

SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE

Superintendent Dr. Chris Timmis began the February 22, 2021 meeting by presenting a condensed version of the upcoming Virtual Open House slideshow. This webinar will share DCS history, campus, vision, learner profile and strategic framework. Attendees will also learn the many pathways to personalized learning available at Dexter Schools (Summit, Pinnacle, Apex, AP, IB, Consortium, Alternative Ed, virtual, etc.) as well as hear examples of project-based learning.

Dr. Timmis also shared plans for a “giant summer program” to be announced in April which will allow students to socialize and engage in fun and safe outside activities. The goal is to “let kids be kids” and enjoy their summer to the fullest in order to return to school this fall refreshed and excited to learn. A planning team of teachers is hard at work on this program, and is coordinating with Camp Dexter for summer childcare needs.

COVID DATA & RETURN TO BUILDINGS

The latest COVID figures show a decrease in cases and infection rates; in Washtenaw County as of 2/18/2021, there were 15.7 cases per 100,000 residents, a 0.82% infection rate and a 2.2% positivity rate. According to the MDHHS scale, we are currently rated low for positivity rate and very high for cases per million. Using CDC guidelines, we are at lower risk based on the most recent data; 2% of the cases are students ages 0-9 years old, and 65% of cases are 18-22 year-olds.

In light of the downward trend in cases and infection rate, and the science showing in-person school can be run safely using certain protocols, the District will begin bringing students back into buildings 5 days/week starting with Y5-2nd grade on March 15. Wylie students will return to 5 days/week on March 22, and Creekside students after spring break on April 5. Mill Creek and DHS students will remain on their current hybrid schedules. Y5-6 buildings will have 3 ft. spacing in classrooms and MC & DHS will maintain their current 6 ft. spacing; all building cafeterias will remain at 6 ft. spacing. All information related to the return to buildings can be found at <https://www.dexterschools.org/district/return>. Approximately 50% of DCS staff have received or been scheduled for their first Covid vaccination, with Y5-2 staff being the next prioritized group.

THANK YOU, MR. MORAN

Dr. Timmis shared that Kit Moran, DHS Principal for the past 15 years, will be retiring at the end of the school year. “This is a tough loss,” Timmis said, “and we’ll miss him, but we’re really happy for him. There are going to be some big shoes to fill.”

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

During the student representative update, Aidan Naughton reported a rumor that the DHS bandwidth is at its max. Dr. Timmis responded that last week’s difficulty with internet speed was a firewall issue that has been fixed and there is ample bandwidth available at DCS.

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Jim McCargar expressed concern that Washtenaw County doesn't have enough vaccines, that vaccinations are not being distributed equitably, and that many teachers haven't yet received vaccinations. Tanya Tassin praised several elements of the block schedule proposal and shared a concern about the reduction in class minutes for AP and IB classes. Melanie Szawara thanked the Board and District for the return to building plans, and for continuing to broadcast Board meetings via Zoom, providing more opportunity for busy parents to attend.

ACTION ITEMS

MPSERS: The first action item of the evening was a complex MPSERS (Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System) issue. Starting in 2014, DCS exempted employee retirement contributions from payroll taxes based on attorney recommendations from ORS (Office of Retirement Services). Deductions for 2012 & 2013 were still outstanding, resulting in \$67,000 of employee money still being held by the IRS. Dexter CFO Sharon Raschke signed and authorized the ORS agent to sign the not-yet-finalized IRS closing agreement on the District's behalf (as is permissible by board policy) so employees might have a chance to reclaim their contributions. After lengthy discussion, the Board unanimously agreed to formally ratify that authorization and resubmit the authorization with the board resolution.

MASB ELECTION: Following discussion at the February 8 BOE meeting, the Board unanimously agreed to cast their vote for Trustee Mara Greateorex in the upcoming MASB Board of Directors Region 7 election.

BLOCK SCHEDULING: The DHS Block Scheduling Proposal, introduced at the February 8 meeting, was further discussed before receiving unanimous approval. Principal Kit Moran noted that COVID has given DHS an opportunity to practice the block schedule, and teachers have already begun changing their instruction methods and plans. "We are looking at different ways of teaching," Moran explained, "deeper, not broader. We want to focus on what students can do with their knowledge, not just what they know." Student representative Aiden Naughton shared that, in his experience, teachers are not having trouble getting through material in the block schedule and that students will not miss any key aspects of class. The Board voted unanimously to begin a block schedule at DHS in Fall 2021.

SCHOOLS OF CHOICE: Dr. Timmis noted that the main focus of schools of choice in Dexter is to create stability for students experiencing life changes such as divorce, moving, etc., by allowing them to remain in their current school. The administration is careful to add only the number of students needed to balance class sizes, and not more students such that additional teachers or classrooms are needed. The Board unanimously approved the following schools of choice spots for Fall 2021: at least one spot in each grade from young 5 through grade 8, at least one virtual spot, at least one spot in Dexter Early Middle College, and at least thirty spots in the Dexter High School IB Program - ten each in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades.

DISCUSSION – SURVEY RESULTS

Dr. Timmis shared the results of a recent survey asking parents their thoughts about return-to-building plans. The District was interested in how much movement there would be between homeroom and homebased when students return to in-person learning 5 days/week. While the results showed some movement of students, on the whole, the percentage of students in the homeroom and home-based options remained steady. Survey data can be viewed on the [Return to Buildings page](#) of the DCS website.

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COMMITTEE UPDATES & BOARD COMMENTS

No one raised their virtual hand to speak during the second opportunity for public participation, so the Board moved on to committee updates. Trustee Greatorex, the BOE representative to the Educational Foundation of Dexter (EFD), reported that they will not be holding their spring fundraising gala, but are moving forward with spring teacher grants. The EFD offers teacher grants to all K-12 teachers; applications are due to building principals on March 15.

During board comments, Trustee Kangas made a suggestion about sharing information to help parents choose between Pinnacle and Summit. Trustee Greatorex gave a shout-out to the currently undefeated Men's Swim & Dive team, as well as excitement for the overall return to sports. Dr. Schumaker shared that she and Vice President Greatorex recently attended an MASB board president workshop, and thanked the District for their support of trustee professional development.

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

Next meeting: March 8, 7pm via Zoom. Agenda and materials are posted Thursday evening on the [website](#); link to join will be posted on the [calendar](#) by 4pm Monday.