Elementary schools analyze survey data

Last spring all four elementary schools conducted surveys with parents, students and staff to help identify and measure perceptions of our school's strengths and areas needing improvement. These surveys help understand where these stakeholder groups stand with respect to seven characteristics of successful schools identified by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (shown at right). School Improvement Teams are using the data for planning purposes.

While each elementary school now has their own data to analyze, it is also helpful to review the information from a district perspective. A brief summary of the elementary school survey results are shown on page 2. If you would like more information, please contact an elementary school principal or Debbie Brewster at 842-6581.

Top 3 Reasons Employees use Employee Assistance Programs

#1 - Marriage and family issues
#2 - Worksite issues
#3 - Depression

See page 3 for more information about the DASD Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Salads To Go!

Foodservice is introducing Salads To Go for all staff members starting the week of November 12th! This is your opportunity to have a fresh turkey, ham or vegetable salad made by the fantastic high school foodservice staff. The cost is $2.00 each and will be charged to your foodservice account. Salads will be available one day a week, on Wednesdays. Here is how the process works:

a. Order salad by Monday at 10:00 a.m. for Wednesday pick up. Order forms are available online or contact Becky Terry at ext. 6511.

b. Fill out order form, and email or send to Rebecca Hess.

c. Please include name, lunch ID number and salad choice.

d. Beckie will charge your lunch account $2.00 per salad.

e. Pick up your salad anytime between 9:00 and 11:00 am at the DHS kitchen.

f. Your lunch account balance must be positive to order salads.

g. If you do not have a lunch account, please contact Beckie Hess at ext. 6512.

As long as you live, keep learning how to live.”
~ Seneca

Seven Characteristics of Successful Schools

Vision
Leadership
High Academic Standards
Standards of the Heart
Family, School & Community Partnerships
Professional Development
Evidence of Success

Taken from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, http://dpi.wi.gov/cssch/cssindex.html

DASD . . . Online

www.deforest.k12.wi.us

The mission of the DeForest Area School District is to provide an excellent education by engaging, challenging, and inspiring all students to pursue their full potential.

Chalktalk is a newsletter published quarterly during the school year for employees of the DeForest Area School District. Its purpose is to foster communication among district staff, by providing information and sharing ideas and accomplishments.

All employees are encouraged to submit articles.
Debbie Brewster, Coordinator
School/Community Relations

The DeForest Area School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability or handicap in employment and its educational programs and activities.
And the survey says . . .

Elementary school survey results summary

Parents were asked to rate their agreement with 31 questions about their child's school.

Parents - # of respondents 414 (36%)

The majority of respondents "strongly agree" or "agree" with the following statements:
• I feel welcome at school.
• I generally attend conferences, meetings, and activities at my child’s school.
• Core values such as respect and responsibility are a part of classroom instruction.
• Parent conferences/meetings are useful and help me with my child.
• Students are held responsible for their behavior in school.
• Assessments are important and meaningful to students, teachers, and parents.
• Administrators treat all students, parents, staff, and community members with respect.
• Parents are considered assets whose contributions are valued.
• The school sponsors parent activities/meetings at times and places accessible to me.

The statements that had the highest concentration of "agree" to "neutral" were:
• Teachers ask me about my child’s strengths and how they will learn.
• The school building is available for use by the community outside regular school hours.
• Differences in language and culture are recognized and valued.
• Support help and different strategies are used for students who are struggling academically.
• Administrators communicate effectively with parents and others in the community.
• Support is provided to students transitioning to a different grade or school.
• Students say they feel welcome, safe, and free from harassment and bullying at school.
• Students have adequate access to technology as a learning tool.
• Information about both academic and nonacademic performance is shared with parents and the community.

3rd/4th Grade Students - # of respondents 452 (95%)

The majority of students "strongly agree" or "agree" with the following statements:
• My family wants me to do well in school.
• My teacher is a good teacher.
• My family believes I can do well in school.
• My teacher believes I can learn.

The statements that had the highest concentration of "agree" to "neutral" were:
• I have choices in what I learn.
• I am challenged by the work my teacher asks me to do.
• I have freedom at school.
• Students at my school treat me with respect.

Most open-ended comments by students were about their positive culture that exists in their school. Suggestions were primarily about lunch and recess.

Note: There was no statement on any of the surveys with an average response rating of neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree.

Support Staff
# of respondents 22 (40%)

The majority of support staff "strongly agree" or "agree" with the following statements:
• I believe student achievement can increase through hands on learning.
• I love seeing the results of my work with students.
• I feel that learning can be fun.
• I believe that every child can learn.

The statements that had the highest concentration of "agree" to "neutral" were:
• I believe student achievement can increase through multi-aged classrooms.
• I believe student achievement can increase through student self-assessment.
• I communicate often with parents about class activities.
• I work effectively with limited English-speaking students.

Certified Staff
# of respondents 90 (83%)

The majority of certified staff "strongly agree" or "agree" with the following statements:
• I love to teach.
• I feel that learning can be fun.
• I believe that every student can learn.
• I love seeing the results of my work with students.

The statements that had the highest concentration of "agree" to "neutral" were:
• I believe student achievement can increase through multi-aged classrooms.
• Morale is high on the part of support staff.
• I believe student achievement can increase through partnerships with businesses.
• I work effectively with limited English-speaking students.
Congratulations DASD staff for record contributions to United Way!


The percentage of staff participating in this year’s campaign rose from 26.5% to 32.3%. Thank you to all DASD employees!

Communicating with parents

Where do parents get most of their information about our schools? Elementary school parent survey respondents said:

88% school newsletter (including District Dialogue)
86% their child
80% letters or notes from school
51% other parents, neighbors, or friends
50% talking with school staff
33% website
23% parent organization
14% newspapers
11% email
4% other

Thank you to the 135 employees who took the "Chalktalk" survey. Below are some of the results.

94 percent of respondents read "Chalktalk". Of those,
   65% read all of it
   25% read headlines only
   10% skim the pictures
67 percent find the overall "look" of the newsletter inviting.
14 percent access "Chalktalk" on the District website.
Suggestions to include in future issues:
   60% Every school represented
   52% More classroom ideas
   46% Articles from teachers
   45% More ideas in working with the community/public/parents
67 percent prefer receiving the newsletter in print format; 32% as an E-Newsletter (via email).
53 percent like the newsletter published monthly; with 46% quarterly.

The feedback is very helpful. Watch for new and better features in the months ahead.
Employee Assistance Program

An EAP is a worksite-based program designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees under stress, such as: health, marital, family, financial, legal, emotional, alcohol, drug, or other personal concerns which may adversely affect job performance. Many personal problems can be successfully treated or resolved if assistance is offered at an early stage and referral is made to an appropriate form of assistance.

What does an EAP provide that employees do not have through their regular health insurance?

- Easy access – by phone from the comfort of your office or home when it is convenient for you - 24 hours a day
- Appointments within the week as opposed to waiting 2 or more months waiting to get an appointment with other mental health providers
- Treatment does not go onto employee’s permanent medical record
- Marital/Family counseling – not covered by health insurance
- Financial/Debt management counseling – not covered by health insurance
- Legal concerns – not covered by health insurance
- Workplace issues (conflict management, etc.) – not covered by health insurance
- Preventative focus: employees get consultation before they become severe enough to require traditional treatment or extensive therapy

EAP provides:

- Three free consultations for employees, their spouse or dependents
- Confidential and timely problem identification/assessment services
- Suggested short-term coping skills and problem resolution
- Identification of community resources that may be helpful

For more information about the DeForest Area School District's EAP, visit the Human Resources website at: www.deforest.k12.wi.us >> For Staff.

Packing a healthy lunch

Packing a tasty, healthy lunch for your kids or for yourself doesn’t have to be a chore. In fact, with a little planning, lunchtime can be a great time to pack in nutrition along with flavor. Here are several ways to pack a healthy lunch:

- Pack it simple. Include a healthy sandwich, fruit, vegetable sticks, low-fat yogurt, and beverage.
- Plan your sack lunches before you go shopping. Make a list of the items you will need for the lunches and buy those items.
- Think ahead. Separate vegetables, pretzels, or crackers into individual baggies when you get home from the grocery store and put bottled water or fruit juices in the refrigerator to chill ahead of time. Pack everyone’s lunches the night before to avoid a time crunch in the morning.
- Choose whole-grain bread instead of white for sandwiches. Select breads that list “whole wheat” as the first ingredient.
- Select low-fat or fat-free turkey breast, chicken breast, ham, and roast beef or peanut butter for the sandwich. Skip the cheese unless you select low-fat or fat-free options.
- Place vegetables like lettuce, cucumber slices, tomato, green pepper, zucchini, or sweet onion on the sandwiches to boost health benefits.
- Include at least one serving of fruit in every lunch. Choices may include apples, oranges, bananas, pears, sliced melon, applesauce, grapes, or pineapple.
- Select baked chips, pretzels or low-fat crackers instead of chips made with oil.
- Limit sweet baked goods like cookies, doughnuts, and brownies. They’re usually high in saturated fat. Select fruit for dessert instead.
- For beverages, pack 100 percent juice or bottled water. Have your kids buy milk to drink with their lunch.

Reminders . . .

- Please sign in and out in the front office when visiting other buildings. And be sure to wear your name badge!
- If you have a negative foodservice account balance, please contact Becky Hess at ext. 6512 as soon as possible to get back in the black!

“A wise question is half of knowledge.”

~ Lord Bacon
November Wellness Events

FREE gum during the "Great American Smokeout"
November 15

The American Cancer Society’s website tells us that every year, smokers across the nation take part in the American Cancer Society’s Great American Smokeout® by smoking less or quitting for the day on the third Thursday of November. The event challenges people to stop using tobacco and raises awareness of the many effective ways to quit for good. One way is to chew gum when you get the urge to light up so the Health and Wellness Committee has provided free packs of gum in the staff lounge. We hope this will encourage you to kick the habit.

Research shows that smokers are most successful in kicking the habit when they have some means of support, such as nicotine replacement products, counseling, prescription medicine to lessen cravings, guide books, and the encouragement of friends and family members.

Despite that, only about 1 in 7 current smokers reports having tried any of the recommended therapies during his or her last quit attempt.

Could This Be the First Day of a Life Without Tobacco?

Use this link to find out about Dean Health Care’s support for smoking cessation - http://www.deancare.com/healthplan/For_Your_Health/tobacco.asp.


A day to “Butt Out”

The Great American Smokeout traditionally takes place on the third Thursday in November. The concept dates from the early ’70s when Lynn Smith, publisher of the Monticello Times of Minnesota, announced the first observance and called it “D Day.” The idea caught on in state after state until in 1977, it went nationwide under the sponsorship of the American Cancer Society. If past Smokeouts are any indication, as many as one-third of the nation’s 46 million smokers could be taking the day off from smoking. If you are a smoker, we hope you’re one of them!

Educational Assistant substitutes receive training

A new training program for newly hired educational assistant substitutes was held on Friday, November 9th from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Substitutes worked with various educational assistants in a job shadowing capacity. The purpose of job shadowing is to give the substitutes a general feel of what the job would entail. Substitutes experienced a variety of typical job duties and had an opportunity to ask any questions they may have had regarding the position.

In addition, formal training was offered at District Office. Topics covered during the training consisted of: the role of the educational assistant, an overview of special education, proper lifting techniques, working with students with autism, and tips on working with students with disabilities.

The training should improve the skill and comfort level of new educational assistant substitutes working in our district.

You cannot live a perfect day without doing something for some who will never be able to repay you.

~ John Wooden, College Basketball Coach
30-Minute Chili

3 Tbsp frozen apple juice concentrate
1 medium yellow onion, chopped
4 garlic cloves, chopped
2 tsp chili powder
1 tsp dried oregano
½ tsp cinnamon
1 Tbsp cocoa powder
1 Tbsp tomato paste
1 jalapeno, chopped
1 lb lean ground turkey
1 12 oz bottle Mexican-style beer
1 14 ½ oz can kidney beans, rinsed and drained

In a large heavy skillet on medium heat, add the frozen apple juice concentrate and onions. Sauté until onions begin to brown, about ten minutes. Add the garlic, chili powder, oregano, cinnamon, cocoa powder, tomato paste and jalapeno. Cook for 1 minute more. Add the ground meat and sauté until thoroughly cooked, approximately 4-5 minute. Add the beer. Simmer for 5 minutes to reduce liquid, concentrating flavors. Add the tomatoes, breaking up the larger pieces, and beans. Bring to a boil and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes. Serve hot with garnish.

Garnish options: chopped green onions, grated cheddar cheese, fat-free sour cream, and baked tortilla chips

SERVES 4  Calories 447, Fat 15g (Sat. 4 g), Cholesterol 84mg, Sodium 1,083mg, Carbs 44 g

Don't miss

Winterfest '07 Saturday, December 1

Events throughout DeForest and Windsor

Watch for more information coming soon!

Congratulations to Roz Craney and Joe Parker who completed the Ironman competition in September! 2.4 mile swim - 112 mile bike - 26.2 mile run

Social Media

Social media describes online technologies and practices that are used to share opinions, experiences and perspectives.

A recent study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project showed that more than half (55 percent) of all online American youth ages 12-17 use online social networking sites.

Other findings of the study reveal that:

- 55 percent of online teens have created a personal profile online; older girls predominate.
- 55 percent have used social networking sites like MySpace or Facebook.
- 66 percent of teens who have created a profile say that their profile is not visible to all Internet users.
- 48 percent of teens visit social networking web sites daily or more often; 26 percent visit once a day, 22 percent visit several times a day.

To stay current, administrators and teachers need to be aware of social media and learn how to navigate the virtual world.

Some of the most common examples of social media include:

- Wikipedia (reference)
- MySpace, Facebook (social networking)
- YouTube (video sharing)
- Second Life (virtual reality)
- Flickr (photo sharing)
What's happening in technology?

Between projectors, voice mail, upgrades, and more, things are busy with technology in our schools. The Learning Information Systems Department (LISD) is using our blog to share information, but here’s a quick look at what’s happening.

Internet Filtering
You’re looking for web resources to use with your classes and come up with a blocked site. Or maybe you’re visiting a site you’ve been to before, but now it’s blocked. It can be frustrating, but it can be fixed.

Because staff members may search out and evaluate sites before using them with students, our access to web pages is slightly different from student access. It’s still filtered, but it’s more open. Here’s what to do if you don’t have appropriate access as a staff member:

Any black computer
Click on Start >> Troubleshooting >> Lightspeed Client Install.

White (GX-110) computer
Please put in a work order asking for installation of the Lightspeed client on your machine.

If you need to use a blocked site with students, please put in a work order to have it unblocked.

Student Presentations
Are your students presenting information to the class using the projector? To cut down on the time it takes to log in and log out, why not use the J drive? How does it work?

- All staff members may create their own folders on the J drive to share files with students.
- By default, all students have access to read items on the J drive.

- If you’d like your students to be able to save files to your folder on the J drive, just let us know through a work order.

This “hand in folder” serves a couple of ends. Besides cutting down on paper, it means all the students may present from one computer and one login. The wireless keyboard and mouse make it even easier.

Saving to Your Desktop
Sometimes that quick access to a file is nice, but it does come with some potential pitfalls:

- Any files saved to your desktop are vulnerable since they aren’t backed up. If a machine is reimaged, those files are gone.
- Files on your desktop can also slow down your login time.

Projectors
The projector project is complete. If you’d like resources (animations, image sources, video clips, audio clips) for using your new projector, please visit our projector resources page. Double click on the LISD blog link on your desktop >> Look for Projector Resources at the bottom right. You’ll also find updated troubleshooting tips, like what to do when your DVD sound isn’t working.

GX-110’s or the “old white” computers
These computers are being replaced and repurposed. Although not all of them can be replaced this year, we are focusing on those machines that get the most use.

Mobile Labs
WES has a brand new mobile computer cart. Similar to carts at YES, EPES, and DHS, this cart offers lab access in the classroom. The mobile lab and its 16 computers work well for collaborative projects, flexible activities, centers, and other integrated activities.

ISTAP
Individual Staff Technology Action Plans are one of the ways we collect information about technology interests among staff members. It takes about as much time as a survey and helps us to determine professional development needs. Log in any time to start your plan. You will find a link from the LISD blog.

XP upgrades
Upgrades to all except the GX-110’s are in progress. Upgrading to XP offers some new tools and features.

Voice mail
Although voice mail is working, it is temporarily at diminished capacity. You may find that you encounter more busy signals than in the past.

New Projects
Besides all the software and tools you might be used to using, we are investigating the best uses of some new tools. Teachers at WES and DHS will be using on online discussion tool and classroom called Moodle. Secretaries at YES, WES, and MES and some teaching staff are starting to use Picasa to manage picture libraries, online albums, and cameras. Some other groups are looking at blogs as a way to communicate with one another.

As we evaluate these tools and find them to be effective, we’ll be making access and training more widely available.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please let us know. If it’s a technical concern, start with the work order system or dial 6535 and Candy or Howard will direct you. If it’s a teaching or staff development concern, dial 6537 for Kim.
Morrisonville Elementary School students help students in New Orleans

Students and families of Morrisonville Elementary School collected over 600 pounds of school supplies for Martin Luther King Jr School, which serves children in kindergarten through 8th grade in the lower ward of New Orleans, Louisiana.

EPES Annual Pumpkin Run

Students at Eagle Point Elementary School took off on their annual “pumpkin run for fun” as part of activities held during the school’s Healthy Choices Week in October.

EPES Build-a-Book

Eagle Point Elementary School/Holum Education Center held their 2nd annual Build-a-Book evening for families on Wednesday, November 7. Students and their families enjoyed writing and illustrating their own books. The event was sponsored by the Eagle Point/Holum Education Center PTO.

EPES skating party

Eagle Point students participated in their annual skating trip this past Tuesday to reward making positive decisions and as part of our healthy choices program.

Opera for the Young for YES & MES

Opera for the Young artists performed “Orpheus Returns” for and with Yahara and Morrisonville Elementary School students on October 22.
Adopt-a-class at WES

Students in Debi Shepherd-Wundrow’s sixth grade reading class recently created storybooks and delivered them to Jean Schaefer’s kindergarten class at Eagle Point Elementary School. The project, in its eleventh year, is an inter-generational activity developed by Shepherd-Wundrow.

WES students build homecoming float

Students at Windsor Elementary School got into the homecoming spirit this year by submitting their first entry into the DeForest Area High School’s Homecoming Parade. Special education teacher Ashia Dale and guidance counselor Stephanie Nelson organized the float building project with elementary school students from Windsor and high school students enrolled in the New Reflections alternative program.

YES & MES students create observational drawings

The third and fourth grade combination class at Morrisonville and the fourth graders at Yahara in Mrs. Freer’s art classes learned to draw what they saw by looking at Wisconsin taxidermy animals.

Middle school students celebrate MOYA

Throughout the month of October staff and students at DeForest Area Middle School celebrated the second annual celebration of MOYA (The Month of the Young Adolescent). Shown above are spirit winners from the Norski Spirit Dress Up on October.

DMS 6th graders create books for EPES kindergarteners

Students in Debi Shepherd-Wundrow’s sixth grade reading class recently created storybooks and delivered them to Jean Schaefer’s kindergarten class at Eagle Point Elementary School. The project, in its eleventh year, is an inter-generational activity developed by Shepherd-Wundrow.
Middle school students enjoy fall festival

Hundreds of students attended the middle school fall festival after school on Friday, October 12. The middle school PTO sponsors the event each year for all 5th and 6th grade students.

Summer learning

This summer six DeForest Area High School students attended the annual World Affairs Seminar and Badger Boys & Girls State. High school staff selected Thomas Hesse and Aaron Owen, Becky Eakins and Tamra Stoltenberg for Badger Girls & Boys State; and Nikki Woods and Lucas Sevedge for the World Affairs Seminar.

DAHS students start GSA organization

The new high school co-curricular activity, GSA, is a youth leadership organization which promotes a safe environment in our school; educates the school community about homophobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues; and fights discrimination, harassment, and violence in our school.

New Reflections activities

This fall students in New Reflections (DAHS Alternative Program) participated in a Ropes Course and built roller coasters.

Congratulations to DAHS seniors Becky Eakins, Aaron Owen, Lucas Sevedge, and Meredith Kremer.

The new high school co-curricular activity, GSA, is a youth leadership organization which promotes a safe environment in our school; educates the school community about homophobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues; and fights discrimination, harassment, and violence in our school.

Above: Students in the DeForest Area High School GSA organization recently raised $120 at a “Run, Walk, Eat” event hosted by GSA for Safe Schools. GSA for Safe Schools is an organization that helps raise awareness of harassment issues throughout Dane County.
DASD - Our Culture

Our culture is a belief and value system that defines the public’s perception of us, as well as our perceptions of each other. It influences how we work, how we treat students and each other, and it is something we all have an important role in defining and implementing regardless of the job description we hold.

The DeForest Area School District has identified twelve elements of a desired culture. Each employee is expected to commit to specific actions that will help them contribute to the desired culture.

1. Keeps students as our central focus.
2. Expects hard work, risk taking and continuous growth.
3. Creates an environment for students and staff that promotes understanding, respect, and celebration of individuality and diversity.
4. Engages community in achieving our common vision.
5. Builds relationships that support a positive, caring school community.
6. Promotes teamwork throughout the district to achieve a common vision.
7. Incorporates joy, fun, and humor in what we do.
8. Develops leadership skills at all levels.
9. Includes stakeholders in decision-making processes.
10. Fosters effective communication throughout the district.
11. Encourages innovation.
12. Values the efficient and effective use of resources.