

Superintendent Report: October Board Meeting
Submitted on October 21, 2021

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK:

We have been working diligently to manage all of the contact tracing and testing related to enforcement of the Ingham County Health Department order. Unfortunately, the health resource advocate we were hoping to welcome to our team via a grant from the ISD has not yet materialized, so our administrative team has largely added all of these responsibilities. We are following the guidelines to establish close contacts and then calling the families of those impacted. We are offering the “test-to-stay” option for all families who would like to choose that route in lieu of quarantining. We meet families sometime between 7 AM and the start of school to provide antigen testing and then do the follow up as needed. This happens nearly every day in the middle school gym. As of 10/19/21, we approximate that 178 student days of instruction have been “saved” by allowing students to “test-to-stay”, which has made this commitment very much worthwhile. We have had students test positive both while in quarantine as well as through this testing process and many families have shared their appreciation of the district’s efforts to provide these services/options.

In honor of National Principal Appreciation month, I hope our district can try to understand how significant it is that most of our administrative team has been together for 11 years. Erin joined two years after Tania and Andy. There are many districts, even in our own county, that have struggled to maintain consistency in their administrative teams and in some of those districts, their teachers make more in salary than our principals. The impact of a principal on student outcomes is well documented in educational research. Dansville Schools has the privilege of retaining three outstanding administrators in Andy, Erin and Tania. Their work ethic, heart for children and love for this school has positively impacted thousands of Dansville students over the past decade. They humbly serve without ego or accolades, making unseen sacrifices every day for our Aggie Family as they prioritize what will benefit students, teachers and staff. It is my sincere hope that this Board, our staff members and this community will someday realize the impact it has had on our district to have the same administrative team for such a long time. It has been one of the greatest honors of my career to serve with this amazing team.

Each of the principals have also been getting into classrooms to give feedback. We have also been working with new staff and mentors to ensure a smooth start for all of our new employees as well.

The second district-wide mentor-mentee meeting also took place last week. As part of the meeting, we held a panel discussion related to classroom management, parent-teacher conferences and instructional methods where mentors and mentees had the chance to learn from one another. We also included a sharing of celebrations and a gratitude activity.

To continue to invest in our administrative team and to show our appreciation, we had the team and their families come to our house for a meal at the end of September. It was a great chance for everyone to connect outside of the school day and to help welcome Mr. Dassance to our team.

Much time has been spent in finalizing goals for this school year- individually and as an admin team. We have worked to ensure our goals are aligned to the district improvement plan and the principals will be meeting with the teachers to talk through their goals in the coming weeks. We waited a bit longer than normal in case the teachers want to add their Aggie Problem Solving Team goals into their personal goals.

Worked to ensure we provided training and orientation for our new special education secretary, Courtanie House. She has hit the ground running due to her previous experience working here and her familiarity with school systems such as Power School.

Homecoming week is a significant part of each school year, as it involves extensive planning and time investment from many of our staff members to ensure it is a fun and memorable experience for our students. Many thanks to class sponsors, the cheerleading program, Mr. Felsing, Mrs. Ryder and Ms. Dupuis for the many hours they spent planning, creating and chaperoning these events for our students. Many thanks to our students for their school spirit, participation and overall efforts to make it a great week!

ATHLETICS:

Earlier this month, I approached the health department about whether it would be possible for our student-athletes to test on the day of competitions in order to be able to play on game days without having to wear their masks. I did get approval for this request from both Dr. Shoyinka and Linda Vail and then worked with Mr. Dassance to establish a procedure to make this happen for our volleyball team. While this wasn't immediately adopted by our teams, it will be in place as an option for a home event prior to Regionals and for teams playing here for Regionals. We will then be able to continue to offer this option for the remainder of the year for indoor sporting events. Coaches and players who are not actively playing must continue to wear masks. Our hope is that this will remain in place as an option for the duration of the current health department order.

Middle school boys' basketball is underway and the rest of the winter sports are slated to begin in early November.

All of our fall teams have held their Senior Nights over the past few weeks. These are special nights where parents and student-athletes share memories and final messages as they close out their senior year in each sport.

The soccer team lost a hard fought battle in the district semifinals to Lansing Christian this week. Our football team plays Stockbridge on Friday night and winning will make a playoff game a possibility. Cross Country Regionals will be at the end of next week (10/29) at Webberville. Our volleyball team starts district play the first week of November and volleyball Regionals will be hosted at Dansville High School.

BUDGET UPDATES:

The audit report will be shared with the Board this month. The ISD provides oversight and has helped set up accountability systems for all of our budgets. Raelynn and I have been working on Revision 1 of the 21-22 budget, but there are still several factors to be figured out before this will come before the Board, including the open negotiations with all groups. This will be presented in November and then be considered for approval in December.

Our current enrollment estimate is 771. We had 744 last year, and conservatively budgeted this year for 740.

COMMUNICATION:

We have submitted all of the information for the fall newsletter this week and it will be sent as soon as possible to the entire community.

Information regarding COVID-19 cases is sent out as soon as possible after contact tracing is complete. It is sent to the staff and then to the entire district.

Sydney Hagelberger was not able to attend tonight because of the band concert, but she asked that we share the following: 1. Homecoming week went really well. She enjoyed float building, spirit week, the football game and Homecoming dance. She didn't mention this, but she was one of the Queen candidates as well. Seniors won best float, sophomores won spirit week with the seniors taking second. She wanted the Board to know that it was all really fun for students. She shared that the district semifinal soccer game the other night was really exciting. Finally, she explained that college application week this week was really helpful and all of the seniors feel a lot better now. Sydney applied to ten schools and wants to study nursing.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH/PARTNERSHIPS/CONNECTIONS:

Our Education Foundation has selected Kathy Driggs as the Distinguished Service recipient for this year. They are honoring all of our teachers throughout the year in lieu of choosing only one recipient to acknowledge their ongoing excellence throughout the pandemic. Their annual event was canceled and an online auction is being considered later in the year to help raise funds for the school.

The Education Foundation also recently coordinated a kind appreciation event to thank our staff for their work and provided Jimmy John's for lunch for the entire staff. This kind act meant so much to our staff and was a welcome surprise.

CURRICULUM/TRAINING:

Our admin team attended another training session to learn more about the new MICIP system where we will be entering our improvement goals at the end of the year.

The monthly county curriculum director meeting also took place at the beginning of this month and involved learning about training offered at IISD as well as collaborating with others from across the county.

DATA:

We have really worked to create a culture of celebration here and one of our HS math teachers shared with great excitement at the K-12 mentor-mentee meeting, that every one of our HS math classes is on track to get through all of Spring Math by no later than the end of January.

We stretched that celebration into a congratulations to all of the educators in the room who have committed to doing Spring Math. We pointed out the role they have played in making this happen at the HS. Literally just a few years ago, we had a group that struggled to get through the skills over the entire year, so this has been a GREAT encouragement to the HS teachers and in turn, everyone else. It makes such a difference for our teachers and staff to know that our students have this solid math foundation and that we have also now specifically identified those who need additional support!

Our graduation rate for the 2020-21 school year was 92%. We continue to work with anyone who does not graduate in the timeframe specified for reporting and extensive efforts are made by our school counselors, our CAPCAN partners and our administrators to ensure our students graduate. Just as an FYI: In some cases, students move out of our district, do not enroll in a new school and then their lack of graduation is counted against our school since we are the last school of record.

FACILITIES:

We are going to be getting bids for air conditioning for the elementary as well as addressing the elementary and middle/high school parking lots in the coming months. We are also still moving forward with the items shared in last month's report.

PERSONNEL UPDATES:

We have shared via Aggie Family Updates and it has been highlighted in both local and national news, that there are significant shortages in all areas of educational personnel- from bus drivers to support staff, teachers and administrators. Compounding this is the subsequent shortage of substitutes for these positions. Every effort is being made to reduce the impact of these personnel challenges by Dean Transportation, EduStaff and our school district. We will continue to do everything we can to attract and retain personnel. This is a good time to remind everyone again of the impact of their words and actions on school personnel. Kindness, respect and grace make a much bigger positive difference than most realize and the opposite of those- harsh words, disrespect and unreasonable demands- also have a bigger negative impact than folks may realize.

Second year teacher Joanna (Cross) Rodriguez has resigned from her secondary math teaching position to pursue a different career that will allow her to spend more time with her family. Her role will be filled by math interventionist Kelsey Parsons. We will keep the position open in hopes of finding a permanent replacement.

We have still not had any applicants for the elementary counselor position. This is not unexpected due to the shortage, but is disappointing nonetheless.

It has been wonderful to finally find some additional Spring Math Interventionists for the secondary schools. Kelsey Parsons remains the lead interventionist and she will work with Megan Cavanaugh (former substitute teacher) as well as Dawn Oesterle (former math teacher and LCC math tutor) and Sara Oesterle (current MS specials teacher and former math interventionist) to provide Tier 3 individual intervention for students in Grades 6-12.

POLICY WORK:

We are still working to get a meeting finalized with the NEOLA representative. It is anticipated to happen in November.

SAFETY:

We have completed more of our mandated drills and made a modification to the HS emergency system to prevent staff from initiating accidental lockdown announcements due to the placement of the original button.

TEACHING AND LEARNING:

More work is being done to lay the groundwork needed to move forward with preschool and possibly before and after care. More details will be shared with the Board when more information is known related to timeline and plans.

Our DSIT team met again to finalize plans for our upcoming October PD day, which will include: an educational mixer that involves sharing of best practices that also allows teachers to get to know others from across the entire district, Aggie Improvement Team time and the launch of Aggie Problem Solving

Teams in each building. This was originally the plan for September, but that PD plan was postponed due to the number of staff who were unable to attend.

TECHNOLOGY:

The Promethean Boards have started to arrive in the district and will be placed in classrooms as soon as possible, as their use enhances instruction.

Upcoming Dates of Note:

*November 22: Board Meeting

*November 24- November 26: Thanksgiving Break

*December 13: Board Meeting

*December 16: Proposed Staff Holiday Event w/the Board in the AM

*December 17: End of first semester/Winter Break begins

*January 3: Second semester begins

Check out the district calendar @ www.dansville.org to find upcoming school events!