

Des Moines Public Schools

DMPS

COMMUNITY REPORT

February 2012

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DMPS Leads State in Enrollment Growth

If you build it they will come.

Does that mantra account for Des Moines Public Schools registering the largest enrollment increase of any school district in the state this year? The biggest provider of public education in Iowa continues to grow in many significant ways.

Figures released by the Iowa Department of Education show that the city's schools enrolled 571 more students for 2011-12 than in 2010-11, the largest increase of any district in the state. Total K-12 enrollment in Iowa declined over the same period. The certified enrollment report is the basis for the allowable growth formula that allocates state funding per pupil for public school districts.

DMPS isn't so much being built as refortified. After all, the district has been earning its reputation as a national leader in public education for more than a century. And now at a time when it serves a more diverse population than ever before the district offers a breadth of choice that will be especially vital moving ahead in the 21st century.

"It certainly makes sense that our schools, like the city of Des Moines itself, would be viewed as attractive by more families," said Superintendent Dr. Nancy Sebring. "The menu of curricula and environments we offer is innovative and the envy of many other diverse, urban districts like ours around the country."

DMPS students, parents, teachers and staff come from many different

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DMPS Leads State in Enrollment Growth

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backgrounds, all of which contribute to the richness of a DMPS education. Opportunities in Des Moines range as wide as the interests and dreams of the 31,000+ students.

The district boasts the widest variety of educational programs – many of them nationally renowned

– in Iowa. That includes the state’s only International Baccalaureate curriculum and the only public Montessori school. According to the Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education, Central Academy’s “record of excellence with Advanced Placement is an honor for the entire state of Iowa,” producing more National AP Scholars in one recent year than 13 entire states. The Downtown School is regarded as a national model. Several schools feature continuous calendars throughout the year, and the Career & Tech Institute at Central Campus delivers training in everything from culinary arts to aviation technology, a scope that is rare in districts with comparable profiles. This year North High School became the largest school in the state to implement a 1:1 laptop program for its entire student body. And Governor Branstad has proposed making the ACT exam mandatory for high school juniors statewide (free of charge), a concept that was implemented by DMPS four years ago.

Over the last decade a comprehensive and ongoing capital improvements campaign has renovated and updated many

schools, 44 of which have now earned the Energy Star designation. Learning environments are outfitted with everything from the latest technology to air conditioning.

Those state of the art learning environments are being created even in the face of a series of budget cuts that could have stalled progress if it weren’t for the savings that were achieved through modernization. Revenues generated by the local option sales tax and the statewide penny tax that replaced it have been put to such efficient use in renovating DMPS schools that the district was recently singled out for a site visit by Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Chief Operations Officer Bill Good gets frequent calls from counterparts around the country wondering how DMPS has managed to simultaneously upgrade its facilities and slash its operational costs.

Long the biggest school district in Iowa, DMPS is piling up evidence through its stewardship of resources ranging from students to dollars that it’s also clearly the best and getting better. ■



Nancy Sutley, President Obama’s principal environmental advisor and Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, visited Des Moines Public Schools on January 26 to tour North High, an ENERGY STAR certified school. After the tour, Chair Sutley met with North High students to discuss the President’s State of the Union address.

There’s an App For That

Parents can now access Infinite Campus on the go through their iPhone or iPad. The app was developed by Infinite Campus to allow parents greater convenience and access to the system in order to see their child’s schedule, grades, assignments or more.

To download and activate the app, simply log on to Infinite Campus, accessible under the Quick Links section on the DMPS home page. Then click on the “Available on the

App Store” button and follow the three-step instructions.

The app provides access to the parent portal only, and does not allow for staff access to Infinite Campus. The app is available for Apple devices only; an Android app is currently being developed.

If you do not have an Infinite Campus account, please contact the main office of the school your student attends in order to create an account. ■



Legislators, Governor Debate School Reform

The current school year started back in August but future ones began taking shape when Iowa Governor Terry Branstad disclosed his blueprint for education reform in October after holding an education summit conference in Des Moines last summer.

The plan was revised after a series of town hall forums around the state gave citizens a chance to weigh in. One of those events filled the Boardroom at Central Campus on December 10, 2011. Governor Branstad then formally unveiled the proposal he later submitted to the state legislature during an appearance at Capitol View Elementary on January 6, 2012.

Key elements of the Branstad plan that have been drawing lots of attention in the early going of the legislative session call for retention of third-graders who aren't reading at grade level, requiring at least a 3.0 grade-point average (GPA) for admission to teacher training programs at regent universities and making the ACT college entrance exam mandatory for all high school juniors in the state, as has been the case in Des Moines for the last four years.

The Des Moines School Board also developed its own set of legislative priorities, some of which were in common with fellow members of the state's Urban Education Network and others which it felt reflected aspects unique to DMPS as the largest and most diverse school district in the state.

Since the General Assembly convened last month, the governor



Governor Terry Branstad along with Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds and Education Director Jason Glass announce their education proposal at Capitol View Elementary School.

is also asking for repeal of the requirement that lawmakers take action on the rate of allowable growth in school funding in the first 30 days of each legislative session, a provision designed to allow school districts reasonable planning time to develop their budgets. He says the allowable growth formula for state aid to schools should be repealed altogether as part of a shift in focus and resources to his reform blueprint.

As part of a two-year state budget, last year was the first time in the 40-year history of the allowable growth formula that a zero percent increase in school aid was enacted. The second year, which will cover the 2012-13 school year, provides for a 2 percent hike in allowable growth which annually fixes the rate of state spending on a per pupil basis.

A proposal to set the allowable growth rate in the 2013-14 school year at 4 percent was passed by the Iowa Senate. Senate Education Committee Chairman Herman Quirnbach says that would help offset the zero percent growth in state aid to schools in the current fiscal year. He described the state's surplus

in excess of one billion dollars as ample enough to justify the increased commitment to education.

Quirnbach also opposes repeal of allowable growth. He says the rationale for two-year state budgets was to facilitate longer-range planning and stability and thinks that principle should certainly apply in the case of school financing.

On another policy front, the Director of the Iowa Department of Education is optimistic about the state's prospects for obtaining a waiver of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) statute. Iowa is expected to submit its application later this month. Exemption from NCLB is seen as a vital step towards allowing Iowa schools the flexibility necessary to effect changes tailored to conditions here.

If you would like to express your feelings on educational matters pending at the statehouse, find your legislator at www.legis.iowa.gov or contact the governor's office by writing 1007 East Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50319 or calling 515-281-5211. ■

Celebrating Our Achievements

This regular feature of the *DMPS Community Report* highlights awards and achievements of district students and staff. Please let us know if you have a notable achievement to share by e-mailing Sarah Taylor at sarah.taylor@dmschools.org. Here are some achievements from the past few months.

Thirteen seniors at Central Academy were named as candidates for the 2012 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. They are **Jack Bequeaith** (Roosevelt High School), **Braden Edwards** (Lincoln High School), **Corey Grief** (Roosevelt High School), **Andrea Harlan** (Roosevelt High School), **Xiaoxue Liu** (Valley High School), **Matthew Mackay** (Roosevelt High School), **Megan Mansfield** (Roosevelt High School), **Sarah Mansfield** (Roosevelt High School), **Kathryn Marcus** (Roosevelt High School), **China Mauck** (Roosevelt High School), **Alisha Smith** (North Polk High School), **Augustine Villa** (Dowling High School), **Luchang Wang** (Valley High School).

Seventeen Central Academy students were chosen as winners in the Young Lawyers Division of The Iowa State Bar Association's "Know Your Constitution" competition. In addition, out of 1,500 essays submitted, Roosevelt High School junior **Nathan Leys** captured the award for the state's best essay.

Cowles Montessori student **Jade Miller** received first place in the Des Moines Music Teachers Association piano competition.

Roosevelt High School's debate team earned the state championship Sweepstakes Trophy for the second consecutive year at the Iowa High School Speech Association's State Debate Tournament.

Roosevelt High School debate team senior **Max Hardt** and junior **Madison Holmes** were crowned champions in Public Forum Debate at the Iowa High School Speech Association's State Debate Tournament.

The Des Moines FFA chapter at Central Campus has been awarded a \$1,500 "Planting A Seed" grant by the Iowa Food & Family Project in order to conduct activities that increase agricultural awareness and interest among youth in food production and life sciences.

Timm Pilcher, Hoover High School's publications adviser, has earned his Master Journalism Educator status from the Journalism Education Association, located at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas.

Fourteen DMPS students were winners in the annual MLK Essay contest sponsored by the Friends of the Forest Avenue Library and the Forest Avenue Brick Fund. Winners were: 1st place, Elementary: **Peyton Dueling**, 3rd grade, Jefferson Elementary School; 2nd place, Elementary: **Steve Ragan**, 3rd grade, Jefferson Elementary School; 3rd place, Elementary: **Chloe Grandberg**, 3rd grade, Jefferson Elementary School; 3rd place, Elementary: **Pascal Patton-Imani**, 2nd grade, Walnut Street School; 4th place, Elementary: **Jake Hubner**, 2nd grade, Walnut Street School; 4th place, Elementary: **Taylor Huss**, 3rd grade, Jefferson

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Des Moines Public Schools received a \$11,600 check from Metro Waste Authority for increasing recycling efforts by 48 percent from 2010-2011. The money will be used to purchase more recycling containers for the schools and offset recycling expenses.

Celebrating Our Achievements

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Elementary School; 1st place, Middle School: **Mitchell Albracht**, 6th grade, Merrill Middle School; 1st place, Middle School: **Jada Alexander**, 6th grade, Merrill Middle School; 2nd place, Middle School: **Jessica Bolten**, 6th grade, Merrill Middle School; 2nd place, Middle School: **Ellie Konfrst**, 6th grade, Merrill Middle School; 2nd place, Middle School: **Asmara Shan**, 6th grade, Merrill Middle School; 3rd place, Middle School: **Savana Coldwell**, 7th grade, Brody Middle School; 3rd place, Middle School: **Emily Weese**, 7th grade, Brody Middle School; 4th place, Middle School: **Sean Anderson**, 6th grade, Merrill Middle School.

The Moulton Science Bound team participated in the science fair competition on January 24.

Seven members took home the top "Science Award." They are **Mayte Gomez-Cruz, Yvonne San Elias, Ange San Elias, Sulaiman Muhammad, Xarius Mickens, and Brianna Hale** and **Tylen Chestnut**. They are led by Moulton science teacher **Neil Gilmore**.

Central Campus Iowa Energy and Sustainability Academy received a grant from the Kum and Go corporation for \$2,000 to support students' work in the class.

Lincoln High School's Academic Decathlon team qualified for the state competition for the third year in a row. **Angelo Vignaroli** received the award for Honors First Place Speech at the regional meet. Other team members include **Taylor Best, Kaitlin Tomlinson, Vanessa**

Vizcarra, Rigoberto Perez, Donnal Whitier, Arianna Bullis, Christian Trinidad, Octavio Lopez, Maddie Schooler and Chris Kirschbaum.

The North High Academic Decathlon team placed first in the regional Academic Decathlon competition. The team won the Super Quiz Oral section of the competition as well as 35 individual awards. They will compete at the state competition in March. Team members are **Julius Tembe, Brian Schulze, Cody McKeehan, Sasha Phillips, Mariama Corneh, Melanie Buck, Brennan Whisler, Shad Corbin, Clark Reimers, Jerson Valenzuela, Katie Ashley, Trista Behrendsen, Kelsey Barbour, Victoria Wilson, Kayla McKeehan, Charles Overton, Jessica Jensen, Ria Gasaway.** ■

Schott Begins New Role as Executive Director of Secondary Schools

Tim Schott, former principal of Hubbell Elementary School, is the district's new Executive Director of Secondary Schools.

In his new role, Schott is leading the district's middle school programs, providing leadership and support to principals and their teams.

"Tim has been a leader and an innovator in Des Moines for several years, especially in our efforts at being the first district in Iowa with the International Baccalaureate program," said Dr. Nancy Sebring, Superintendent of Des Moines Public Schools.

Schott made a positive impact at Hubbell Elementary during the seven years he was principal at the school. During that time, Hubbell became Iowa's first International Baccalaureate PYP World School, enrollment at Hubbell

increased 38 percent, and the school was twice awarded School of Excellence Designation by the National PTA.

He is excited to expand his knowledge to the entire district.

"We are on the cusp of great changes in our school district and I am honored to be able to contribute my energy to our mission of ensuring that our graduates possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities for success at the next stage of their lives," said Schott. "I am looking forward to working with our middle school students, teachers and schools along their path to success."

A long-time Des Moines educator, Jack Cavanagh, is serving as interim principal at Hubbell through the end of the 2011-12 school year. Most recently, he was principal at Edmunds Elementary School. ■



Tim Schott
Executive Director of Secondary Schools

District Seeks ‘Great Conversation’ With Community

When noted educational consultant Jamie Vollmer visited DMPS recently looking to start what he calls The Great Conversation about public schools he came to the right place.

Last year Superintendent Dr. Nancy Sebring created a Citizens’ Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) to recommend financial priorities to the school board as a conversation starter. That was followed in short order by an Employees’ Budget Advisory Committee (EBAC). The next step in a process aimed at a more free-flowing community dialogue will be the formation of a Strategic Issues Advisory Committee (SIAC) and Vollmer’s appearance in the Boardroom at Central Campus on January 24 launched that initiative.

Vollmer’s been calling for educational reform for years but there appears to be a perfect storm gathering in Iowa now around the topic. Governor Branstad has drawn up a blueprint for school change and submitted it to the state legislature for consideration and debate. As had been the case when Branstad held a town hall meeting on his reform agenda on December 10, the Boardroom was filled when Vollmer spoke there last month. On both occasions the audience was a healthy mix of parents, teachers and public officials. The parties to the conversation are coming to the table.

One of them who’s been there for some time already is Shane Schulte, a member of CBAC and head of the Citywide PTA.

“I’ve really enjoyed working on the budget. School finance is

complicated and this has been an eye opening experience. I have a better understanding of the challenges our schools face and the services we need to provide,” he said recently. “I would encourage everyone to become more engaged with the district. The new strategic issues committee is an opportunity to learn more about our challenges and new strategies,” Schulte added.

A good primer on school challenges and strategies is Vollmer’s book, *Schools Cannot Do It Alone*. His talk at Central Campus was a synopsis of talking points gleaned from its pages. He believes too many people look at the schools now in a trance of “nostesia,” a word he coined to refer to a condition marked by 50 percent nostalgia and 50 percent amnesia that keeps us stuck in a system “designed for a state and a country that no longer exist.”

“Vollmer’s List” of the additional tasks that have been assigned to schools since 1900 demonstrates the folly of expecting more without a commensurate adjustment in the amount of time and resources.

So how will the necessary change happen? Vollmer says there are four key ingredients:

- The community has to understand the challenges
- The community has to trust the schools
- The community has to give its permission for change
- The community has to support the changes that are made

The realization that understanding, trust, permission and support all have to come from



the community is driving the district’s renewed emphasis on outreach.

“We have always depended upon community participation and input,” commented Dr. Sebring. “But we are looking for more effective ways to invite and collect it.”

Vollmer cites research indicating that volunteers who see schools up close are overwhelmingly their most enthusiastic advocates. Until he saw them from that perspective he was a businessman and harsh critic of schools who thought educators were the primary problem, a view that quickly changed upon his closer inspection. Now he unequivocally says, “The system is the problem, not the people” in it.

Schulte agrees and says the more he gets involved the more involved he wants to be. “In the end, I feel like I’m making a difference in our schools.”

And so can you. For more information about joining The Great Conversation click here: <http://www.jamievollmer.com/> ■

Jongewaard Appointed to Fill School Board Vacancy

On January 27 the Des Moines School Board appointed Joe Jongewaard to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Patty Link. He will serve the remainder of the four-year term Link was elected to in 2009.

Jongewaard was selected from among 11 applicants, a field that was pared to three by a Board subcommittee consisting of Dick Murphy, Connie Boesen, Cindy Elsbernd and Bill Howard. The other finalists were Shane Schulte, who heads the Citywide PTA, and Patricia Woodward-Young, a professor of education at Simpson College. They were interviewed by the Board in a public session on January 24 at Central Campus and each had the following questions posed to them:

- Tell us a little about yourself and why you would like to serve on the Des Moines School Board.
- Did you consider running for the Board last September? Why did you choose not to? If appointed would you consider running again in 2013 for four more years?
- What do you think of public schools today and please comment on Governor Branstad's plan to improve Iowa's schools.
- Please talk a little about how you see the role of the board in relation to the Superintendent, in relation to the staff, and in relation to each other.



Joe Jongewaard gets sworn into office by School Board Chair Teree Caldwell-Johnson

- Board members are expected to be on committees, represent the district, and just be present in the district. Do you have the time and commitment to fulfill this expectation?
- If you had to cut \$5 million from next year's budget, what would your priorities be?
- What are some of the critical challenges facing the Des Moines Public Schools today?

"We're pleased to welcome Joe to the Board to join us in our work on behalf of our students, our schools and the entire community," said Teree Caldwell-Johnson, chair of the Des Moines School Board. "We are grateful to everyone who applied and for having a strong group of finalists to consider."

"I am honored," Jongewaard said. "Des Moines Public Schools is...one of the best urban districts in the nation."

Jongewaard is no stranger to advocacy on behalf of public schools. As a Project Coordinator for Vision 2005 from 1994-97 he

played a key role in developing strategies that resulted in adoption of the one-cent sales tax for schools which continues to fund the modernization of district infrastructure and facilities. He is also a longtime volunteer in support of such efforts as the district's Fine Arts Dinner, various district fundraising campaigns and the Hoover Boosters. He is married to Connie Cook who retired last year as an Associate Superintendent after a long and distinguished career as a district teacher and administrator.

In addition to his central role in Vision 2005, Jongewaard also compiled an impressive record of accomplishments during stints as an aide to former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack and as a Project Manager in the Iowa Department of Economic Development before recently taking early retirement. His career in state government established a network of relationships that he brings with him to the Board as a steward of school resources.

Jongewaard was sworn in and seated at the Board meeting on February 7. ■



Registration for Preschool Programs

UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

Des Moines Public Schools Early Childhood Department will begin taking applications for the Universal Preschool (UPK) program on March 12, 2012. The application will be available on the DMPS website starting on March 9, 2012. Children that are 4 years old on or before September 15, 2012 are eligible to apply. The child's birth certificate or T-19 card is required. Contact 515-242-7588 or 515-242-7234 with questions.

HEAD START

Des Moines Public Schools Head Start program will start taking applications for 3 & 4 year old children on February 17, 2012. Applicants will need to bring proof of birth (child's birth certificate or T-19 card) and proof of income (taxes from 2011 or current FIP or current SSI). Call 515-242-7588 or 515-242-7234 for more information or to schedule an appointment. ■

2012-2013 Kindergarten Registration

Dates are set for kindergarten registration in Des Moines Public Schools for the 2012-2013 school year.

Families who already have children attending a traditional calendar school in the district (including preschool), may register at their school on Wednesday, February 15, 2012 from 2:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Families who are new to the district can register one of the following ways:

- Visit the Welcome Center on Wednesday, February 15, 2012 from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. No appointment is needed during this time.
- Visit North High School (501 Holcomb) on Tuesday, March 6, 2012 or Tuesday, March 27, 2012 from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. No appointment is needed during this time.
- Call the Welcome Center at (515) 242-7371 to make an appointment to register your kindergartner.

The Welcome Center is located at 1301 2nd Ave. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Everyone is required to bring the following documents to kindergarten registration:

- Birth certificate or another proof of birth date for your child;
- Resident verification (two of the following items: rental or purchase agreement, valid identification, utility bill, cell phone bill or credit card statement);
- Immunization records;
- Home Language Survey (download and print at www.dmschools.org);
- Registration form (download and print at www.dmschools.org).

Please be aware that children must be five years old by September 15, 2012 to enroll for the 2012-2013 school year.

Families may call 515-242-7725 with any questions about the



kindergarten registration process. Registration for the continuous calendar schools was held on February 9, 2012. ■



Let's Move Event with First Lady Obama

Nearly 2,500 Des Moines students - and more than 10,000 students from the metro area - helped First Lady Michelle Obama highlight Iowa's Healthiest State Initiative, a private-public partnership launched in August by Governor Terry Branstad and other government and business leaders to make Iowa the healthiest state in the nation by 2016.

More DMPS News and Information Available Online and On Air

Des Moines Public Schools is the largest provider of public education in Iowa, which means one newsletter alone cannot provide all of the information or share all of the stories about everything taking place in your school district. More news and information is always available online and on air.

ONLINE

You can find information on schools, news stories, data, contacts, and more on the DMPS web site at www.dmschools.org, and at [facebook.com/dmschools](https://www.facebook.com/dmschools) and twitter.com/dmschools.

ON THE AIR

Tune in to **DMPS-TV on Mediacom Cable channels 85 and 97-3** at any time to see stories about programs and events from throughout the school district. If you do not subscribe to cable television, you can still view stories online at www.dmschools.org. And if you're in the mood for interesting talk and music, tune into Des Moines Public Schools' own radio station - **KDPS 88.1** - where your hosts are students from Central Campus and GrandView University

The Des Moines Independent Community School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact the district's Equity Coordinator Patricia Lantz, General Counsel, 901 Walnut Street, Des Moines, IA 50309; phone: 515.242.7837; email: patricia.lantz@dmschools.org

Reminder: 2012 Spring Conference Dates for Elementary and Secondary Students

Upcoming student conferences for elementary students are scheduled for Wednesday, February 15; Tuesday, February 21; and Thursday, February 23 from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. each day. Classes will be held on all days.

Conferences for middle and high school students will be held Wednesday, March 14 from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. and Thursday, March 15 from 12:15 to 8:00 p.m. Classes will be held on Wednesday but there will be no school for elementary or secondary students on Thursday.

SPRING BREAK

Friday, March 16 – Friday, March 23

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