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Technology Initiative In Detroit Public Schools

By Stacy Andell

New Technology Partners

The Detroit Board of Education revealed four new key partners in the ongoing technical development of Detroit schools. These partners will work together with Detroit schools for the next five years to improve the quality and access to technology throughout the area. The following companies, three of which are Detroit based, will be part of the program:

VisionIT, which is located in Detroit's New Center, has offices in Chicago and Atlanta, and counts Wayne State University, General Motors, Ford Motor Company, Xerox, Dell and Siemens among its many clients. VisionIT's services will include management of the data center, network services, application systems, data warehouse, help desk, and field services and technology curriculum. VisionIT will team up with SYNC Technologies, Inc., a minority and woman-owned firm that has been in business for nearly 20 years, and Unisys to execute the contract.

Management Systems Consultants, a Detroit-based firm that has provided e-solution consulting and project management services to various clients for more than a quarter of a century. It will provide web technology services, including the design and maintenance of all websites and web applications.

Universal Sales, a Detroit-based company whose employees collectively have more than 170 years of audio-visual experience.

GVC Networks, a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC) that is licensed to provide telecommunications and information technology services in 41 states. GVC Networks maintains a presence in Downtown Detroit.

How the Companies Were Chosen

Detroit schools entertained bids from seventeen companies nationwide before choosing the four technology partners. The competition was fierce and there were some very difficult decisions to be made in the interest of serving the Detroit school population as well as possible. The superintendent, William F. Coleman III, expresses optimism about the new partners, stating: "We are pleased with the

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caliber of the companies that won this contract. Most of these companies are companies that are familiar to us. We know and admire their work. I have no doubt that our students, faculty and staff will benefit enormously from their rich and varied experience."

In addition to their roles as technology providers, the four partner companies will also play another interesting part in Detroit schools. All of the companies will be creating internships for Detroit school students to work and study in the real world. Superintendent Coleman was particularly interested in these internships programs when selecting the companies to win the bid as technology partners. In this way, Detroit school students benefit in more ways than simply having more technology available to them in schools. Students will begin working in internships at the companies and learning important real life skills as well as improving their college applications and professional prospects. These students and many more will therefore see how business and education can work together to provide opportunities for Detroit school students to learn more about the world of technology. The technology

partnerships with these four companies are sure to bring new ideas and new products into the Detroit school system and help students compete in the twenty first century.

Stacy Andell is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. For more information on Detroit schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/Michigan/Detroit/index.html>

Detroit Schools Has A Difficult Start To The 2006–2007 School Year

By Stacy Andell

Detroit Schools' Teachers Delay School Starts with Strike

There has been a slow and turbulent start to the Detroit Schools ' new school year. In a battle over contracts, some 7,000 teachers and 2,000 staff members refused to start school in September. These contract disagreements lead finally to a court battle. The contract disagreement began on August 28 after the Teachers Union rejected a two year contract that included salary cuts of 5% and increased health insurance co–payments. Detroit Schools wants an \$88 million concession from the Detroit Schools' Teachers' Union to help with the \$105 million deficit to its \$1.36 billion budget.

On September 16, Detroit Circuit Court Judge Susan Borman ordered that the 7,000 striking Detroit Schools' teachers return to work. After this order, Detroit Teachers' Union president Janna Garrison read the order aloud to 3,000 Detroit Federation of Teachers members but did not comment or give any instructions as to whether the order should be obeyed. The vast majority of the teachers did not return to work.

Detroit Schools' spokesman Lekan Oguntoyinbo stated that under state law teachers who defied the order could face penalties which include fines and other actions. Oguntoyinbo said that Detroit Schools would go back to the courts and request that the order be enforce. As of the 18th of September,

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teachers had not returned and Detroit Schools has not decided what action it would take.

On the official first day of school, the 130,000 students in the Detroit Schools were greeted by their teachers not in the classroom but protesting outside. The picketing teachers were most of the teachers, only about 9% of Detroit Schools had returned to work. The Detroit Schools Board of Education worried that the strike would cause students to pull out of the Detroit schools and that their families will leave the city, however most parents support the teachers.

Detroit Schools' Teachers Return to Work

Even though the contract issues have not been fully resolved but the Teachers' Union has announced that the teachers returned to work on September 20. This was mainly due to pressures from the court and not due to reconciliation between the Detroit Schools and the teachers.

Many Union members, parents and other supporters of the teachers do not want the issue to remain tabled. These supporters want the Detroit Schools system revised. They claim the administration is top heavy and each position should be justified in some way. Others want the Detroit Schools to consider the consolidation of schools. This idea has fewer supporters because it would involve school closures that would greatly affect parents and neighborhoods. Even though this would be the most drastic of the possible ways to change the Detroit Schools, it may be the most cost effective. Like all issues there are many sides. Some wish the Detroit Schools top be run more like a business, which would include offering teacher buyouts, others believe education should be the main focus no matter what the costs.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. For more information on Detroit schools visit

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