

# FRAMEWORK for *Our Future* 3.5



November 2023

*A Community Conversation*

**DeForest Area School District**

500 South Cleveland Avenue • DeForest, WI 53532  
(608) 842-6500 • [www.deforestschools.org](http://www.deforestschools.org)



*THIS WAS A GOOD EXPERIENCE AND I'M GLAD I CAME"*

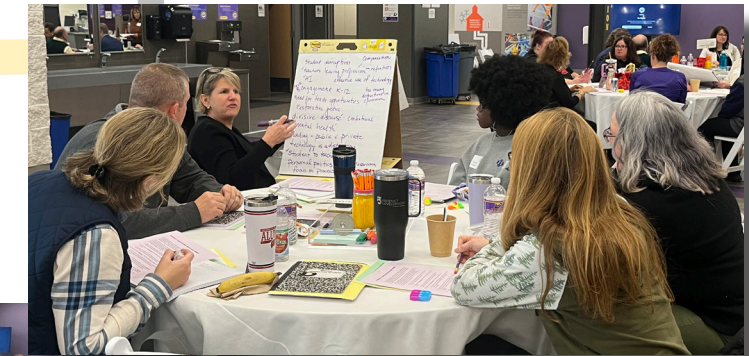
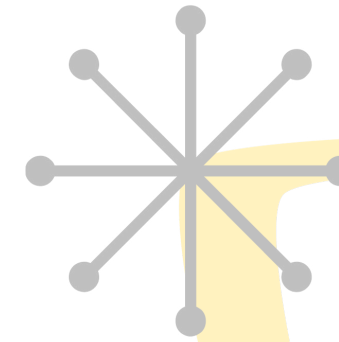
About 100 community partners of the DeForest Area School District participated in **Framework for Our Future 3.5** on November 4, 2023. They shared important perspectives on the future of our school district. Partners representing parents, students, teachers, support staff, business, government, citizens, civic/social organizations, and/or service providers, came together for this unique and important community conversation.

*I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE MY VOICE HEARD IN HELPING TO SHAPE THE DISTRICT'S FUTURE PLANS"*



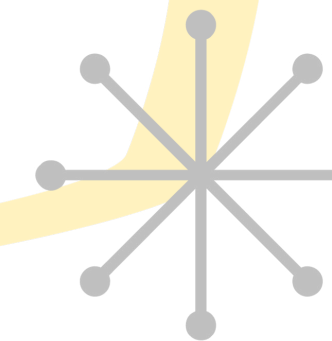
*OVERALL, WE HAVE A LOT OF COMMONALITIES TO CELEBRATE & CAPITALIZE ON. IT WAS GREAT TO SEE ALL TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS AT THE TABLE - STUDENTS, PARENTS, BUSINESS LEADERS, STAFF, ETC. POSITIVE WORK HAPPENING"*

*The mission of the DeForest Area School District is to provide an excellent education and engage, challenge, and inspire all students to pursue their full potential.*



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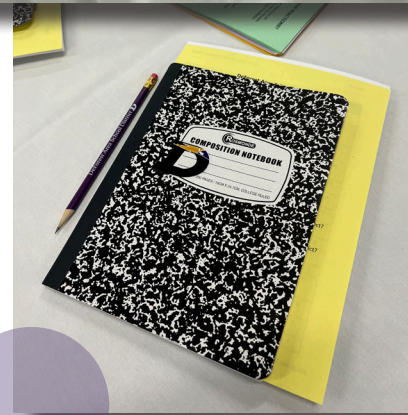
# THE PROCESS

**Framework for Our Future** uses a consensus process called “Future Search®.” Since 1999, DeForest Area School District (DASD) has used the services of Howick Associates to plan and facilitate this community conversation.

A Design Team, representative of community members and district staff, met between August and October 2023 to design the November conference.

## Framework for Our Future 3.5 Design Team

- Jan Berg, DASD Board of Education (BOE)
- Debbie Brewster, Howick Associates
- Macy Buhler, Business Owner
- Roz Craney, Yahara Elementary School Principal
- Gavin Denning, DeForest Area High School Student
- Jeff Hahn, DASD BOE
- Drew Howick, Howick Associates
- Suellen Kurt, DeForest Area High School Teacher
- Rachael Lewis, DeForest Area High School Student
- Jessica Martins, Windsor Elementary School Teacher
- Doug Powell, Yahara Elementary School Head Custodian
- Ann Stettbacher, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent & BOE
- Rebecca Toetz, DASD Superintendent
- Christa Tollefson, Assistant Director DeForest Area Public Library
- Kathy Williams, DASD School & Community Relations Coordinator



# UPDATE: Themes & Progress from 2018

To start the day, Superintendent Rebecca Toetz and other members of the DASD leadership team gave an update on some of the things that have been happening in the district since the previous community conversation, **Framework for Our Future, 3.0**. The team shared the priority themes that emerged five years ago and highlighted a few of the things that have happened in response to what was shared by our community.

## Mental Health

- Room space and technology provided for students with virtual appointments
- Room space provided for DASD Student Services staff to collaborate with external mental healthcare providers

## Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Online learning options
- Flex time for interventions, student clubs, enrichment
- Implementation of SEL across all buildings (morning meetings, advisory, responsive classroom)
- Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)

## Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)

- Mandatory professional development for all staff
- Hired Head of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Staff book studies
- Curriculum review rubric
- Student groups with DEI focus
- Board policies reviewed through an equity lens
- Building celebrations are around learning

## Staff Development & Retention

- Working to maintain salaries within 5% of Dane County average
- Professional Development offered for increased compensation
- Professional Development Pathways
- Professional Learning Community at all levels
- Elementary and K-12 leadership teams

## Appropriate Staffing

- Increasing staff to match growth
- Added: Deans of Students at three levels
- Added: Special Education Coordinator
- Increased student services staff

## Connecting Learning & Careers

- High School student opportunities for: Internships, Youth Apprenticeships, Industry Credentials

## Community Partnerships

- Reality Day simulation
- Alignment to Redefining Ready research
- Academic & Career Plans
- Guest speakers, business tours, adopt a classroom
- Partnership with community center
- Monthly meeting with area clergy, DASD, and county social workers

## Individualized, Personalized Learning

- 1:1 devices
- 4K-3, Seesaw platform
- 4-12, Google Classroom

## Global Citizenship

- Global Education Achievement Certificate
- New High School courses: Global Studies, Global Cuisine
- Added student groups focused on Global Citizenship

## Citizenship

- Implemented new K-3 social studies curriculum
- Related student clubs at all levels
- Reflection on service learning as part of Academic & Career Plan presentation

# CURRENT *Issues & Trends*

**Next, participants were asked to identify the issues & trends that are currently impacting education and the DeForest Area School District?**

- Behavior/Discipline
- Funding
- Communication
- Teacher Balance/Wellness
- Meeting the needs of the “average” students
- Tolerance
- Staff Retention
- School/Family Relationships
- Technology
- Mental Health
- Decrease in respect (public education, educators)
- Increase student voice
- Communication of all aspects of education
- Remaining competitive to retain and attract staff
- Increase the focus on the Arts
- High School grading practices
- Academic Fundamentals
- LGBTQ+ and diversity issues
- Community growth, budget, and sustainability
- Growth - long term plan
- School safety
- Addressing socio-economic gap
- Teacher/sub-recruitment, retention
- Student services (high demand)
- Politics/Policy
- Teacher support
- Workload/students/teachers
- Accountability
- Interventions - both ends of the continuum
- AI - good & bad
- Student to Teacher ratio

## *Visioning Activity*

Taking into account everything they discussed, participants were asked to imagine the year 2033.

Participants were split into groups to create a scenario that communicated what the district had done to ensure that all students graduate as responsible citizens prepared for personal success.

As each group presented their scenario the other participants were noting the priorities that they heard. Each table group then identified and ranked which of the priorities they believed to be the most important.



## *Priorities*

<b>QUESTION: What are the priorities to focus on now to ensure that all students graduate as responsible citizens prepared for personal success? (Theme in parentheses)</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Advocate for and educate the community around increased funding. Approve a referendum to increase competent staffing and reduce student/teacher ratio (staff development, staff retention, appropriate staffing)	<b>59</b>
Continue, expand, and raise awareness for academic career planning from middle school and up. Create more inclusive post-graduation pathways with more well-rounded advising to those not attending 4-year college (connecting learning & careers)	<b>42</b>
Identify and communicate clear and consistent behavior expectations to all stakeholders. Continue to enhance efforts around expected behaviors and consequences consistently (social emotional learning)	<b>33</b>
Well-paid staff that exceed Dane County averages (staff development, staff retention)	<b>29</b>
Increase partnerships in the community by creating a mentoring program and business/partner database. Continue to partner with the community to drive internships and real life opportunities (community partnerships)	<b>28</b>
Safety: address safety concerns by upgrading safety equipment, have a parent/community night, increase partnerships with law enforcement, and create school safety teams. Expand technology education in a positive and safety-minded way. Implement district-wide parent information meetings around safety (bully, phone, internet, school) and district education secure portal (notes from PTO meetings, videos of meetings) (school safety & emergency preparedness)	<b>20</b>
Create a community task force between schools, families, and community to support students and staff (diversity, equity, & inclusion)	<b>19</b>
Create an IEP for every student and further individualized learning (individualized, personalized learning)	<b>17</b>
Establish school stores that provide food, clothing, essential items for free (diversity, equity, & inclusion)	<b>14</b>
The District should build a new Performing Arts Center (PAC) (facilities)	<b>13</b>
Create a 3rd-party “exit” and/or “stay” interview to support teacher retention (staff development, staff retention, appropriate staffing)	<b>7</b>
Celebrate everyone’s accomplishments K-12 (diversity, equity, & inclusion)	<b>6</b>
Expand existing buildings or add a new building, specifically for elementary (facilities)	<b>6</b>
Hold all staff accountable for following the district curriculum and policies (staff development, staff retention)	<b>3</b>
Establish a program for businesses to donate dollars for volunteer hours (community partnerships)	<b>1</b>



*INFORMATIVE, EYE-OPENING"*

*A GREAT WAY TO HEAR SO MANY DIFFERENT OPINIONS"*



*THANK YOU TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS VALUABLE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION!  
PICTURED: A GROUP PHOTO OF THOSE WHO ATTENDED ON NOVEMBER 4.*

*THIS IS AN AWESOME EVENT"*

*A DAY WELL SPENT"*

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The DeForest Area School District Board of Education (BOE) is grateful to the community members who participated in **Framework for Our Future 3.5**. The conversations and collaboration led to both the affirming of the priorities identified in 2018 as well as offering additional priorities and topics to reflect on. The BOE will continue to use this thoughtful work to guide their questions and shape the policies that reflect the priorities and values of our community.

Watch for additional opportunities to learn more about how this information will be responded to and ways to continue to be involved with moving the DeForest Area School District forward.

*IT WAS WONDERFUL TO HEAR ALL THE PERSPECTIVES,  
ESPECIALLY THE STUDENTS!"*

*Published January 2024*

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