

Champion Learning News

A District news brief from Superintendent Rob Glass

Champion Learning: Develop, Educate, Inspire!

March 2010

About This Newsletter

In a busy world, it's challenging to get key information to people on a consistent basis. As part of Goal 3 of our strategic plan, we've put in place communication tools like Alert Now, Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, online surveys, etc. -- and we will soon have a revamped website. Yet, some of life's best lessons come the hard way. Upon recently learning that some important information did not reach the intended audience, I realized that I had overlooked the most important tools of all-- School level communications both paper and electronic.

So I decided to give *Champion Learning News* a try as something that can be put

into student information packets or e-mailed with each school newsletter. The intent is to give you key district information on an as-needed basis in a recognizable format. If nothing else, I hope to highlight specific information and point you to more detail at our website. The frequency will be periodic and the content more substantive than promotional. Let's see how it goes, and if you find this helpful, I'll keep it going. Let me know what you think.

Speaking of communication, let me encourage you to check our website as often as you possibly can, at www.dexterschools.org. From our homepage, you can launch the following important communication avenues:

- My blog 'Glass Half Full' <http://blogs.dexterschools.org/glassr/>
- Twitter <http://twitter.com/DexterSchools>
- Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dexter-Community-Schools/136490930684>
- Please feel free to e-mail me at: glassr@dexterschools.org

Reducing Costs, Enhancing Programs

We are not planning to cut or reduce student programs for 2010-11. Yes, we are dealing with serious state funding pressures, but with our Strategic Plan as a guide, every department and building is asking, 'Can we deliver our current (or improved) program for less by operating differently?' Sometimes the answer is 'yes,' other times 'no'. Here's a taste of some of what we're working on as part of a multi-year approach:

- Reorganization of Community Education and Athletics into one new department under a new director with a strong entrepreneurial focus. The new department will be self-sustaining within 3-5 years.

- Re-imagining Transportation: We've held three public meetings, and have more planned (see article in this newsletter on page 2).
- Restructure various Support Services Departments with different scheduling, staffing, etc.
- Optimize scheduling of classroom and specials teachers: This could mean up to 1-2 students more in a classroom, but still within our normal range.
- Conservation of resources and progressive energy management
- Offering 'Freshman House' program at DHS this fall
- K-12 world language beginning 2010-11 (survey in process)
- International Baccalaureate at DHS for 2011-12 and possibly all Dexter schools K-12 (survey forthcoming)
- Full-Day kindergarten standard 2011-12 (half-day as optional offering)
- Enhanced Personalization and Virtualization of learning

Please regularly check our website under 'Dexterity' for more details.

Find out more and give input on our 'Dexterity' Draft plan at one of our Community Meetings:

- **March 18th** at Creekside Cafeteria, 6:30-8 p.m.
- **April 14th** at Creekside Cafeteria, 6:30-8 p.m.

Re-imagining DCS Transportation

A portion of the 2008 bond issue was authorized to renovate the bus garage. Preliminary estimates came in significantly over budget, mainly due to implications of constraints on the current site. At the same time, concepts for a bond-funded roadway to separate auto and bus traffic at Wylie School were not yielding an ideal solution.

We hypothesized that integrating both projects could potentially yield a better solution and also achieve operational improvements. Midwestern Consulting was engaged to conduct a technical study of the situation. The study is posted on our website (<http://sites.google.com/a/dexterschools.org/dexterity/home/transportation>). The findings involved several recommended initiatives:

1. DCS should consider relocating the transportation to a new site on the 83 acre campus
2. DCS should consider changing the dual-tier system to a single-tier system

3. DCS should begin to purchase larger bus units to be able to respond to changing demographics
4. DCS should consider implementation of a no-transport zone primarily within one mile of the campus.

A series of three public meetings was held in February to discuss the study, with about 60 people in attendance each night. The study was discussed in detail, questions were asked, detailed answers provided, and a survey taken. Frequently Asked Questions are posted at http://web.dexter.k12.mi.us/Transportation%20restructure%20forum%20Q_A.pdf.

Using the study, operational improvements and community feedback from these meetings, we are in the process of creating a Draft Plan for Transportation restructuring initiatives to be implemented for the 2010-11 school year.

Concurrently, Washtenaw Intermediate School District is creating a plan to provide transportation service for all districts in the county as a united operation. Once we have the details of their plan (late April), we will compare it to ours. Administration will then evaluate

the most appropriate approach and generate a recommendation.

Administration will share the Draft Plan and provide opportunities for input according to the following schedule:

- **March 25- Public Meeting:** Present Draft Plan and receive public input
- **March 31- Public Meeting:** Present Draft Plan and receive public input
- **April 12 Board Meeting-** Board receives administration's recommended plan for Re-imagining DCS Transportation
- **April 26 and/or May 10 Board meeting-** WISD countywide plan presented to Board for information and comment; Receive Board and public input. Administration will make a final decision sometime shortly thereafter.

I will also be available for Coffee and Conversation at Foggy Bottom on:

- March 17th, 7-8 a.m.
- March 23rd, 7-8 p.m.
- April 21st, 7-8 a.m.

Did You Know?

- Our **Energy Management** program under the direction of Mr. Randy Westerman and our Energy Champions has saved the district nearly **\$170,000** annually on Electric and Natural Gas utility costs. Dexter staff and students are committed to doing what it takes to 'reduce the use' even more in the future. We are grateful to the community for energy efficiency improvements that are being realized through bond renovations. We are committed to good fiscal stewardship

through responsible use of our natural resources!

- DCS operates a number of **self-sustaining** programs that contribute to Dexter's General Fund and thus support the classroom. These programs have contributed over **\$1.7 million** in total indirect costs transferred back to the General Fund since the 2000-01 school year!
- Bates principal **Roger Moore** and Wylie principal **Paula Thomas** will be retiring at the end of this school year. We are very sad to say goodbye to these

talented, dedicated professionals. We wish them all the best in this new chapter of their lives. I have met with the staff members at each school to get input on the characteristics they are looking for in a prospective principal, as well as establishing a process/timeline. I envision a representative stakeholder group, (with parent representation) will be used to select candidates through a series of interviews. The positions will be posted soon, both internally and externally.