Faith-based community unites to support students and families

The Faith-based Council launched in January at a special breakfast with principals and board members. The goal of the Council is to develop school support and enable the Superintendent to meet with leaders regularly to discuss the successes and challenges of the District and to hear from faith-based leaders about how the District and schools can work collaboratively to help children, families, and communities. The Council will continue to encourage Detroit clergy members to partner with schools.

Celebrating Black History Month

The District will launch a History Task Force to expand students’ knowledge of Detroit history and ensure the belief and thinking that Black History is part of the everyday experience. DPSCD students will be participating in various African-American centered activities throughout Black History Month including:

- NAACP Essay competition open to 3rd to 12th students; Winners will be shared at a future board meeting.
- District wide oratory contest. District Winners will be shared at a future board meeting.
- Expanded visits to the Charles H. Wright Museum of African-American History.
- A selection of lesson plans have been offered to expose students to materials related to African-American history.
- School-based activities highlighted through the District’s social media to show best practices.

THE CURRICULUM TEAM

Beth Gonzales, Senior Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction, beth.gonzales@detroitk12.org
April Imperio, Deputy Executive Director of K-12 Literacy, april.imperio@detroitk12.org
Tony Hawk, Deputy Executive Director of K-12 Mathematics, tony.hawk@detroitk12.org
Kristie Ford, Deputy Executive Director of K-12 Science, kristie.ford@detroitk12.org
Ellen Gilchrist, Deputy Executive Director of K-12 Social Studies, ellen.gilchrist@detroitk12.org
Julie Pita, Director of Professional Development, julie.pita@detroitk12.org

Spotlight on the DPSCD Curriculum/Academics Sub-Committee

Detroit Public Schools Community District Curriculum/Academics Sub-Committee is comprised of three board members who were all reappointed by Board President, Dr. Iris Taylor, at the January 2018 board meeting: the Honorable Dr. Deborah Hunter-Harvill, the Honorable Georgia Lemmons and the Honorable Misha Stallworth.
More DPSCD students will be exposed to strategic and critical thinking skills through the District’s expanded robotics club initiative funded by the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics club initiative funded by the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics program. The District’s expanded robotics club initiative funded by the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics program.

The District will begin to restore equity and access to art and music for all students by launching its Cultural Passport Initiative that seeks to recruit at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, to help with teacher recruitment, they will be approaching the board with an approval for out-of-state travel. Dr. Vitti is seeking to recruit at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, in Canada and in the Midwest.

In addition, the Committee is recommending that the District create a district-based certification process to grow our own. These strategies are recommended to address the teacher shortages.

The first cohort of organizations to help launch this initiative are The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and The Michigan Opera Theatre. The program will expand in the fall to include all grade levels from K-5 with the goal of each student participating in up to three cultural experiences per school year.

Exposing our students to art and music outside of the classroom encourages exploration and provides diverse learning experiences. These cultural trips will help students see the world outside of their homes and community.

Misha Stalbearth
Committee Member

Students left the theater with a better understanding of the Supreme Court judge’s demeanor and character traits as a man,” says Principal Sharon Lee. “The students are more informed about the life of a man whose goal was to pursue happiness for ALL mankind.”

5000 Role Models

Detroit Public Schools Community District announced the launch of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project for minority males in grades 6 through 12. This project is designed to develop a leadership pipeline for young men utilizing school-based and community role models through various methods of support including themed weekly meetings, a monthly speaker series, community service projects and college access support. Board members voted 7-0 to launch the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project. Six schools will pilot this program and 50 students will be inducted from each school to participate. The 300 students identified will participate in various academic and behavioral support programs as well as cultural and educational experiences. Students will serve as ambassadors for the program and the school district throughout the City of Detroit. The first service project is expected to be conducted in May 2018.

THE STANDARD SERIES
Professional Development

“Our vision is that teachers will receive professional development on the Standards in Literacy, Mathematics, and Science before the start of the 18/19 school year,” said Dr. Deborah Hunter-Harvill, Committee Chair. “This knowledge will support the implementation of new instructional materials.”

Dr. Vitti understands the importance of teacher development and the impact it will have on improving student achievement. The District believes all students should be offered instruction that is aligned to the expectations of the standards, but first, teachers much be supported through proper professional learning.

Teachers attended their first session of The Standard Series in January and will continue through the winter. Below is an overview of the sessions:

- In English Language Arts/Literacy, teachers learned how the ELA shifts illustrate transformative changes in practices that are called for by the standards.
- In Mathematics, teachers explored the concepts of balanced mathematics, analyzed problems and instructional strategies aligned to the three aspects of rigor: conceptual, procedural skill and fluency.
- In Science, teachers explored the Three-Dimensional Learning practices of the Next Generation Science Standards.

These initial sessions introduced teachers to the research behind the standards and how the shifts illustrate transformative changes in the classroom. This foundation will be leveraged over the course of the series and as teachers begin to implement these new practices in their classroom.

Dr. Vitti is planning next year’s budget to expand i-Ready to K-8.

The District launched the Master Teacher program. Of the many applicants, 30 were selected for the program and participated in a week-long learning experience. A second round of teachers will be selected for the program in February.

The Committee is making a recommendation to the Board to help with teacher recruitment, they will be approaching the board with an approval for out-of-state travel. Dr. Vitti is seeking to recruit at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, in Canada and in the Midwest.

In addition, the Committee is recommending that the District continue to seek partnerships with local universities.

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The District will begin to restore equity and access to art and music for all students by launching its Cultural Passport Initiative. Students will be exposed to art and music for all students by launching its Cultural Passport Initiative. This spring, students in grades 3-5 will begin stamping their passports at cultural landmarks throughout metro Detroit.

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Per the committee’s recommendation, all Thurgood Marshall Elementary School students went on a trip to see the movie “Marshall,” which focuses on racism and antisemitism in 1940. Students and staff were eager to watch the life and legacy of the influential African American Supreme Court Judge, Thurgood Marshall. Prior to the viewing, students built their background knowledge to help them with their capstone projects. Each student will write a constructive essay depicting the life of Thurgood Marshall and what true justice stands for.

Students left the theater with a better understanding of the Supreme Court judge’s demeanor and character traits as a man,” says Principal Sharon Lee. “The students are more informed about the life of a man whose goal was to pursue happiness for ALL mankind.”

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Curriculum/Academics Sub-Committee Recap
- Former DPS student and published author, Ashleigh Garrison, addressed the Board and presented them with her first book, “Dodgeball Mystery”. She published the book when she was 10-years-old. She is currently a student at Syracuse University majoring in Journalism and a freelance writer for the Detroit Free Press and BLAC Magazine. Ms. Garrison visited several metro-Detroit schools where she facilitated book talks and creative writing workshops for students. She plans to do more.
- Dr. Vitti and cabinet members met with all principals during “data chats with the Superintendent” to review students’ performance on last year’s M-STEP, enrollment, discipline, graduation and attendance.
- During the January sub-committee meeting, Dr. Vitti reviewed early testing and data results with the committee from i-Ready and NWEA testing. The data looks at where students are now to accelerate this path for students who are more than a year behind,” said Superintendent Nikolai Vitti.