

DCS Strategic Plan

In February, 2008, Dexter Community Schools engaged Dr. Michael Wilmot from the Michigan Leadership Institute to facilitate the District's strategic planning initiative. The members of the Board of Education determined the need for a comprehensive, dynamic planning process because they believed that the implementation of such a plan was essential to the future success of the District. It is obvious that the future will bring unprecedented complexity at an ever-increasing rate of speed and that the schools in the District must be in a position to respond effectively to these challenges. The Board acknowledged that this planning effort and the resulting plan document be developed with broad school and community involvement to guarantee the best and most comprehensive thinking possible on behalf of current and future students of Dexter. Several meetings were held throughout the remainder of the year. Recommendations were made to the Board based upon the input gathered from these meetings. On July 14, 2008, the Board approved the following components of the plan.

Vision

Champion Learning -- Develop, Educate, and Inspire!

Mission

We will encourage and develop each student's individual abilities, skills, and character to shape tomorrow's world through positive relationships, best practices, and a shared sense of purpose.

Core Beliefs We believe in:

- ◆ Working with passion, pride, and integrity to realize one's personal best
- ◆ Providing quality educational opportunities for all learners at all levels
- ◆ Continually evaluating the effectiveness and relevancy of the K-12 curriculum to better achieve desired student outcomes
- ◆ Maintaining the physical resources of the District and maximizing fiscal effectiveness, efficiency, and stability
- ◆ Eliminating prejudice and discrimination to promote tolerance and a respectful school environment
- ◆ Enhancing dialogue with the community to increase and strengthen the essential partnership among staff, students, and community
- ◆ Ensuring a safe and secure learning environment to maximize student achievement

Indicators of Success

- ◆ Learning is the primary focus and purpose of the organization
- ◆ All District efforts are designed and delivered with a focus on individual students and the development of abilities, skills and character
- ◆ Instructional delivery systems are implemented and evaluated based on established, research based "best practices" and strong partnerships
- ◆ Partnerships at all levels are encouraged, valued, and strengthened
- ◆ Partners in the educational process are inspired by the work they do and the learning/growth that takes place

Focus Areas

◆School Improvement

◆**Curriculum** - To meet changing needs and expectations of stakeholders, the curriculum is broad-based, rich, and challenging. The curriculum meets the needs and abilities of students at every level and is aligned so as to meet/exceed state and federal standards and benchmarks. The curriculum is periodically reviewed and updated based upon current research. The curriculum is clearly articulated, committed to writing, and is accessible to parents, students, teachers, and administrators. The curriculum is consistently implemented across the District in a manner to ensure the development of a common knowledge and skill base among students at specific grade levels. The adopted curriculum is enhanced by opportunities for students to participate in academic and extra-curricular activities. These activities complement the instructional program in developing the skills and talents of students.

◆**Instruction** - Instructional practice refers to the use of teaching techniques, time and space, school equipment, and specific programs in support of the District's vision and mission. Specific instructional practices are based on established, research based "best practices." High expectations for achievement are the standard for both staff and students in every class, every day. Differentiated content and instructional techniques are developmentally appropriate and are designed to create a personalized learning environment for each student. Instructional practices are fully supported and provide high quality, relevant professional development opportunities for all staff.

◆**Assessment** - A system of multiple assessments is routinely administered and used to determine levels of student-achievement. Data about the effectiveness of curriculum and instructional practices are used to guide instruction and to ensure continuous student achievement. The system of assessment is supported with training, technology, and other necessary resources.

◆**Technology** - Technology is a tool for learning and is widely integrated into the District's instructional programs as an essential skill whose successful application enhances and extends instruction and learning. The effective use of technology, for both instructional and administrative purposes, requires ongoing, relevant professional development opportunities at every level and on a consistent basis.

◆**Positive Human Connections** - Schools exist to provide high-quality, learning opportunities for students. A safe and orderly environment is an essential component to support learning and enhance efforts to improve student achievement. Effective schools recognize the need to establish behavioral expectations and routines that reflect district-wide goals for a safe, orderly, and respectful environment that is free from bullying and harassment. Schools also recognize the need to create an environment where everyone is valued for the contributions they make to student achievement and the success of the District. Effective schools have a strong belief in the value of developing and sustaining meaningful relationships between teachers, students, administrators, support staff, and parents. These relationships are cultivated by providing on-going professional development opportunities which promote relationship building and keeping all employees informed about important aspects of the District.

◆**Facilities** - District facilities that are appropriately designed for and enable the full implementation of the District's curriculum and established instructional practices are essential to the effective and efficient operation of the District. Additionally, appropriately designed and maintained facilities are integral to the efficient operation of the District's extra-curricular and athletic programs. Facilities must be well-maintained and safe to ensure maximum benefit for students from the instructional processes of the District.

◆**Finance** - A stable financial condition is required in order to ensure continuity of programs and stability in the District's employment practices. Spending will be monitored using a standard aimed at maintaining and enhancing the quality of instruction. When necessary, expenditures will be reduced in a manner consistent with the District's vision and mission. Finances must reflect, rather than dictate District policy. Local, regional, and statewide opportunities for revenue enhancement will be pursued which are consistent with the District's vision, mission, and goals.

◆**Communications** (Internal and External) and Partnerships - Effective school organizations maintain ongoing, two-way communication with all segments of the school and the community at large. It is imperative that employees at every level and the school community at large be well informed. Information relative to the District and its students must be communicated openly, honestly, and in a timely manner which is easily understood. Ongoing partnerships between the school, families, and the business community provide mutual benefit, enhance the learning process, and significantly increase the potential for relevant, hands-on experiences for students. The District will pursue meaningful partnerships at every level.

Work will continue during the 2008-09 school year to write and refine action plans to address these focus area initiatives. Updates to the plan will be posted on the District's web site.