

2024-25  
YEAR IN  
REVIEW



## DEAR DISTRICT 99 COMMUNITY:

This report highlights and celebrates the outstanding achievements of our students, staff and community at Downers Grove North High School (DGN), Downers Grove South High School (DGS) and the Transition 99 Center (T99). The 2024-25 school year was filled with academic success, growth and meaningful connections.

Our students thrived in over 200 diverse courses, earning expanded college credit opportunities. Both schools maintained "Commendable" ratings from the State of Illinois and earned national recognition from U.S. News & World Report, reflecting the dedication of our teachers and students.

Beyond academics, **over two-thirds** of our students participated in athletics and extracurricular activities, excelling in competitions and community service. Strong partnerships throughout our community and local businesses provided hands-on learning experiences, enhancing their education.

We are grateful for the unwavering support of our teachers, staff, families and volunteers. Working together, we've made this year an exceptional one. As we look ahead, we remain committed to empowering our students for future success.

Thank you for your support.

**Dr. Hank Thiele**, Superintendent  
[hthiele@csd99.org](mailto:hthiele@csd99.org)

**Kara Casten, Katie Courtney,\* Ken Dawson, Christopher Espinoza, April A. Finan\*, Don Renner and Michael Riske,\***  
District 99 Board of Education  
[boardmembers@csd99.org](mailto:boardmembers@csd99.org)

*Many thanks to outgoing members Sherell Fuller (2017-25), Jennie Hagstrom (2021-25) and Terry Pavesich (2005-25) for their service and to student board members Rehan Hashim (DGN) and Jason Trejo (DGS) for serving in 2024-25.*

\* New members in 2025

## INSIDE

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We serve residents from Downers Grove and Woodridge, as well as sections of Bolingbrook, Darien, Lisle, Oak Brook and Westmont. Our students come to us from public school districts 58, 60, 61, 66 and 68 and private schools.

DID YOU  
KNOW





# Academic Progress

## SCHOOL RATINGS

The Illinois State Board of Education rated both DGN and DGS as “Commendable,” reflecting the strong graduation rates and academic performance of all student groups. The rating is based on a possible 100 points measuring success, including graduation rate, attendance, 9th grade students on track to graduate, and other measures.

▲ 89.71

DGN increased from 87.28 last year

▲ 86.44

DGS increased from 84.09 last year

## GRADUATION RATE

93.4% of students graduate

87.7% State average

## 9th GRADE BENCHMARK

Keeping 9th grade students on track (earning the minimum number of credits and not failing a core course) is an indicator of graduation.

▲ 96.3%

D99 increased from 96.1% last year

86.2% State average

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

Standardized test scores exceed local and state averages, but are lower than last year. The percentage of D99 students who meet or exceed in SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing is down 2.3% over last year; the percentage who meet or exceed SAT Math is down 1.7%.

Compared to other DuPage high school districts, D99 students exceed the average score by

▲ 11.3%

## AP and DUAL CREDIT COURSES

Advanced Placement and dual-credit courses give those who are college bound both a head start and a financial advantage.

30%

enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement course

14%

enrolled in at least one Dual Credit course

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING

For students pursuing a vocation, our career and technical education offerings and internships show the breadth of possibilities and prepare students to work in high-wage, high-skill and in-demand occupations.

3%

enrolled in work-based learning, including internships

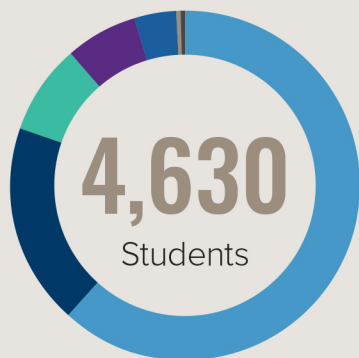
4%

enrolled at the Technology Center of DuPage, a state-of-the-art training center that allows certification in many occupations and career pathways

58%

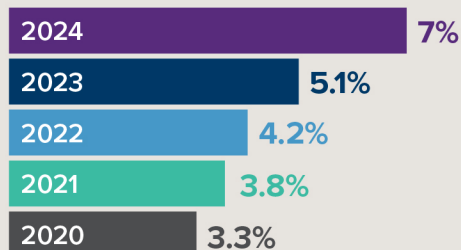
enrolled in at least one Career and Technical Education course, which expose students to a variety of careers and emphasize real-world skills

## Our Students



61.9% White	4% Two or More Races
18.6% Hispanic	.3% American Indian
8.2% Black	.3% Pacific Islander
6.7% Asian	

Percentage of students whose primary language is not English:



55 Students were awarded the Seal of Biliteracy, making it possible to earn college credit for their language proficiency

Number of languages that students report as their home language: 65

Figures based on current enrollment.



# Strategic Directions in Action

Our Strategic Plan — **Future Focused, Future Ready** — outlines four strategic directions in order to graduate students who are equipped with a foundation to realize their potential and make a positive impact. Here are highlights of our work this year.



## AN EQUITABLE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

**Our schools embarked on a process to cultivate a culture of belonging by focusing on relationships.**

All staff members identified students with whom they have a personal connection, since this is essential in creating a supportive learning environment. Counseling staff reached out to students who were not identified. The majority of students do have strong connections; students in 12th grade are significantly more connected than those in 9th grade. The process follows best practices set forth by Lurie's Center for Childhood Resilience.

Our schools continually promote ways to build connections, such as intentionally and warmly greeting students individually in the hallways, celebrating students through recognition programs and sending positive emails home.

**DID YOU KNOW**



## GROWTH OF STUDENT OWNERSHIP AND AGENCY

**We strive to challenge students and hold them accountable in developing respectful and responsible actions.**

A significant area of improvement this year was in chronic absenteeism, when students miss 10% or more school days. In 2023 our rate was at an all-time high of 29.7%. This year it is 23.3%. The work being done to make students feel a sense of belonging and connectedness at school has been a critical factor in improving attendance, which ultimately promotes academic achievement.



## INCREASED STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN POST-SECONDARY PLANNING

**Planning for life after high school starts well before graduation day in May.**

We're focused on increasing student participation in capstone experiences, which are the most rigorous levels of study across all content areas. We define "capstone experiences" as taking a college-prep course such as Advanced Placement, dual credit or honors, as well as pursuing career-based work experiences like internships. Our goal is that all students will engage in a capstone experience before graduation, and currently over 95% of recent D99 graduates completed a capstone experience.



## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND SUPPORT OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS AND STAFF

**Providing high quality professional development is essential in supporting our workforce.**

Continued learning programs are based on staff feedback about what is relevant and useful, as well as what will make a positive impact on student success. Every D99 teacher personalizes their activities throughout the school year, which provides them with the flexibility to pursue worthwhile topics related to learning strategies and to collaborate with their peers. Our support staff, including security, nursing, paraprofessional, job coaching and administrative assistants, also personalize their learning to improve their skills and knowledge.

**"Education has been scrutinized for not making enough innovation compared to other types of industries, and this [professional development] is that main innovation that education has always needed."**

DGN Student Board Member  
Rehan Hashim



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We offer comprehensive programs to meet the needs of all students. We want them to experience choice while still in high school, so that they can identify what paths they'd like to pursue in the future.



## Academic Achievements

### 14 National Merit Scholars

Syed Ahmad, DGN  
Zevian Davis, DGS  
Gabriel Deaton, DGN  
Maya Engel, DGN  
Carly Ermitage, DGN  
Varun Ganesh, DGN  
Alessio LoBello, DGS

William Mielke, DGN  
Melody Parker, DGN  
Ryan Pawlik, DGN  
Sakthi Rajeshkumar, DGS  
Meaghan Wernett, DGN  
Zander Yee, DGN  
Al Zoerb, DGS

### 17 National Merit Commended students

31 Students nationally recognized in **National Merit African American, Hispanic, Indigenous and First Generation**

191 Students recognized as **Illinois State Scholars**

67 12th grade students designated **"distinguished honors"** with a career GPA 4.4 or higher (on a 4 point scale)

485 12th grade students designated **"high honors"** or **"honors"** with a career GPA 4.0 or higher or a 3.4 or higher (on a 4 point scale)

## Extracurricular Achievements

**DGN Boys Cross Country Team**  
State Champions for second consecutive year

Students receive numerous benefits from participating in extracurricular activities, including leadership opportunities and increased success in the classroom.

DID YOU  
KNOW



Photo courtesy of VIP Photography

**DGN/DGS  
Girls CO-OP  
Gymnastics Team**  
State Champions





# Our Staff

70%

24%

6%

Teachers, principals, deans, counselors, psychologists, paraprofessionals, and classroom support staff

Other support staff, including campus security, technology support, office staff, custodial, maintenance and grounds personnel

Administrative leaders, professionals and technical staff

**725** Full-Time Staff Members

The average experience of certified faculty members is **16 years** and **96%** hold advanced degrees

## STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

DGN Teacher and Coach **Tim McDonald**, IHSA Administrative Staff Coach of the Year

DGN Teacher and Coach **John Sipple**, Illinois Track and Cross Country Coaches Association Coach of the Year

DGS Teacher and Coach **Josh Forst**, Illinois High School Tennis Coaches Association Coach of the Year

DID YOU KNOW

In celebration of Veterans Day, students heard history firsthand from area veterans, including current staff member veterans like Marine Corps Sergeant Jacob Baleski, DGN Security.



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**S Genevieve Herion**  
Champion, All-Around  
mpion, Balance Beam



**DGS Addison Weinstein**  
Gold Medalist, 2025 National  
Scholastic Art and Writing Awards



**DGS Sebastian Blanco and Carly Bleau**  
State Champions,  
Dramatic  
Duet Acting

**DGS Sebastian Blanco**  
State Champion,  
Radio Speaking

**DGS Speech Team**  
Second Place in State

**DGN Girls Cross Country Team**  
Third Place in State

**D99 Hoops, Team 1, Division 11**  
Third Place

**D99 Hoops, Team 3, Division 11**  
Third Place

On a team with DuPage area culinary students, **Ireland Lenz** (DGN) and **Ashlynn Zimniewicz** (DGS) received First Place at Illinois ProStart Invitational

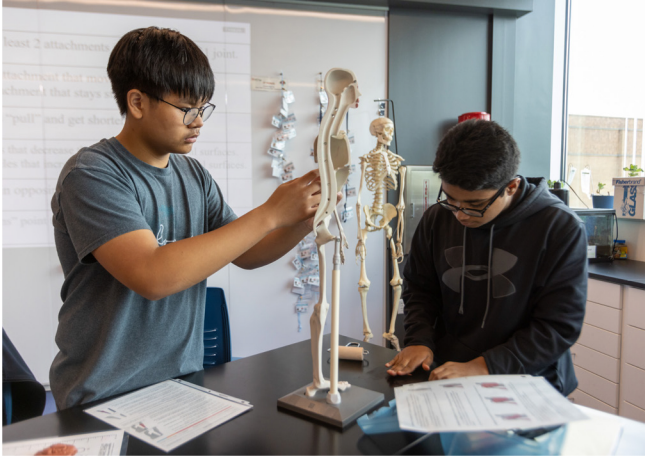
**20 DGN students** placed in the Top Ten at State DECA Competition

**71 students** performed in the 2024-25 Illinois Music Education Association All-State bands, orchestras, choirs, jazz bands and vocal jazz ensembles



# District Financials

District 99 manages its finances and budget of **\$115 million** conservatively and transparently. We received a “Certificate of Excellence” from the Association of School Business Officials International for the 25th year in a row. The designation reflects the district’s commitment to transparency and comprehensive financial reporting.



## FUNDING SOURCES

- 85% Local Property Tax
- 7% Other Local Sources
- 6% State
- 2% Federal

## EXPENDITURES

- 77% Salary and Benefits
- 12% Purchased Services (includes transportation and food)
- 5% Tuition (for special education and vocational opportunities)
- 5% Supplies and Materials (includes textbooks and utilities)
- 1% Routine Repairs and Maintenance (for safe, efficient and properly-working buildings)



D99’s 2024 total tax rate is **\$1.6497**, down from \$1.7250 in 2023, making it a good value to taxpayers.

The District 99 Education Foundation **awarded over \$19,000 in grants** in the fall to support innovative teaching. Funded projects included tools to boost students’ critical thinking and engagement, equipment for a new sensory room, materials for the student-led candle making business and electronics for the Engineering Club’s radio-controlled boats. The Foundation also sponsored this year’s back-to-school speaker, a leading expert on effective grading practices. Visit **www.d99ef.org** for details.

*Note: To save on postage costs, District 99 mailed this publication by USPS carrier routes. We apologize if you received this publication and live outside of our district boundaries. Thank you for taking the time to learn about District 99.*



ECRWSS  
Postal Customer



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