
The Monday, March 8, 2021 Board of Education meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

DCS Spark Innovative Learning Environment

Superintendent Chris Timmis presented a video describing a new pilot program potentially to be launched this fall. DCS Spark is an innovative learning environment intended to provide students K-12 with another option for personalized learning. Using the metaphor of Dexter's arched bridge, Dr. Timmis explained that the District has a set number of hours with students and sometimes, like truck drivers who misjudge the tunnel's size, try to squeeze too much into those hours and some students struggle. To address this, the DCS Research and Development team, composed of teachers and administrators from all buildings, took advantage of the pause created by COVID to step back and reassess instruction methods.

Using principles defined in the book "Dark Horse" by Todd Rose, DCS Spark will focus on the learning journey while supporting the competencies of the DCS Learner Profile and the District's strategic vision. The program will feature:

- Mixed age learning bands
- Interdisciplinary projects with community connections (e.g., CommuniTree & Frederick Pelham bridge projects)
- Narrative feedback focused on competencies and skills
- Topics & content are dynamic with student interests
- Teachers are guides and mentors

A pilot program will run March 15-26 for randomly selected students in grades 3-6, the results of which will be analyzed for a formal presentation to the Board in April. More information about DCS Spark can be found in the [presentation video](#).

DHS Celebration Plans

DHS Principal Kit Moran updated the Board on tentative plans to celebrate 2021 seniors, including Commencement, Honors Night and Prom. Prefacing his remarks with, "COVID...nothing is the same," Moran shared they are planning for the worst and hoping for the best. The biggest consideration is that these three events cannot legally be held indoors with their typical capacity.

Commencement is tentatively planned for the evening of Friday, June 4 (rain date: Sunday, June 6) at Al Ritt, after taking into account state and district sports meets, previous communication with senior families regarding this particular weekend and CDC/state COVID restrictions. There will be as few ceremonies as allowed by law (last July, there were 4 sessions), and the entire event will be live-streamed and recorded. **Honors Night** is tentatively planned for the evening of Tuesday, June 1 at Al Ritt, and will be live-streamed as well (rain date: Thursday, June 3). The **Senior Celebration** (in lieu of Prom) is tentatively scheduled for the evening of Saturday, May 22nd at Al Ritt, rain or shine. This event will be seniors only and, depending on capacity restrictions, seniors may be permitted to invite one guest each. This will not be a traditional prom, and Mr. Moran and a student committee are working on what the event will look like, dependent on CDC guidelines (masks, social distancing, no close dancing, etc.). After not holding a senior celebratory event last year, DHS is committed to having some kind of event for seniors with as many friends as possible.

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All these dates are tentative and subject to change. Final confirmed dates will be shared with DHS students and families.

COVID Data & Reconfirmation of Learning Plan

Dr. Timmis next shared the most recent data from the [DCS COVID Dashboard](#) and [Return to School Data Review](#); the number of local cases and infection rates continue to decrease, but we do have a number of students (mostly athletes) quarantining. As of March 1st, DCS has had 34 students and 15 staff members test positive for Covid since the beginning of the school year. In Washtenaw County, there are 11.5 cases per 100,000 with a 2.1% positivity rate.

Each month, the Board of Education must reconfirm the District's Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan. This month's reconfirmation summary outlined a dilemma created by the passing of HB 4048, which in essence states that for Dexter to receive approximately \$850,000 of state stimulus money, the District must offer in-person learning at least 20 hours per week to all students K-12 by March 22, 2021. Further discussion was postponed until after public participation to allow for community comment.

DCS Summer Plans

Dr. Timmis shared plans for a summer learning lab entitled Dread Strong Summer, an educational adventure designed to Educate, Develop, and Inspire students through friendships and engaging experiences. This program is intended to allow students to enjoy the summer and reconnect with peers, in order to return refreshed in the fall. Tentative plans are to allow students Y5-8th grade to attend weekly from June 21-August 6, Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., for no charge. More information will be announced in April.

There are also plans for a DHS Summer School Credit Recovery program, scheduled for June and July, which will allow students to catch up, receive course credit, and focus on key content needed for future classes. Run by DHS teachers, Phase 1 will run June 21-24 and Phase 2 is scheduled for July 12-30. More information is forthcoming.

Student Representative Update

Aiden Naughton reported that the DHS Student Council will be holding their Senior Survival fundraiser again this year, date TBA. Anna Shehab noted that DHS hours will shift later when the Y5-Grade 6 students return to full in-person to accommodate busing.

Reconfirmation of Learning Plan Discussion

No community members chose to speak during public participation time and, after unanimously approving the consent items in bulk, Trustees began an extended discussion regarding the learning plan reconfirmation. In particular, talk focused around the aforementioned HB 4048 and whether or not the District should expedite plans to bring Creekside, Mill Creek and DHS students back into buildings at least 20 hours per week by March 22 (Y5-4 were already scheduled to begin 5 days/week before that deadline).

Multiple school-day scenarios and logistics were considered, as well as pros and cons of not pursuing the stimulus money. Trustees expressed their displeasure with the state legislature for tying school stimulus dollars to public health decisions. Discussion ranged from student COVID testing, staff safety and the impact

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of another schedule change on DCS families to what the money could fund and the rushed timeline to implement the needed changes.

The Board unanimously approved a motion that, “Beginning the week of March 22nd, the District will offer in-person learning a minimum of 20 hours per week for all K-12 students who choose that option, subject to administration confidence that it is doable.” DCS families will continue to have the choice to send their students to school or remain virtual, but the option for more in-person learning will be available.

Wrap Up

No members of the public commented during the second opportunity for participation. During committee updates, Dick Lundy reported that the finance committee met last week and brought their two new members up to speed, walking them through the budgeting process and starting plans for the upcoming school year.

During board comments, Mara Greatorex shared that the Educational Foundation of Dexter delivered Dexter Bakery cookies to all staff from Jenkins to DHS to show appreciation for their hard work this year, as well as provide information about the spring grant cycle. Brian Arnold noted that the MHSAA website indicates that most spring sports have games/competitions the weekend of graduation. He also mentioned that CFO Dr. Raschke recently refinanced the District’s bonds at a favorable interest rate, saving approximately \$1.5M for taxpayers.

The full Board of Education meeting video can be found on the DCS website at <https://www.dexterschools.org/district/board-of-education/meetings/videos>.

Upcoming Board Schedule:

- ~~Monday, March 22 – 7:00pm – Board Meeting~~ canceled due to light agenda
- March 29-April 2 – Spring Break
- Monday, April 12 – 7:00pm – Board Meeting
- Monday, April 26 – 7:00pm – Board Meeting