

Superintendent Chris Timmis began the January 25, 2021 Board of Education meeting by sharing that Mill Creek Middle School students returned to the building that day, beginning their A/B hybrid schedule. DHS Students will also be returning this week, with a different start date due to the PSAT. District administration continues to explore how to bring in a higher percentage of students more often while adhering to COVID-19 protocols and managing logistical concerns, as well as busing.

Dr. Timmis updated the Board on the District’s Strategic Plan, provided an overview of work thus far, and outlined next steps moving forward. The current plan was adopted in 2015 as a 5-year plan, with the intention to have a new plan prepared and adopted before the end of 2020, for which the District was on pace until the pandemic. This update shared the progress of the work on the new plan which would go through 2025. Throughout 2019, KnowledgeWorks (an outside educational consultant) surveyed families, staff, students and several other constituent groups, ran focus groups and toured DCS buildings and classrooms, giving the District a thorough external assessment of our operations. The District then created several constituent working groups (community members, staff, Board members, students, etc.) to review the information collected. Based on these findings, five areas of strategic focus were distilled: Vision, Culture, Learning Continuum, Extended Learning Opportunities and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.

The District’s current Vision statement is, “Champion Learning: Develop, Educate and Inspire,” but the assessment process revealed that the meaning behind these words wasn’t universal. The goal then became to unpack the meaning and make it tangible in order to develop unified, collaborative, and supportive teams working together to achieve that vision.



Develop

- Collaboration
- Creative & Critical Thinking
- Communication

Educate

- Information Literacy
- Content Knowledge
- Financial Literacy

Inspire

- Kindness & Empathy
- Personal Responsibility & Resilience
- Initiative

January 13, 2021

In terms of the overall strategic plan, the two remaining areas to address are Extended Learning Opportunities and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI). Extended Learning Opportunities include learning experiences outside school walls and working closely with the Dexter community. A District-wide DEI committee has been created and meetings are scheduled in February and March to create a long-range plan for DEI, which will then be included in the overall District strategic plan. To ensure student experiences are accurately recorded, DCS recently commissioned a study of the experiences of our minority students at DCS. The results of this study, including action steps, should be available in early March and will help guide the DEI committee in their work.

Dr. Timmis concluded his remarks by informing Trustees that the District will be focusing on the Strategic Plan over the next several months, and more information will be shared for their feedback and approval as it develops.

Board President Dr. Julie Schumaker had no update this evening. Student representatives Annalisa Shehab and Aiden Naughton reported that freshman orientation was held at DHS last week, serving as those students' first official visit to the building and making them the first students to see in person the many COVID-19 protocol changes made at the high school. High school students recently had the opportunity to give live feedback on the year thus far to DHS administration via a Zoom call. Naughton reported that students like the asynchronous Wednesday, but IB and AP students seem to be struggling with the lack of in-person instruction. Dr. Timmis stated that a similar meeting between high school parents and DHS administration is scheduled for Tuesday, January 26th at 6:30 p.m., also via Zoom.

No community members raised their "virtual hand" during the first opportunity for public participation, and Trustees moved on to unanimously approve two consent items: the recommendation to hire Lindsay Babicki as a Mill Creek special education teacher and to receive the December budget report.

Dexter Community Schools has an opportunity to refund its School Loan Revolving Fund (SLRF) balance with taxable bonds and take advantage of currently low interest rates on short-term maturities. This was previously discussed by the Finance Committee at its September 15, 2020 meeting. CFO Dr. Sharon Raschke explained that this is a great opportunity for the community to save over a million dollars by taking advantage of current low interest rates. The term 'refunding' is similar to homeowner refinancing; the District will pay off the old bonds, then buy new bonds at a lower interest rate, thus saving taxpayers significant money in the long run. Trustees voted unanimously to adopt the resolution authorizing the issuance of 2021 refunding bonds.

In recognition of the significant time spent by salaried employees beyond their normal contractual hours working to prepare and provide high-quality learning for our students throughout this pandemic school year, the Board unanimously approved one-time, off-schedule payments to all DEA & DAA members. This off-schedule payment (3.09% of base salary) equates to just over one week of time spent this summer by our salaried employees outside of their contract requirements.

January 13, 2021

These employees have worked tirelessly to help the District prepare, adjust, and continue to adapt to the learning environments required over the past year. The district has continued to pay hourly employees for all hours worked and held them harmless when schools moved to remote learning. DCS was fortunate to receive Coronavirus relief funding which makes this recognition of the additional time spent by salaried employees possible. Dr. Schumaker expressed the Board's appreciation of both DEA & DAA employees' continued support of students and families since last March, specifically citing the challenges of transferring curriculum to an online environment and facilitating a hybrid schedule.

As there are several community members currently serving on Board committees, it had been suggested that relevant training for them might be useful. Trustees unanimously approved funding for community members serving on board committees to attend relevant training paid by DCS, with the approval of the Board President for each training.

After the final public participation portion of the meeting netted no speakers, Trustee Kangas updated the Board on the latest meeting of the Legislative Relations Network (LRN). Kangas reported that the morning's LRN meeting was well attended with representation from elected officials including US Congresswoman Debbie Dingell, State Senators Lana Theis and Jeff Irwin, and State Representatives Donna Lasinksi, Felicia Brabec and Yousef Rabhi. A good portion of the discussion focused on the national COVID strategy, presented by Congresswoman Dingell, and the federal government's plan to push out the vaccine to frontline workers, which includes teachers. There is currently a \$1.9 trillion package proposed to fund all national COVID work. Congresswoman Dingell also shared that there is a store of Pfizer vaccinations available which the federal government has not yet allowed to be sold to Michigan, but she hopes that will soon change. Dr. Schumaker added there was some discussion about school funding and summer programs focusing on learning loss due to COVID.

Trustee Greatorex attended the recent Educational Foundation of Dexter (EFD) meeting as the BOE liaison. Greatorex reported that the merger between EFD and Excellence for Dexter Students (E4DS) has been successful in creating a strong, cohesive group. Despite the pandemic and inability to hold in-person events, EFD has successfully raised funds throughout 2020 with online campaigns such as Giving Tuesday (after Thanksgiving) and the Dread Strong Staff Appreciation Awards. Community members can nominate Dexter staff for a [Dread Strong Award](#) (accompanied by an EFD donation), with recipients highlighted on screens in each school building. EFD is currently in their 2020-2021 spring teacher grant cycle, the deadline for which is March 31, 2021.

The full video of the January 25, 2021 Board of Education meeting can be viewed on the BOE website at <https://www.dexterschools.org/district/board-of-education/meetings/videos>.

The next meeting of the Dexter BOE is scheduled for Monday, February 8, 2021 at 7:00p.m.