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Board Members Hear Proposed Updates To Dist. 62 Strategic Plan

By George Howe

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Des Plaines Elementary School Dist. 62 board members met on March 18 and after taking care of the customary consent agenda items, which included the previous month's meeting minutes, payroll, and financial summary, a lengthy discussion and slide presentation was formally introduced by Supt. of Schools Michael Amadei for updated recommendations to the district's Strategic Plan.

With the conclusion of the existing plan that was formally adopted by the board in 2018, the district began a plan of action that was reflective of the transition of leadership both at the administrative level, beginning with Amadei's appointment as superintendent of schools in July 2022, as well as within the board of education.

The transition included action plans and goals that summarized the main areas of focus for the 2023-2024 school year. Some of the goals included student growth and achievement, learning environment that supports equity and belonging, as well as involved families and community.

In the fall of 2023, the catalyst for educational change began its work with students, staff and families to define the future direction of the district to create a multi-year plan. In anticipation of the work ahead, a strategic core team was established made up of students, faculty, staff, families, community, and management.

It was recognized by the committee that many times, students are seen as passive bystanders in their respective learning communities while decisions are being made that shape their future. As a result, five middle school and 14 high school student's voices were heard and actively participated in sharing their opinions and experiences with adults in a candid and honest way.

A proposed draft was presented, which included:

Mission: To cultivate an innovative learning environment that's inclusive that inspires students to explore robust academics.

Vision: What must become in order to accomplish a fundamental purpose.

Motto: Curiosity Compassion Courage

Core Values: to guide behaviors and actions.

Learner, Educator, and System Portraits which support Dist. 62 employees and members of the school community.

Amadei gave his appreciation to board members for their trust in this process. He went on to say that there has been a lot of research, analysis, communication, and teamwork that was put in place. Amadei was optimistic that the recommendations presented will be approved at the board next meeting in April.

School Board Approves Bus Contract Extension

Mark Bertolozzi, assistant superintendent of business services, presented a recommendation to Dist. 62 school board members to approve a contract extension with First Student Transportation at the board's March 18 meeting.

The district has been renewing its contract with First Student on a yearly basis since the expiration of the three-year contract in 2020. Jan. 1, a new law went into effect allowing school districts to enter into longer-term contracts, including the length of renewals.

The district has been working on a three-year extension that will increase the safety, security, and service with state-of-the-art improvements including a new fleet of buses that will have air conditioning, real-time cameras, an app for parents to download and have the ability to see the location of the buses en route, and scanning equipment to allow students to swipe onto the bus for better location management.

✓ All these new improvements come with increases in cost. The first-year increase is estimated to be 23% over fiscal year 2024, increasing the

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