

Duquesne City School District
Receiver Opinion

***School Superintendent Leads the Way with
Hope and Promise for a Brighter Future***

Under the extraordinary leadership of Dr. Sue Mariani, Superintendent of Schools, the Duquesne City School District is moving forward with the hope and promise of a brighter future for its students, educators, parents, and families.

Under Act 141 of 2012, the School District is considered a financially distressed school district and in Receivership for oversight of academic and financial matters. Severe financial conditions, lack of secondary course offerings, and poor academic performance resulted in the high school closing in 2007 and the 7th and 8th grade program ending in 2012. As a result, secondary students were assigned to attend East Allegheny and West Mifflin neighboring schools.

Every fiscal quarter since 2013 – 2014, the Duquesne City School District has been in good financial standing. There have been no unpaid or contested invoices; and, all payroll, benefit expenditures, debt service obligations and tuition payments have been made in a timely manner.

Further, there are no threatened or pending litigation against the School District; and, there no other unasserted claims or assessments involving Duquesne.

In November 2020 the Pennsylvania Department of Education approved a Fourth Amendment of the School District's Financial Recovery Plan and the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas approved the amendment to re-set financial targeted investments in School District educational programs, student services, and facility improvements.

With much grit and determination by the Superintendent, a two-year phase-in plan to a re-establish a K-8 Grade Level Reconfiguration was achieved and fully implemented for the 2022-2023 school year.

The plea from parents was heard loud and clear about bringing back 7th and 8th grade and Dr. Mariani delivered with much optimism and success.

From a concept to reality, Duquesne K-8 School will provide an enhanced curricula with electives, STEM focused activities, World of Work experiences, middle school athletics, and school clubs such as an e-sports gaming lab. In addition to expanded learning opportunities for students, an emphasis on mental health and behavior support programs and increased measures for school safety and security have been implemented.

Under Dr. Mariani's vision for the future and in collaboration with several partnerships, the School District has been the recipient of several grants to support new initiatives that directly benefit student learning, teacher and administrator development, and technology enhancements. Partnerships include, but are not limited to, the Grable Foundation, the University of Virginia Partners in Educational Leadership Program, and the Penn State University Readiness Institute.

Under the leadership of Dr. Mariani, the Duquesne City Education Foundation was created. The Foundation will encourage innovation, recognize excellence, and create vital partnerships,

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including regional philanthropic organizations to support academic programs, athletic fund investments, ongoing facilities maintenance, and other school community activities.

Dr. Mariani has implemented “Rediscover Duquesne”, a new Marketing / Recruiting Plan for 2022 – 2023 which aims to increase the overall student enrollment at the Duquesne K-8 School and to reduce the amount of charter / cyber charter school tuition paid by the School District. The initiative will engage the community in legacy-building and to share the traditions, pride, and history of Duquesne and will also promote a flexible, online cyber school options for parents and families.

These Duquesne highlights are just a few of the new and exciting ventures under Dr. Mariani’s extraordinary educational leadership. She is an inspiring transformational leader who is an advocate for children and youth, consistently demonstrating a commitment to change lives. Dr. Mariani does whatever it takes to do good and right for her students, staff, and the greater community.

Educators are called to serve the greater good of the school and community.

The humanity of an educator’s work is hard, but the reward is making a positive difference in the lives of young people. It requires a visionary and strategic leadership by making the most of people, time, and resources to re-design the work of public education.

Dr. Mariani is a shining example of positive change to improve the quality of education based on equity, inclusion, and belonging.

The Superintendent is on a mission to build a solid foundation to change Duquesne for the better and stands by her convictions to do what is best for her students educationally. Her parents and families highly value her dedication, resilience, and determination for Duquesne to be recognized as “a turnaround school”, academically and financially.

Dr. Mariani is leading the way for Duquesne with the hope and promise of a brighter future!

William H. Kerr, Ed. D. is a former Superintendent of Schools and serves as the Court-appointed Receiver for the Duquesne City School District in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

September 29, 2022