



DOWNTOWN AREA
SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT UPDATE

INSIDE

Superintendent's Message

Strategic Plan

Full-Day Kindergarten

School Start Times

Budget

Enrollment and Facilities

Siemens Property Sale



Hello, Downingtown Area School District!

For those who I have not yet met, I'm Bob O'Donnell, Superintendent of Downingtown Area School District (DASD). My family and I, including our two DASD students, made Downingtown our home two years ago. Since then, I have gotten to chat with many residents, learn about the history of DASD and experience the district's strong sense of community. Please know I am proud to be a part of the Downingtown family and hope that together, we are able to strengthen our pride and add to the rich traditions of our school district.

Throughout my 30+ years in education, I've experienced the power of collaboration between families, educators and the community. We are committed to fostering this partnership in DASD. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform our entire community about some of our key initiatives, including new and exciting opportunities for our students.

(Continued on next page)





Our district is known for prioritizing student learning and well-being. Each year we will build and expand upon the previous year’s successes, aiming to continually improve our service to students.

This year, we embarked on a collaborative strategic planning process. With input from more than 300 stakeholders, we have crafted a six-year strategic plan, which includes a district promise – **Downingtown Area School District: where every student is valued, engaged, and instilled with the confidence and skills for future success.**

To realize this promise for every student, we will need the support of our entire community. Thank you for your partnership.

Sincerely,

Robert J. O'Donnell, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

FAST FACTS



DASD is the sixth largest district out of 500 in Pennsylvania



DASD has a graduation rate of 96.1%



99.7% of DASD graduates continue to higher education, trade school or the military



All DASD high schools rank in the top 10% in the state



81% of DASD teachers have either a master’s or doctoral degree



DASD has earned the Meritorious Budget award for the past 19 years

STRATEGIC PLAN: 2024 - 2030

*Downingtown Area School District:
where every student is valued, engaged,
and instilled with the confidence and
skills for future success.*

Following a year-long community effort, Downingtown Area School District is excited to share its evidenced-based and community-informed educational strategic plan. It will serve as a road map for the district's future direction and provide a framework for decision-making and resource allocation. This plan will guide and align the efforts of all stakeholders.

Over 300 individuals, including students, staff, teachers, administrators, family members and community leaders, actively participated in our planning teams. An additional 400 stakeholders provided valuable feedback to shape the plan. The finalized report includes a comprehensive Portrait of a Graduate, specific goals, strategies, measures and a district promise. We will share future progress updates on our website's dashboard. To learn more about the process and to read the full plan, please visit www.dasd.org/strategic-plan.

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

READY FOR CAREER, COLLEGE AND LIFE

CRITICAL THINKER AND PROBLEM SOLVER

RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY MEMBER

PRIORITIZES HEALTH AND WELLNESS

SKILLED COMMUNICATOR AND COLLABORATOR

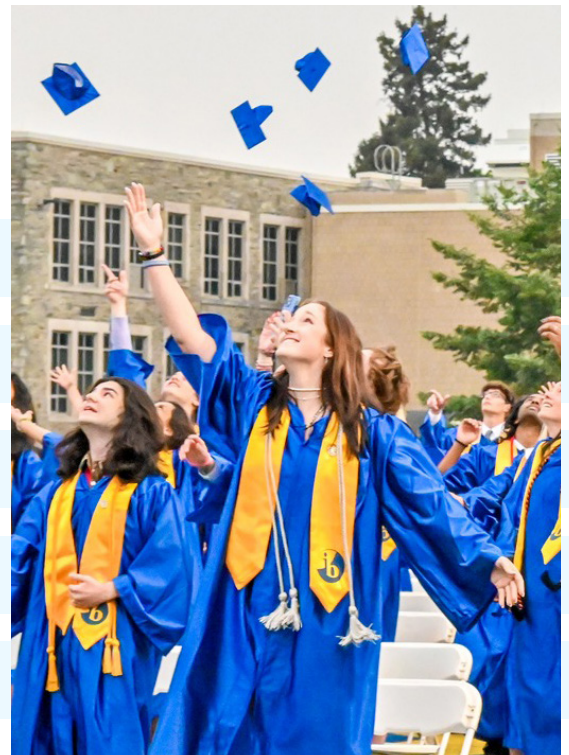
GOALS

STUDENTS FEEL
Safe, Connected
& Engaged

STUDENTS ACHIEVE
Core Academic
Standards & Skills

STUDENTS EXPERIENCE
Growth Through
Equitable Support

STUDENTS ARE
Prepared for a Future
of Their Choice



FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN IN 2025-26

District administration has proposed a plan to provide full-day kindergarten in all DASD elementary schools starting in the 2025-26 school year. The plan includes expansion and renovation at some elementary schools, as well as the hiring of additional teachers and support staff members.

As the district continues to grow and enrollment increases, the board and administration have strategically evaluated options to provide robust educational opportunities, appropriate class sizes and equity across the district.

More than 86% of districts across Pennsylvania provide district-wide full-day kindergarten. DASD currently offers half-day kindergarten to all students. A limited number of qualifying students may elect to participate in full-day kindergarten exclusively at Beaver Creek, Bradford Heights, East Ward and Lionville Elementary Schools.

By adding full-day kindergarten at all elementary schools, our youngest learners will receive expanded learning opportunities, which include dedicated time to develop academic, physical, social and emotional skills. To learn more about the benefits of full-day kindergarten in DASD, please visit www.dasd.org/fdk.



SCHOOL START TIMES IN 2024-25

In an effort to promote overall student health and to ensure our students are provided the opportunity to reach their greatest potential, the DASD board approved the following revised school schedule for the 2024-25 school year.

Elementary (K-6): 9:00 a.m. - 3:35 p.m.

Secondary (7-12): 8:00 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.

We understand that this change will affect traffic patterns in the mornings and afternoons. We ask for your continued understanding as we prioritize the well-being of our students.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine both recommend that teens between the ages of 13 and 18 get at least 8-10 hours of sleep per night. Based on the findings from both the Youth Truth survey and the DASD PAYS data, the majority of our DASD high school students are getting less than 8 hours of sleep per night. Studies have found that getting less-than-the-recommended amount of sleep each night impacts both student health and academic achievement.

We appreciate your understanding as we implement this schedule change. To learn more, please visit www.dasd.org/start-times.



BUDGET

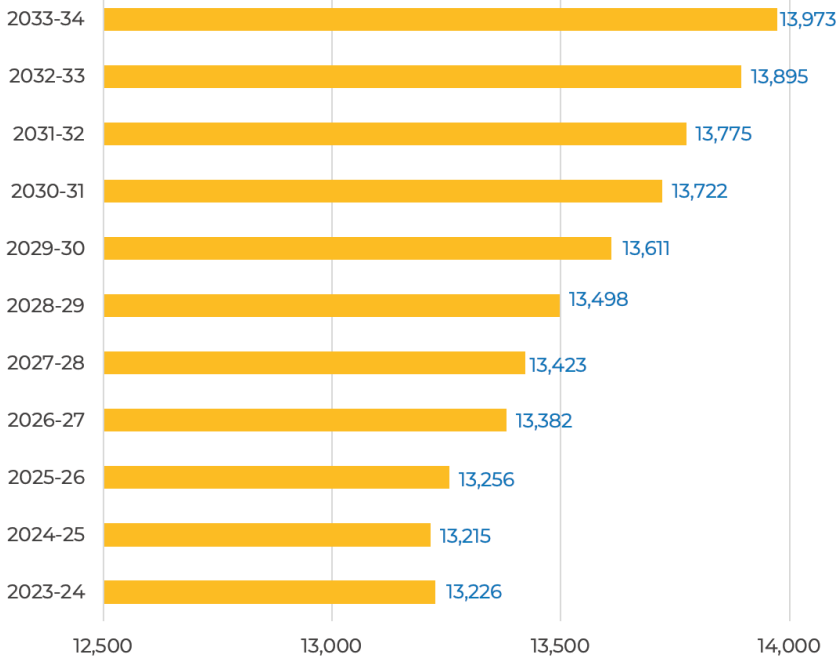
Downingtown Area School District strives to maximize resources to maintain high-quality academics and student support systems, with the **third-lowest per pupil instructional expenses across Chester County's 12 school districts**. DASD has maintained a AAA financial rating for the past 15 years, and received the National Association of School Business Officials Meritorious Budget award for the past 19 years. Though the district has been able to maintain a zero percent tax increase eight of the past 11 years, escalating costs, increasing enrollment and implementing full-day kindergarten present challenges that require additional resources. **To safeguard a bright future for all DASD students and uphold our reputation for excellence, the district is proposing a 3.9% tax increase for the 2024-25 school year.**

Fortunately, the state has increased the 2024 funding to support the Homestead Property Relief Program, providing homeowners with approximately \$50 in additional tax relief funds. With the additional tax relief, the net tax impact will be approximately 3% for homeowners. The increased overall tax revenue will directly support the expansion of DASD facilities to address growing enrollment, additional staff to support students' educational and social-emotional needs, as well as essential core and extracurricular programs and resources.

DASD is committed to using district funds responsibly to ensure a strong future for our schools and community. We recognize the financial impact any tax increase may have on residents, and this decision is not taken lightly. Investing in our schools increases property values, fosters a more educated workforce and provides a safe and nurturing environment for our children to learn. We encourage you to visit our website at www.dasd.org/budget for a detailed breakdown of the budget and to see if you qualify for property or rental rebates.



FUTURETHINK ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS



ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Across Pennsylvania, DASD has grown to become the sixth largest among 500 school districts. This achievement highlights our dedication to educational excellence and the trust our community places in us. As we embrace this growth, we remain vigilant in tracking enrollment trends and crafting strategic responses to meet the evolving needs of our community.

During the 2023-24 school year, DASD hired demographics firm FutureThink to complete an enrollment study. The study looked at live birth rates, projected housing growth, DASD student retention rates and the amount of available open space in our district to create enrollment projections by grade level.

Overall, the study projected a 10-year enrollment growth of 750 students. The study did not account for the addition of full-day kindergarten, which will likely further increase elementary enrollment as students return to the district from charter schools.

FACILITIES PLANS

In order to respond to the district's growing population, DASD must expand its facilities through renovations and additions.

- Additions and renovations at Downingtown East and West High Schools will be completed summer 2024
- Additions and renovations at Beaver Creek and West Bradford Elementary Schools will be completed summer 2025
- Renovations to create space for full-day kindergarten will be completed prior to its launch in fall 2025
- Additional projects on hold pending future funding include
 - Bradford Heights Elementary & Lionville Elementary School additions
 - Brandywine Wallace Elementary School expansion
 - 5-6 Center
 - Addressing needs of aging facilities

OPEN HOUSES

Stay tuned for community open houses this fall at Uwchlan Hills Elementary, STEM, Downingtown HS East and Downingtown HS West.

SIEMENS PROPERTY

Located in Uwchlan Township, the Siemens property (a.k.a. Lionville Station Farm) was purchased by DASD from Siemens Medical Solutions for \$22 million in 2003 with the intent of building a third secondary campus. At that time, DASD was unable to gain the necessary zoning change in order to construct a school building.

- In 2014, DASD entered into a sales agreement with Hankin Group. Hankin was unable to gain zoning approval for their proposed residential and retail development, and, after seven years, they terminated their agreement with the district.
- In February 2022, DASD entered a sales agreement with Carvana, LLC. for \$87,817,000. Carvana withdrew from the sales agreement in March 2022.
- In July 2022, DASD entered into a sales agreement with Audubon Land Development for \$96,000,000. In October 2023, Audubon ended the sales agreement.

During the last decade, DASD has seen, and is projected to see, student enrollment growth primarily in the central and southern portions of the district. Due to the areas of enrollment growth and zoning, the Siemens property is no longer an appropriate location for a school building. Funding from the sale of this property and subsequent development by the buyer will support district programming, staffing and facility needs, while helping to slow the increase in annual millage rate for our taxpayers.

**JOIN
OUR
EMAIL
LIST**



Visit www.dasd.org/signup

We invite our community to join us on May 29 from 6:00 - 7:00 PM for a conversation about potential future plans for the Siemens property. Learn more and RSVP at www.dasd.org/conversation.



**WE ARE
HIRING**

Apply Now

#JOINTEAMDASD

Learn more at www.dasd.org/hr

Downingtown Area School District
540 Trestle Place
Downingtown, PA 19335
www.dasd.org • 610-269-8460 • info@dasd.org

 @downingtownschoo

 @downingtowntown_area_sd