

### **Administrative and Board Updates**

Superintendent Chris Timmis began his update by announcing the commencement of winter contact sports per the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) most recent update to the current pandemic order. Student athletes are permitted to begin practice and competition as of Monday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, following protocols set forth by the order including wearing masks and testing (for certain sports).

Starting with the [COVID-19 Case Dashboard](#), Dr. Timmis shared the most recent pandemic-related data: during the week of February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Dexter had 0 students or staff confirmed positive for COVID, and 8 students and 3 staff in quarantine. This is a drastic improvement from figures reported in mid-December. Looking at the daily cases in Washtenaw County at the end of January, there were 29.9 daily new cases per 100,000 residents, which is in the critical range. According to the WISD dashboard data pulled on February 4<sup>th</sup>, there were approximately 115 cases/million and a positivity rate of 4.8% which puts us at “very high” on the MDHHS scale in terms of cases and “medium” in terms of positivity rate.

Dr. Timmis reported that DCS should have the majority of staff aged 50+ vaccinated by the end of this week (first shot). The delay has been due to limited number of doses received by Washtenaw County, and those were first given to county residents over 65. Student-teacher interactions rates this past week indicate an overall average of 95%+ at least twice/week. The District recently offered staff a voluntary rapid antigen test, part of a statewide pilot program.

Board President Dr. Julie Schumaker reminded Trustees of the upcoming National School Boards Association (NSBA) Equity Online Symposium focused on dismantling institutional racism in education scheduled for this Wednesday, February 10.

Student representative Aiden Naughton reported that Wednesday, February 10 is DCS Count Day and will follow an adjusted schedule. School pictures are scheduled to be held at DHS next week, February 17-19. Student representative Anna Shehab described her first days back in the building, relaying that students are glad to be back and following protocols. The National Honor Society (NHS) Coat Drive begins February 8<sup>th</sup> and runs through Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup>; coats, hats and mittens can be dropped off by students on the catwalk and by community members at the DHS bus loop entrance. The NHS Special Olympics Committee is presenting a webinar in conjunction with WISD on Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> entitled, “Abilities Over Disabilities” featuring speakers of different abilities sharing their stories and experiences.

### **Public Participation**

During the first opportunity for public participation, a Dexter parent expressed concern about the welfare of Dexter students due to the pandemic and asked about the loss of students to neighboring districts due to remote instruction. He encouraged the Board and administration to get students back into the buildings as soon as possible.

For clarification, Dr. Timmis confirmed that the District did lose students in the fall, the vast majority of whom were early elementary students. In Washtenaw County, there are only two districts currently in person full-time – Whitmore Lake and Manchester; most other districts are running a hybrid schedule (Saline, Chelsea, Milan, etc.) and Ann Arbor Public Schools and the WISD continue to be 100% remote. Dexter is working to get the youngest students in more frequently, but safety needs must be met.

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## Consent Agenda

Trustees unanimously approved two consent items: a staff resignation and a request for leave.

## Action Items

### Reconfirmation of Learning Plan

The Board unanimously reconfirmed the 5<sup>th</sup> Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan (pg. 12 in [Board packet](#)) which recommends maintaining a hybrid schedule for grades K-12, while working to bring the youngest students into buildings more frequently. During discussion, a trustee expressed how difficult a situation this is for the District, parents, students and staff. Another trustee asked about the “outbreak” at Mill Creek reported in January by the state COVID website: the two cases were confirmed before students were back in the building, but not reported until late January. The question was raised if there has been any documented transmission at DCS due to students being in person. Dr. Timmis replied that a class had to be quarantined in November, and there are other cases around the state and country where transmission was due to classroom attendance.

Based on feedback from some Dexter parents, a trustee asked if students could receive a Credit grade instead of a failing letter grade (students were offered the choice of taking their letter grade or a Credit grade for 1<sup>st</sup> semester). Kit Moran, DHS Principal, said counselors are still processing requests for 1<sup>st</sup> semester grade changes, which are being handled on a case-by-case basis. The mantra at the high school this year has been “do no harm,” and administration and counselors are working individually with students to determine their best solution.

### Resolution for In-Person Board Meetings

Currently, Michigan is not allowing school boards to meet in person due to COVID restrictions. Included in the Board packet is a resolution from Dexter’s Board of Education asking MDHHS and Governor Whitmer for permission to meet in person. Citing the return to buildings of students and staff, the resumption of winter sports and the following of strict protocols, the Board feels they can safely meet in person with the option for community members to attend either in person or log in remotely. The resolution received full support and was unanimously approved.

## Discussion Items

### MASB Board of Directors Election

Five candidates are running for the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) Board of Directors, one of which is Dexter BOE Vice President Mara Greatorex. The Board will vote on their candidate choice at the February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Greatorex shared she is honored to be nominated and this is a great opportunity to get our District talking with MASB and be a part of the organization’s governance. Dr. Schumaker stated that the Board approved Greatorex’s candidacy at their December 2020 meeting, after which she and Dr. Timmis wrote a letter of support to MASB.

### Block Schedule Proposal

The largest portion of the meeting was spent on the [District’s proposal to adopt a block schedule for DHS](#) starting in the 2021-2022 school year. In 2006, the state adopted the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) and, after trying trimesters, the District settled on the current two semester, 6-period instructional day.

From the proposal:

*Throughout his/her academic career at DCS, a student studies in longer blocks of learning time through K-6, formally moves into a pure-block schedule at Mill Creek, moves to a 6-period per day schedule at DHS, then into postsecondary schedules that function in longer blocks. The high school level is the only point of a students’ academic career where a bell rings and kids move every hour. The current schedule we use is guided by efficiency*

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*and not driven by student learning. This proposal is the culmination of several District initiatives to address student needs. In 2018-2019, the District began deliberate work around student mental health. As part of that process, DCS embarked on a community-wide book study of Dr. David Gleason's "At What Cost: Defending Adolescent Development in Fiercely Competitive Schools." This book study and Dr. Gleason's community presentations addressed the need for school districts to demonstrate developmental empathy. Two of the recommendations made by Dr. Gleason to better support our students are directly addressed in this proposal: changing to a block schedule and addressing adolescents' need for sleep.*

*Next, DCS has been committed to providing individualized and innovative learning opportunities to our students in all grade levels. In the past few years, we've seen an expansion of opportunities to DCS students in the lower grades, the addition of an alternative education program, and the start of the Dexter Early Middle College this year. DHS staff have been researching and visiting other schools while working to scale instructional delivery changes on behalf of students. After visits and conversations with schools throughout the country (Kentucky, Texas, Arizona, Wisconsin, Michigan, Colorado, California, Ohio, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, etc.), engagement with EdLeader21, several trips to Bloomfield Hills High School and a visit to Kettle Moraine (WI) just prior to the pandemic, the next step in our journey is to change to a block schedule while embracing a comprehensive commitment to continuous improvement.*

The Board discussion of this item was extensive with lots of information shared. You can watch it in its entirety by clicking on the meeting video here: [BOE Meeting Videos](#).

The block schedule proposal will return to the Board as an action item at their February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

### **February 20th Board Workshop**

The final item of the evening centered around the upcoming Board Workshop scheduled for February 20<sup>th</sup>. Due to current COVID restrictions, the Board is not allowed to meet in person, and Trustees debated whether the workshop should be rescheduled or conducted virtually. The decision was made to cancel the scheduled workshop, as they would like to meet in person, and to be on standby for a future announcement.

### **Public Participation**

No community members raised their hands to speak during the second opportunity for public participation, and with no committee updates or board comments, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:29pm.

The full meeting video can be viewed at <https://www.dexterschools.org/district/board-of-education/meetings/videos>.

The next BOE meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 22 at 7:00pm.