

Detroit schools manager names schools to close this fall

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Detroit Public Schools (DPS) Emergency Manager Roy Roberts has named 16 Detroit school buildings for closure this fall. The action comes as the latest implementation of a long-standing policy of defunding public education. Roberts, recently appointed by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, has been accorded dictatorial powers to impose whatever measures he deems necessary.

For the last three years, Detroit schools have operated under a budget shortfall, prompting first the Democratic state government under Jennifer Granholm, then the Republic administration of Snyder to appoint so-called emergency financial managers to impose the rule of the banks on the school system. Teachers and school staff are the principal target of the measures being implemented.

Among the schools slated for closure at the end of the school year are Detroit Day School for the Deaf, Detroit City High School, Mae C. Jemison Academy, Kettering High School & Kettering West Wing (special education), Southwestern High School, and several elementary and middle schools. Other schools are being consolidated into those with wider districting and some with stricter admission requirements. The school replacing Finney and Crockett High Schools will be called East English Village Preparatory Academy. Admission to the school will require that the student hold a minimum 2.5 grade point average and complete an entrance application.

Some of the schools listed for closure, such as Detroit Day School for the Deaf, were named last March as part of then emergency manager Robert Bobb's "Renaissance 2012" plan. Students and parents at nine of the listed schools are just finding out for the first that their schools will close permanently.

In addition, four elementary schools were named for

privatization as charter schools authorized by the DPS.

Not mentioned in this announcement is the fate of 15 other "low-performing" schools facing possible privatization into a new statewide district called the Educational Achievement System, under which schools will be run as businesses. Under this system a principal, similar to a CEO in a business, will have authority to hire and fire anyone for any reason.

Last fall, Roberts unilaterally imposed a 10 percent wage cut and 3 percent increase in health care premiums on Detroit teachers. As a result, as many as 900 teachers are expected to retire by July, leaving a shortage of experienced teachers by next fall, with potential dire consequences for the school system.

Because of these cuts, Roberts is now stating publicly that the DPS deficit, once over \$325 million, is now under \$100 million. The threat of bankruptcy has been wielded by DPS managers for years in order to intimidate school employees with the possibility of erasing retirement funds and earned benefits.

Roberts was chosen for the emergency manager job because of his background at General Motors. The plan for the so-called revitalization of Detroit's schools is modeled after the restructuring of GM, the central component of which was the destruction of the wages and working conditions of auto workers.

His thuggish attitude was apparent in an interview with the Detroit *Free Press*: "I'm not going to accept any crap. And I think that because we've had so many changes, mediocrity of performance was accepted. I'm not accepting it. I'm not gonna accept that. And I didn't come here not to make a difference... I'm not going to piss this around and not make a difference and I'll run over anybody that gets in my way."

Federal government policy under Obama's "Race to the Top" program has endorsed and championed the

direction taken by Roberts. The expansion of charter schools is integral to the Obama administration's education policy.

The effect will be a further contraction of the public school system in Detroit and the educational deprivation of wider numbers of students.



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