuals (the cerebral cortex or thinking brain).
- A dysfunction in one part of the brain (i.e., dyslexia) may trigger compensator functioning in another area of the brain.
- Gifted functioning is most often genetic. If latent or inhibited, gifted functions may be triggered rather than newly created by compensatory mechanisms. In other words, dyslexia doesn't determine creativity and genius. Dyslexia may, however, stimulate creativity because of a biological need to compensate for the dysfunction. By contrast, secondary emotional factors triggered by dyslexia resulting in alcohol and drug abuse as well as depression and anxiety may block creative mechanisms from surfacing. This observation further emphasizes the need for therapy--the earlier the better.
- The tremendous differences in function vs. dysfunction within dyslexics highlights the dyslexic rule for all: Dyslexia is a syndrome of multiple varied reading and non-reading symptoms, many of which may be compensated for over time. Some dyslexics may read well, but write, spell and calculate poorly. All combinations exist which is why it is unreasonable and wrong to define dyslexia as only a severe reading disorder.
- In fact, there are dyslexic artists who can only draw landscapes, but others can only do portraits... The list of functioning and dysfunctioning combinations is as endless as it is fascinating. This insight clearly refutes the misguided tendency to define or portray this complex and multidimensional disorder as only a severe reading difficulty.

## • “That Kid”

### Reaching Difficult Students

# Never give up on “that kid.”

## You can reach them.

By Hilary Richardson, Member contributor

First semester you got your feet wet. You have everything set up and running smoothly. The students are all learning. Except for “that kid.”

We all know “that kid.” We've fought to get him to work—any work. We've struggled to get her to stay on task and in her seat. We've ordered him not to throw pencils, paper, or erasers at others. We've battled to help her find success, even when she doesn't seem to want it. Oh yeah, every teacher knows “that kid.”

What can you do about “that kid”? First, don't take it personally. Start each day fresh, no grudges. I know this is the most difficult aspect of this situation. You care about your students and have put enormous effort into their learning; it is extremely challenging to realize their behavior is not always about you. “That kid” is rebelling against life, not you. Take a deep breath and relax.



The next step is to determine what causes these behaviors. This is not a job for you alone. Talk to counselors and administrators, they may already know something that you don't about this child's life. Often this information is not something they will email to you, but a quick conversation can give you all kinds of insight.

You also can talk to parents about the behavior, but I would urge you to find out as much as possible prior to this conversation. Most parents want to help their child, but sometimes they are the issue, so be cautious with your approach. All of this information makes it easier to understand “that kid” and to create a better relationship with them.

And that’s the key—you need to create a relationship with “that kid.” Talk to him or her, one on one, face to face, but not when either or both of you are frustrated or upset. A simple “I feel like you are struggling to sit through class, what can I do to help?” can start a meaningful conversation. And don't leave it at just one conversation. Later, ask follow-up questions (“Is this helping?”).

“That kid” struggles with relationships; the more you can do to build one, the more you are helping them long term.

### Looking for More Advice?

Join the **Classroom Management group** on NEA's edCommunities and connect with educators from around the country as they share practical resources and tips for the classroom. Registration is required but the group is free and open to all. **Sign up today.**

## • Editor’s Note

Each month the On Target will come out near the end of the month.

If you have something that you would like included, please send as a **Word document** by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to:  
lpanek@clarenceschools.org

Items that could be included are: Articles dealing with education/unions, Good ideas for teaching, something humorous/light dealing with education, Information for sharing, Opinion pieces on education, Advertisement for a service you provide.

Thank you,  
Lisa Panek

01/12/2017

## **Professionals put out the welcome mat for unions**

Most of America's working professionals support the idea of union representation in their workplaces, according to a poll released last week. The scientific survey of 1,000 nonunion working people across professions [\(link is external\)](#) found that more than half of them look favorably on labor unions.



Sponsored by the AFL-CIO's Department for Professional Employees and conducted by Hart Research Associates, the online poll was taken in October. Major findings include:

- 56 percent of professionals surveyed approve of having a union at their workplace.
- 61 percent support coming together in a union to receive better salaries and raises.
- More than half say union representation would improve their salaries and benefits.

"We are a union of professionals, so we are happy to shout it from the rooftops: Professionals don't need to work in isolation," says Mary Cathryn Ricker, AFT executive vice president and chair of the AFT Task Force on Professionalism.

"Professionals deserve a raise and a voice on the job. Of course, unions are the best way to make that happen."

Improving wages has become more important to professionals over the past decade. The survey found that better pay is now the most convincing reason for professionals to consider joining a union; it was not a top factor when they were surveyed in 2005.

There's also opportunity to cultivate union support because most professionals who disapprove of unions don't feel strongly about it.

What they do feel strongly about is having a voice, says Jan Hochadel, president of AFT Connecticut and an AFT vice president, adding that all employees need to be consulted in decisions on their areas of expertise. "When our professional employees are able to express their concerns and opinions," she says, "not only is their work experience improved, but their clients and customers benefit."

The survey results are impressive, adds PSRP leader Robert Chacanaca, a school security officer in Santa Cruz, Calif., member of the AFT's professionalism task force and president of the 63-union Monterey Bay Central Labor Council.

The more students learn about labor history at school, the more they'll warm to unions later on, he says. Chacanaca points to an influx of computer technicians coming from the private sector to work in public schools and colleges, where they discover to their delight that they have more job stability, better pay and more benefits in a unionized environment.

"People need to know what unions are and what we can do to help them," he says. "The more information the AFL-CIO can get out to the professional community, the more likely you'll see the unionization of rank-and-file professionals."

The Department for Professional Employees, a coalition of 22 unions representing more than 4 million professional and technical union members, will continue to analyze its survey results and release new reports every two weeks. DPE affiliates represent professionals in over 300 occupations, including education and healthcare; science, engineering and technology; and public administration.

[Annette Licitra/photo by Armando Arorizo]