



# Washington Teachers' Union

## *A Special Teacher Appreciation Message From the President*

When you work with students in the D.C. Public Schools, almost any day can bring a moment when the look on the face of a child who has just solved a math problem, written an essay or presented a report to the class tells you how much your work means to the young people whose lives we touch and whose dreams we encourage in our classrooms. National Teacher Appreciation Week (May 2-6) is a time each year when others in the school community and the wider population have a chance to honor the contributions of educators and their impact both inside and outside the schools.

I think you will agree with me when I say that the best expression of appreciation we could receive right now from our school community would be for the DCPS bargaining team to return to the negotiating table and conclude talks on a new collective bargaining agreement. Expressing respect for teachers, as Chancellor Henderson did in her April 29 letter, rings hollow if it is not accompanied by a true commitment to work together to resolve remaining issues.

The Chancellor commends WTU members as the best teaching cadre in any district in America. If she really wanted to show her appreciation and support her assertion that DCPS teachers have meaningful economic opportunity, she would agree to a compensation offer commensurate with what other District of Columbia and DCPS employees have received.

What the Chancellor's letter highlights is a fundamental misunderstanding about the profession of teaching. I see great things happening all over this city, and not only because of those blessed with an innate talent to teach, but also those teachers who are skilled and continue to build their pedagogical skills every day. While talent may be easily and passively observed and lauded by leaders, skill must be actively built and supported. What cannot be overlooked is that year after year the District loses an inordinate number of great teachers, many of whom accepted some of our schools' most challenging positions but found little support to be great.

The Chancellor is right about one thing: Teachers make possible everything else that DCPS does. Teacher Appreciation Week would be a good time for the school district to show true recognition for teachers' work by returning to the bargaining table to resolve the few issues holding up a final agreement.

After four and a half decades of experience as a teacher in our district, my frequent visits to schools across our city always renew my wonder over the miracles that occur every day in our classrooms. I am so proud to be able to honor and represent you—the miracle workers. Together, we will keep pushing to achieve a contract that is fair, affordable and that embodies the respect and appreciation you deserve.

In unity,

Elizabeth "Liz" Davis