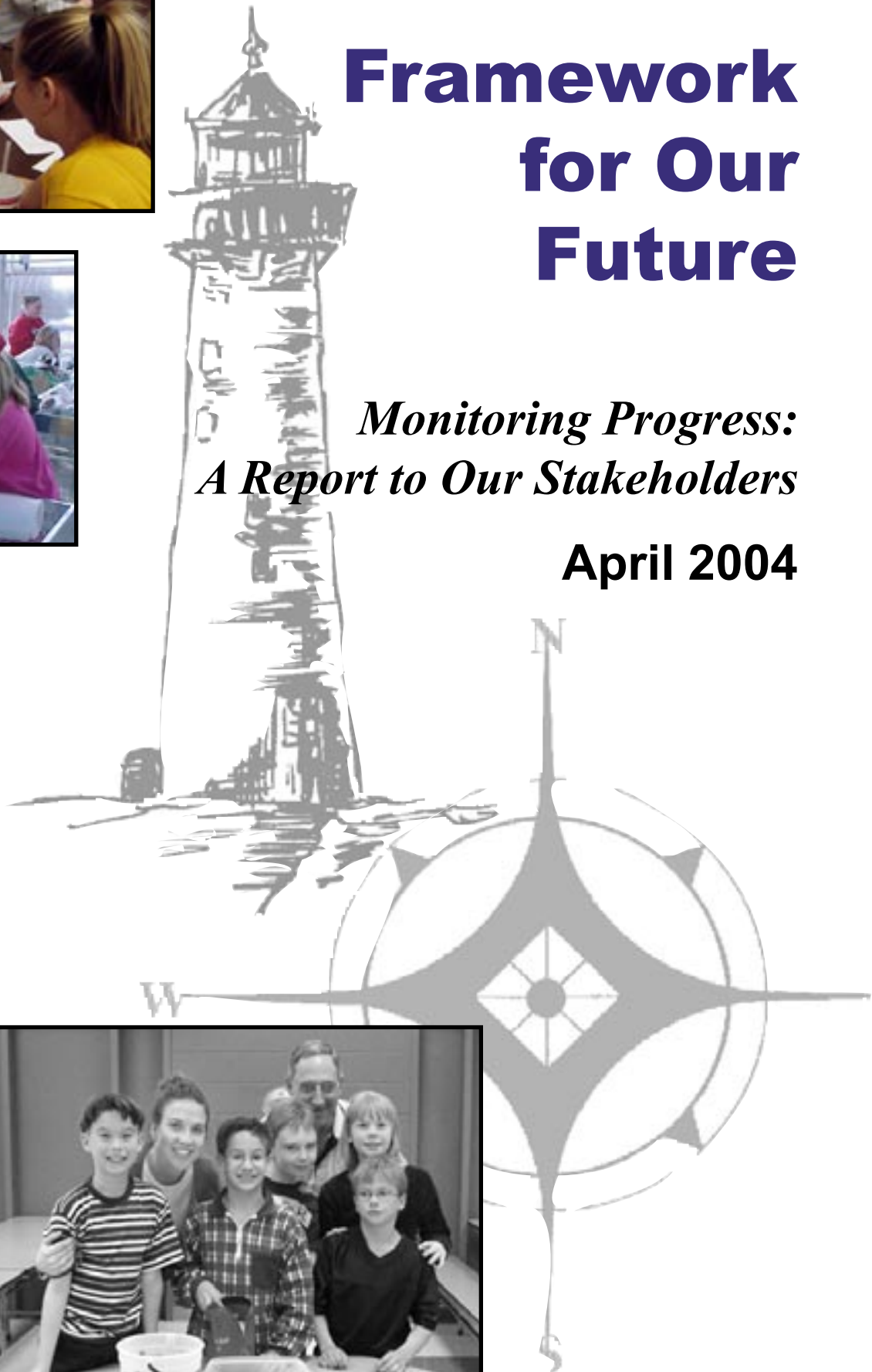


DeForest Area School District

# Framework for Our Future

*Monitoring Progress:  
A Report to Our Stakeholders*

April 2004



## Introduction

# Framework for Our Future - our journey together



In 1999, the DeForest Area School District hosted a future search conference, called “Framework for Our Future: Building a Community of Learning for All.” This extraordinary event was attended by nearly 140 community members representing parents, students, teachers, support staff, business, government, senior citizens, civic/social organizations and service providers who all had a stake in the school district.

Since the conference, the school district has been on a journey toward the vision imagined by the stakeholders. The journey has been guided by the community’s values and interests expressed in the themes that emerged from the Framework conference. Throughout the journey, challenges, achievements and change have been experienced by the district. As we approach the five-year anniversary of this landmark event, the board of education invites stakeholders to reflect on the journey so far and provide input on the district’s charted course for the future.

This report highlights aspects of our journey since the original 1999 future search conference. Structures are in place and initiatives are under way to continue building toward the vision our community holds for its schools. Also highlighted are ideas coming from the original Framework conference that are still on our horizon. The report is presented in five parts, one for each of the vision elements identified at the 1999 conference.

## Vision Elements

- Building community
- Creating learning programs that are comprehensive, globally oriented and promote excellence
- Supporting the overall growth & development of children
- Providing optional learning structures and school/programs of choice
- Developing life-long & community-wide learning opportunities

*Please refer to page 7 for the original list of conference “themes” from which the above vision elements were derived.*



*“Greatness is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving. We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it - but sail we must and not drift, nor lie at anchor.”*

*- Oliver Wendell Holmes*

# Building Community



*The DeForest Area School District will contribute to the development of an effective school community that prioritizes collaborative planning, the identification of shared interests and the achievement of mutual benefit for the DeForest Area School District and the citizens of the community resulting in an improved quality of life. (DASD Board of Education Policy on Community Ends)*

## **The journey so far . . .**

One of the resounding themes of the Framework conference was for the DeForest Area School District to be proactive in efforts that would build a sense of community and enhance the connections between citizens and the schools that serve them. To do that, the school district structured itself to focus on ongoing school community relations, to develop integrated planning and programming initiatives with other community entities, and to take steps to sustain itself in the face of fiscal challenges so that it can remain a viable asset to the community.

### *School/Community Relations Emphasis*

- Technology infrastructure
  - Fiber optics network
  - Website development
  - On-line parent access to student information
  - On-line DeForest area community calendar
  - Voice/email systems
- Comprehensive communication planning
  - Coordinated media communications
  - Regular newsletters to parents, community and staff
  - Stakeholder linkage processes
    - Surveys
    - District Dialogue email address for public Q&A
    - Small-group meetings with board of education

### *School/Community Integrated Planning*

- Policy Governance operating model for the board emphasizing stakeholder input
- Coordinated business partnerships
- Linkages with municipal government
  - Shared programming, joint board development, area-wide planning
- Partnerships with community groups
  - Chamber of Commerce, Clergy Association, DeForest Area Friends of the Arts, Rotary, Lions, etc.

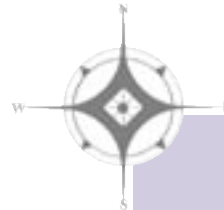
### *Fiscal Management Focus*

- Decentralized budget center accountability
- Elimination of short-term borrowing
- Debt management
- Moody's A1 bond rating
- Growth management planning - population impact studies
- Legislative contacts and lobbying

## **On the horizon . . .**

Areas from the original conference vision not yet fully analyzed or developed

- Aligning school, municipal and business leadership around an area-wide focus and vision
- Further involvement of the community in schools
- Enhancing school and community pride



## ***Did You Know?***

- Hundreds of business partnership activities take place each year with DASD students and staff.
- Each year over \$250,000 in local scholarships are awarded to graduating seniors.
- Nearly 25 local businesses have “adopted” elementary classrooms.
- Two full-time police liaisons are employed within the district.
- Each day there are an average of 18,000 “hits” to the DASD website.

## Creating learning programs that are comprehensive, globally oriented and promote excellence



*Each student in the DeForest Area School District will be knowledgeable and skilled in the use of tools necessary to be a responsible citizen in his/her community.*

*(DASD Board of Education Policy on Student Ends)*

### **The journey so far . . .**

Framework participants affirmed the community's commitment to providing an excellent public education to its youth. Stakeholders envisioned a journey characterized by continuous improvement in quality learning environments, rigorous and relevant curriculum, highly qualified staff, and performance accountability. The school district has emphasized structures to build upon its strong tradition in these areas.

#### *Facility Improvement*

- \$28 million from the community to build quality facilities; increase staffing; develop technology infrastructure; and enhance fine arts, technology and agriscience programs

#### *Curriculum Coordination and Development*

- Learning Information Team (LIT) - representative decision-making process
- Consistent K-12 curriculum documentation
- Grade level learner expectations developed
- Enhanced curriculum leadership and responsibility

#### *Instructional Quality*

- Priority on resources to direct instruction
- Small class sizes maintained
- \$250,000 annually to support professional development
- Mentoring of beginning teachers
- Highly qualified staff
  - 45% of teachers hold advanced degrees
  - 15 years average experience (13.5 average in DASD)
  - 45% hold multiple subject certifications

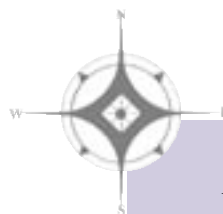
#### *Monitoring and Accountability*

- Skyward data systems (financial, personnel, student)
- Coordinated student performance assessment
- Pre/post individualized learning assessment (NWEA)
- Compliance reporting process to board of education
- Data-driven decision making for continuous improvement

### **On the horizon . . .**

Areas from the original conference vision not yet fully analyzed or developed

- Individualized performance-based assessment
- Improved data collection processes
- Leadership structure for K-12 curriculum development and implementation



### **Did You Know?**

- Student ACT scores exceed United States, Wisconsin and Badger Conference averages.
- Average Wisconsin Knowledge & Concepts Exam scores exceed Wisconsin average and among the top of Badger Conference.
- Madison Magazine study identified DASD as 2<sup>nd</sup> highest performing suburban district in Dane County in 2004.
- DASD ranks 4<sup>th</sup> (out of 13) in the Badger Conference for the amount of resources allocated to direct instruction.

## Providing optional learning structures and school/programs of choice



*Each student will be able to apply individual knowledge and behave in ways necessary to function effectively throughout all facets of community within which they are engaged. Effective functioning includes the capacity to maintain personal physical wellness and positive interpersonal relationships. Facets of the community include peer group; grade level; classroom; school; community; and broader society.*

*(DASD Board of Education Policy on Student Ends, Developmentally Appropriate Application)*

### **The journey so far . . .**

The community's schools have a strong tradition of inclusionary programming and planning. Meaningful success for all students is a clear and deliberate goal of instructional programs. Balancing a wide variety of needs and interests with existing resources, programs are designed in a way that opens possibilities for all students to benefit.

#### *Programs Tailored to Support Success for All Students*

- Enrichment activities open to all students
- Alternative programs at middle and high school
- Reading support programming (e.g. READ 180) for grades K-12
- Full-day and half-day kindergarten options
- Open enrollment available to all students
- Peer tutoring programs
- Study skills curriculum
- High school Link Crew peer mentoring program

#### *Diverse Curriculum Offerings*

- Youth options programming at MATC and UW-Madison
- Youth apprenticeship programs with local businesses and MATC
- Advanced placement (AP) courses offered through high school, distance learning lab, and on-line
- Community service as part of graduation requirements
- Hands-on learning labs (e.g. Big Hill, greenhouse, technology)

#### *Partnerships*

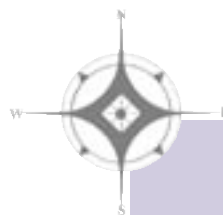
- UW-Madison - mentoring program for new educators
- MATC - integrated and accelerated course development
- Viterbo University - professional development academy for staff
- Local businesses - adopt-a-class, speakers, field trips, projects, scholarships

*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.*

### **On the horizon . . .**

Areas from the original conference vision not yet fully analyzed or developed

- Expanded course options aligned with higher education
- Options in student schedules
- Unique learning environments
- Links with Herzing College in technical fields



### **Did You Know?**

- DASD students take dozens of classes at MATC and UW-Madison annually.
- MATC has established a policy to develop partnerships with K-12 school districts.
- DASD students can simultaneously earn high school and college or university credits.
- DASD has a 98% attendance rate.

## Supporting the overall growth & development of children



*Each student will possess the character traits necessary to perform according to the Standards of the Heart established by the Department of Public Instruction for the State of Wisconsin. Standards of the Heart include the capacity to demonstrate caring; contribute; be productive; assume accountability; and engage in responsible citizenship.*  
(DASD Board of Education Policy on Student Ends, Character Attributes)

### **The journey so far . . .**

The community vision emphasized the importance of developing the “whole child,” encompassing intellectual, social, emotional and character development. District initiatives are intended to address the whole child in partnership with families and the community-at-large.

#### *Enhancing Social/Emotional Development*

- Search Institute: 40 Developmental Assets for Youth
- Programs to build interpersonal relationships
  - Tribes
  - Habits of personal effectiveness
  - Peer mediation (DMS)
  - Link Crew (DAHS)

#### *Extra- and Co-Curricular Activities*

- Non-traditional learning opportunities (e.g. after-school programming)
- Fine arts/performing arts opportunities
- Community service
- Full range of interscholastic sports

#### *Community Engagement*

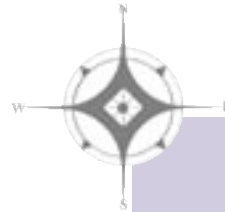
- Student service clubs and organizations
- Parent/citizen surveys
- Service learning curriculum
- Community service expectations
- Linkage with area clergy
- Extensive volunteerism



### **On the horizon . . .**

Areas from the original conference vision not yet fully analyzed or developed

- Coordinated K-12 guidance programming and curriculum
- Ongoing student/family surveys to assess student needs, interests and strengths



### **Did You Know?**

- 85% of students participate in at least one of over 85 available extra- and co-curricular activities.
- This year over 500 individuals volunteered in the schools.
- 75% of students report they perceive their peers as positive influences.
- Community service can be credited toward high school graduation requirements.
- 62% of our youth are engaged in the religious community.
- 75% of our youth report a positive view of their future.

## Developing life-long & community-wide learning opportunities



*Each student will demonstrate the ability to problem solve; think critically; communicate effectively (written and oral as appropriate); participate in the arts; deal effectively with change; and successfully engage in life-long learning.*

*(DASD Board of Education Policy on Student Ends, Processing Skills)*

### **The journey so far . . .**

Framework participants recognized that “learning” is a life-long activity, not restricted to the years of formal public schooling between ages 5 and 18. The school district was encouraged to play a role in developing mechanisms that would promote opportunities for all citizens to engage in life-long learning.

#### *Younger Children*

- Community-wide early learning study
- Efforts with preschools and the public library to enrich early learning experiences
- Full-day kindergarten programming, in addition to half-day option

#### *All Ages*

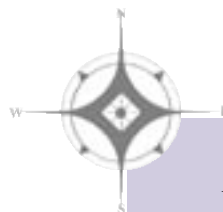
- Distance learning lab for courses and seminars open to students and public
- Public access to technology classes
- Internet access/infrastructure to public access points
- Access for senior citizens to student performance events
- Inter-generational learning opportunities, events and activities
- Partnerships in area-wide initiatives on economic development, business retention, demographic studies, community infrastructure (e.g. roads, sidewalks, emergency planning)



### **On the horizon . . .**

Areas from the original conference vision not yet fully analyzed or developed

- Coordinated planning with municipalities for recreation/ education opportunities
- Initiatives in early childhood development
- Study of four-year-old kindergarten
- Adult learning opportunities



### ***Did You Know?***

- Over 500 older adults participated in inter-generational activities last year.
- The school district is in partnership with DeForest Area Friends of the Arts to facilitate learning and entertainment opportunities for all citizens in the area.
- The distance learning lab offers student, staff and community members access to educational opportunities from across the world.

## Further perspectives



### 1999 Conference Themes . . .

*As participants in the original Framework for Our Future conference envisioned the preferred future for their school district, a number of commonly held themes emerged. These themes, later refined into five vision elements, shape the values, priorities and direction of the school district today.*

- Technology (distance learning & interactive learning)
- Community Harmony
- Ethics/Responsibility
- Involvement of parents and business in the governance of schools
- Emphasize the “area” of the district (e.g., change name of district to “Yahara River School System”)
- Community service (students and citizens, including senior citizens)
- Facilities as a center for community activities
- Smaller class sizes
- Foreign language at early grade
- Global partnerships – school/business and other stakeholders
- Ongoing professional training
- Networking between schools and community
- Alternate school funding
- Fine arts
- Year-round education (school)
- More individualized learning (at home, by PC, www.etc.)
- Established vision of higher standards
- Life-long learning
- Flexible schedules
- Wellness – emotional and physical
- Inter-generational learning
- Learning outside the traditional school setting
- Monitoring of continuous growth for students and teachers
- Evaluation/assessment of community’s progress
- Parental involvement
- 24-hour access to schools
- Lab centers and resource centers replace traditional classrooms
- International learning (foreign language)
- Programming with MATC and UW
- All inclusive campus from day-care to life-long learning (clinics/cafes)
- Teachers as facilitators of learning
- Curriculum with affective as well as academic areas
- Maximizing value of tax investment
- Formal education beginning at age 4 years
- Status quo not acceptable for this community
- Community pride and school pride
- ICATT a reality

### DASD AT-A-GLANCE

• DASD population (2000 census)	approx. 17,000
• Municipalities serviced by district	9
• District boundaries	100 sq. miles
• DASD enrollment (2003-04)	3,152
3 <sup>rd</sup> largest in Badger Conference	
6 <sup>th</sup> largest of 17 districts in Dane County	
Top 15% in Wisconsin	
• Annual growth rate projection	1-2%
• Total budget	\$38.5 million
• Full- and part-time employees	548
• Payroll	\$27 million
• Total square footage of facilities	120,000
• Total land acreage	125 acres
• Daily bus miles	1,725
• Number of students transported	1,690
• Average daily meals served	2,332
• Students receiving free and reduced-price meals	403
• Graduation rate (2003)	99%
• Students pursuing 2- or 4-year post-graduate education	85%
• Students receiving special education services	464
• WIAA girls and boys sports	19
• Computer stations	1,200
• Computer labs	20
• Fiber optic cable within district boundaries	7 miles
• Annual technology expenditures	\$500,000

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