

Etcetera



Founder/CEO of Become Inc. Dominica McBride speaks Thursday about the importance of cultural competence as the keynote speaker at the 23rd annual Parenting Awareness Michigan conference in Marquette, held at the Holiday Inn. (Journal photo by Mary Wardell)

House OKs holding back third-graders who lag in reading

By DAVID EGGERT
Associated Press

LANSING — Michigan third-graders could not advance to the fourth grade if they lag behind on state reading tests, unless they qualify for an exemption, under literacy legislation the House narrowly approved Thursday.

The "retention" provision would take effect starting for the 2019-20 school year and prompted considerable debate on the chamber's floor. Kids could not enroll in fourth grade unless their reading score is less than one grade level behind, they show proficiency through an alternative state assessment or demonstrate mastery through work samples.

Some students could still move to fourth grade for "good cause" — learning disabilities, a limited grasp because English is their second language or they have been previously held back despite receiving intensive reading help for at least two years. Third-graders proficient in other subjects, but not reading, could still take math, science, writing or social studies in a fourth-grade classroom.

The bill was sent to the Senate for its consideration on a 57-48 mostly party-line vote in the Republican-controlled House. Starting in 2016-17 — three years before kids would be held back — the measure would place early literacy coaches in schools to focus on children reading below grade level. Parents would be given a "read at home" plan, and K-12 districts and charter schools would be encouraged to offer summer reading camps.

A state-approved reading assessment would be given at least three times a year in kindergarten through third grade to screen and assess progress. Any student with a reading deficiency would be given an individual reading improvement/intervention plan within 30 days, with input from the teacher, principal and parents.

"Thirty percent of Michigan third-graders have not been afforded the gift of literacy. This number is unacceptable and, to me, heartbreaking," said the sponsor, House Education Committee Chairwoman Amanda Price, R-Holland. "These are Michigan children who are allowed to be illiterate only because we allow them to be through our inaction."

Opponents, predominantly Democrats, said the legislation would not give parents a say in whether their child has to repeat third grade. They unsuccessfully sought changes, including a provision to let kids who improve their reading under an individualized plan — but not enough — to still advance to fourth grade.

Rep. Adam Zemke, D-Ann Arbor, said retaining such a student would be devastating.

"I am not going to remove the hope of a 9-year-old, period," he said. "They're working hard, they're playing by the rules, they're doing everything right. ... Then you take it away. What do you think they're going to do for the rest of their educational career? They're not going to try."

BUILDING CULTURAL COHESION

Parenting awareness conference tackles issues facing families



The approximately 120 people who attended the conference participate in a "paired share" about their own culture and upbringing, discussing how their background shapes the way they see themselves and the world. (Journal photo by Mary Wardell)

By MARY WARDELL
Journal Staff Writer

MARQUETTE — Preconceived notions about other groups — whether socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, age- or gender-based — can create barriers to achieving commonly held goals of raising healthy kids, building strong families and creating more supportive communities, according to one psychologist who specializes in community development and family therapy.

At the 23rd annual Parenting Awareness Michigan conference in Marquette Thursday, keynote speaker Dominica McBride, PhD and founder/CEO of Become Inc., said while no one is without some unconscious biases, residents can work toward greater empathy to diminish the negative effects such prejudice can have.

"People fall through the cracks because of a lack of cultural competence, the lack of empathy, the lack of understanding, the lack of checking assumptions," McBride said.

McBride's presentation, "Beyond Race and Ethnicity: Creating a Culture of Cohesion," highlighted culturally responsive ways of approaching differences to reduce persistent social problems like violence, drop-out rates, infant mortality rates and sexually transmitted diseases.

About 120 people attended the conference, including parents, representatives of the Women's Center, Head Start program, Michigan State University Extension, substance abuse prevention programs and Northern Michigan University.

The PAM conference included a full day of workshops and breakout sessions on topics like childhood trauma and resilience, tobacco and youth, violent media, childhood obesity and disciplining adolescents.

PAM coordinator Luanne Beaudry said the purpose of the annual conference is to bring together community leaders, parents, social workers and

anyone who works with youth and parents to address prevalent issues facing families today.

Society tends to think "parents should know it all," Beaudry said. "But we don't come with a manual of how to do parenting and how to raise kids. Sometimes we raise them as we were raised. Sometimes that can be good, sometimes not."

That's why it's important to inform parents about evidence-based methods for raising kids to become socially, emotionally and physically healthy adults, she said.

"It's great for parents to have knowledge," Beaudry said. "And I think parenting education gets a short shrift in our state and many states because of funding cuts."

Beaudry said she was extremely impressed with McBride's message that the answer to any problem lies within the person experiencing it.

McBride said she credits all her success as a therapist to this ethos: "I kept in mind, 'They have the answer.' They have the answer to their problem. I don't. They do. And I'm going to help them uncover that answer for themselves."

As a psychologist and community organizer in rural and urban communities around the U.S. and Tanzania, McBride said she has learned how important it is to "Know thyself and learn from others."

"It's about learning about that other person ... getting to know what culture is to them, what are their values, what are their practices, how do they relate to their community," McBride said. "But it's also getting to know yourself because a lot of times we can think that our way is the (only) way. ... But there are other ways."

She said a recent scientific study about neurological empathy revealed Caucasian and Chinese participants responded with greater empathy to images of individuals who looked like themselves. The same was true between men and

women.

When the study analyzed responses to images of people who are homeless or addicted to substances, the brain often registered them as objects, McBride said. But when participants were asked to imagine those people doing things like shopping for groceries, the brain response became much more empathic.

"So this really gives me hope," McBride said. "This is what cultural competence is really about, is this empathy, is connecting with people on a very human level, on a profound human level regardless of differences, ... to be able to work and communicate effectively with other people in our communities."

McBride has conducted domestic and international program development and evaluation projects with marginalized groups including African American, Hispanic and Native American communities and women.

Born of Haitian and African American descent, McBride was raised in Leslie, Michigan, where she learned both about the value of a close-knit community and the realities of racial discrimination, she said.

"It was really interesting, ... experiencing both of those very opposite things, but it taught me a lot of lessons," McBride said. "Because it's made me value culture and community but it's also given me this drive to address discrimination on all fronts, racial, gender, religion, all of them, to help us become more accepting of one another."

To test your own implicit assumptions about other people based on age, ethnicity, gender and mental health status, McBride recommended an online test, which can be found at <http://implicit.harvard.edu>.

Mary Wardell can be reached at 906-228-2500, ext. 248. Her email address is mwardell@miningjournal.net.

BLP from 1A

By RYAN JARVI
Journal Staff Writer

MARQUETTE — The Marquette Board of Light and Power held the first of two public forums Thursday to discuss its proposed plan for the new Marquette Energy Center, a natural gas-fueled electric generating facility.

A second public forum is scheduled for 5:30 p.m.

Thursday at city hall. The BLP is also hosting two more open house gatherings at its office at 2200 Wright St. from 2 to 4 p.m. Wednesday and 10 a.m. to noon Oct. 29.

The facility, which would be located behind the BLP's office, would house three reciprocating internal combustion engines able to generate a total of 50 megawatts. They could be fueled by natural gas or fuel oil. The building would be

roughly the same height as the BLP's existing warehouse and cover about the same area as a football field.

To pay for the facility, the BLP would seek a \$77 million, 20-year bond, which would be repaid through customer rates.

A 30 percent rate increase has been proposed and would raise the monthly bill of an average residential customer from \$58 to \$76. If approved by the Marquette City Commission,

the rates would go into effect in October 2016.

Additional rate increases are also being considered at 4.5 percent over the following two years, in 2017 and 2018. BLP officials believe the facility could be operating by March 2017.

"We're doing this project for three reasons: reliability, reliability, reliability," BLP Executive Director Paul Kitti said.

One concern raised during the forum was the access to

natural gas in the region.

BLP officials said part of the plan is to extend a natural gas transmission line about 3,500 feet east along Wright Street from where it currently ends to the facility, which would cost about \$1.5 million of the total project budget.

"We'll have gas for all three units for seven months in the summer, and then in the winter we'll have gas for one unit," said John Reynolds, BLP's director of

Teachers from 1A

By DAVID EGGERT
Associated Press

LANSING — A new state framework for evaluating

teachers and school administrators would take effect this academic year, with annual evaluations being based in part on students' standardized test scores under legislation easily passed by the

House on Thursday.

The bill, which was approved 97-8, is a follow-up to a 2011 law that overhauled teacher tenure rules. The law deferred legislative decisions on establishing a

Spouts from 1A

By RYAN JARVI
Journal Staff Writer

MARQUETTE — Two waterspouts were reported Thursday afternoon over Lake Superior near Harvey and Munising, but dissipated before reaching the shore.

At 2:41 p.m. Thursday a confirmed tornado was located about 3 miles southeast of Marquette moving in a southeasterly direction at 35 mph, according to the National Weather Service.

Dave Petrovich, a forecaster with the NWS station in Negaunee Township, said a tornado warning was issued at 2:42 p.m. and lifted

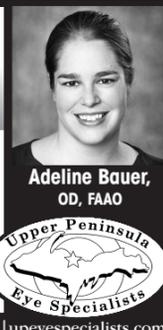
about 14 minutes later when the storm that prompted the warning weakened.

"This one here would have done some localized damage if it would have held up," Petrovich said.

At 2:34 p.m. a waterspout with a strong shower was reported 16 miles northwest of Grand Island near Munising, according to the NWS,

Congratulations, Dr. Bauer, on completing your fellowship!

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