

BOARD BRIEFS



DHS, UM-Flint partner to offer opportunities for Davison kids

Last summer, Davison Schools and the University of Michigan-Flint joined forces to offer high school students a chance to take an intense, hands-on environmental science course at the Robert Williams Nature & Historical Learning Center in Davison Township. Professors taught students about scientific inquiry through field experience six hours a day for three weeks and students earned college credit upon successfully completing the course. It was the beginning of a unique relationship between the school district and the university that has expanded into even more opportunities for students this year. And it's called DEEP (Dual Enrollment Education Program).

"It's a very unique partnership because it blends together a university, K-12 school district and local municipality," said **Kevin Brown**, Assistant Superintendent.

"It took us about two seconds to say yes," **Robert Hahn**, Coordinator of K-12 projects with the University of Michigan-Flint, said when contacted by Superintendent **Eric Lieske** about the potential for educational opportunities at the Williams property. "The professors were very much impressed by the space and what was available to them as faculty members. They were also impressed by the students' academic preparations and their level of enthusiasm and skill."

Brown added that professors were so impressed, in fact, that college officials decided to expand its course offerings to high school students. Now, students have a choice of several courses in the area of environmental sciences and could potentially earn up to 18 college credits before graduating from high school.

This summer, students will also be able to participate in an art program offered through UM-Flint at the Williams Nature and Historical Learning Center.

"These are all university courses," Hahn said.

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The mission of the Davison Community Schools is to develop individuals who demonstrate skills necessary for lifelong success in a changing, global society.



Organizational meeting date set for July 13

The Board of Education will hold its annual Organizational Meeting at 7 p.m. July 13 at the Cardinal Center.

Administrators' Week March 2-6

Board of Education members approved a resolution recognizing March 2-6, 2015, as School Administrators' Week in Davison.

Board gratefully accepts contributions

The following contributions have been offered to the district:

Richard and Mary Ann DuCharme donated \$500 to continue their sponsorship and support for the STEM-based DHS School Robotics FRC Team 3534 House of Cards. The donation provided assistance with the cost of building materials and supplies. This is the fourth consecutive year the DuCharmes have donated \$500 in support of the team.

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Board Briefs is a monthly newsletter published after Board of Education meetings. For additional information, please contact the Communications Department at 591-0852.

Parents address board about Balanced Calendar concept

About a dozen parents attended last week's board meeting to show their support for a district wide balanced calendar, however, one parent shared his disapproval of the concept.

Barry Jones, who has three children in the district, said he did not support the balanced calendar for two reasons: infrastructure and academics.

"We have three elementary buildings not equipped with air conditioning and I think that needs to be a priority before a balanced calendar is implemented," Jones said.

He added that he had done quite a bit of online research about balanced calendars and has not been impressed with what he's learned.

"The argument about four- to six-week summer breaks show that you should get the same results or slightly a little better, academically," he said. "For me, to structurally change a calendar to get the same results or slightly a little better doesn't do well for me."

Jones added that while the majority of families may be in favor of the switch from a traditional calendar to a balanced one, there's still probably about 30 percent of families who want that extra time in the summer to spend time with their kids or at vacation homes in northern Michigan.

"This would create stresses in their life," said Jones, who said that his family is involved in a summer ministry at their cottage. "This would significantly change our family's traditions."

Hill Elementary parent **Courtney Elliott** told board members she is "100 percent on board" with a K-12 balanced calendar. A graduate of Davison, Elliott said she would have loved to have had intersession breaks as a high school student.

"When you're in a high school, there's a lot of struggle between working, being involved in sports, dual enrollment ... to have a week off to take a breather between final exams would be nice," she said.

As a single parent of two boys, Elliott said the balanced calendar has been a benefit.

"It's very hard to hear any negativity about this because it has done such wonderful things for my family," she said. "I'm a divorced single mom and for my family this works great. My boys can spend extra time with their dad on intersessions and the whole argument about daycare—I'm not sure why people think they have to pay more in daycare because that does not make sense. I do really appreciate, though, the board listening to all of the opinions."

Parent **Ann Prill**, who is a teacher in another school district, has a son who attends Hill Elementary.

"I liked how Hill had a (balanced calendar) program but it wasn't just about (stopping) the summer regression," she said. "Come February, my son needed that break so significantly."

While she and her son are not on the same traditional calendar, she said there are benefits. She was excited that she could be a mom on her child's first day of school and actually spend some time in the classroom to see some of the great things taking place.

"What you truly believe is best for your child and their learning is not necessarily convenient for your schedule," she said. "As a teacher, yes it would be more convenient but I truly believe in the (balanced) year program; that is why we participate in a (balanced) year program. If you are against it because it doesn't work with your schedule, then you are not focusing on the educational component."

Sarah White said her child attended Hill before enrolling into the Challenging Academic Potential (CAP) gifted program, which is housed at Central Elementary.

"I miss the schedule," she said.

White said that she is a 4-H mom and doesn't see an issue with her child continuing to participate in the annual county fair in mid August.

"Who cares?" she asked. "The fair has moved dates and I will pull my kid out for it. It's not an issue. Kids' summer sports? Again, not a problem. If we can do something that's even slightly better for our children, then it's not a problem."

It was as a teacher cadet at Hill Elementary that sixth grader teacher **Cayla Dowdall** first experienced the

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Hank Graff Chevrolet in Davison donated \$100 to the DHS Robotics FRC Team 3534 House of Cards to help purchase building materials for this year's competition.

Hansen Funeral Home in Davison donated \$100 to the DHS Robotics FRC Team 3534 House of Cards to help purchase building materials for this year's competition.

For the second consecutive year, **Patti Engineering** in Auburn Hills generously donated \$500 to the DHS Robotics FRC Team 3534. The contribution will help offset building costs for competition.

Neighborhood Bagel, LLC. in Davison donated \$100 to the DHS Robotics FRC Team 3534 House of Cards to help purchase building materials for this year's competition.

Dr. Kenneth and **Karen Vobach**, M.D., PC. Pediatrics generously donated \$1,200 to the DHS FRC Team 3534 House of Cards to offset building costs for this year's competition. This is the third consecutive year the Vobachs have provided a monetary donation in support of the team.

Kroger of Davison donated \$25 to Gates Elementary to purchase hot dog buns for the school's second grade Economics Fair.

Jimmy John's of Davison donated \$200 in food to the DHS Robotics FRC Team 3534 to consume during their full day build.

WoJo's Garden Splendors donated \$150 to the DHS Athletic Department for purchase of equipment and supplies for the Girls' Softball program.

Ryan Carley of First Merit Bank in Flint donated \$200 to the DHS Athletic Department for purchase of equipment and supplies to the Girls' Softball program.

Resident **Connie Hill** donated \$150 to Hill Elementary to support intersession and afterschool clubs.

Crossing Guard **Mike Christopherson** donated hats, scarves and gloves to Central Elementary for students in need of them.

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"These are not made up courses for high school students who want to pretend to be college students. These courses are for those who want to face the rigors of college. It's a bit of a jolt going from high school, even AP course work, and there are some key differences in terms of pacing and style, but the idea of this is to get a taste of what college coursework is like."

There are no course prerequisites and students can step in and take one or two of the courses or the entire sequence. Currently, 24 Davison High School students are enrolled in Environmental Science 102, which is being offered in mixed mode—meaning some of the classes take place online with others being held at the university or at the Williams property.

Brown said that professors have also come to the high school to assist students with their coursework.

"The courses are 14 weeks, twice a week; and they cover a tremendous amount of content reading expectations," Hahn said. "It's not our intent to have these students step up to the plate and whiff at the first class. We want them to be successful."

Student board representative and DHS senior **Amanda George** participated in the summer dual enrollment course held at the William's nature center.

"I thought it was a great experience," she said. "I'm mostly a hands-on learner and 75 percent of the time we were outside in waders and boots and using equipment I never had used before. "It was a nice experience to be taught by a college professor."

Lieske lauded Dr. Hahn and the university for their openness in pursuing such a partnership.

"Learning is ever changing," Lieske said. "Partnering with the University of Michigan-Flint is an exciting learning opportunity for students interested in a college experience while still in high school. This is one of the ways we can make Davison special and unique and truly a destination school district that makes people want to come here."



Leading the Pledge

Members of the Davison Alternative Education Student Advisory Council and Dean of Students Chris Wilson led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance at the March Board of Education meeting. Students are selected for the Student Advisory Council by their peers.

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balanced calendar. She also served as a guest teacher during intersessions and fell in love with the calendar.

“We do spend weeks getting students back up to speed and re-teaching kids things they learned in their previous grade level. Imagine what I could do if I had that extra time?”

Parent **Jessica Brown** placed her daughter on the waiting list at Hill Elementary when she was just 2 years old.

“I think the majority of parents don’t have the summer open.” she said. “My husband and I work all summer so this schedule for us is amazing. The intersessions are fantastic learning opportunities for non traditional learning times that the kids absolutely love. I am very sad this is my child’s last year at Hill and we will have to go to a traditional calendar.”

Superintendent **Eric Lieske** agreed with Jones, saying that the research does indicate that most students following a traditional school calendar can catch up the gap caused by summer learning loss. However, that research is based on balanced calendars where summer breaks are four to six weeks and there are three– to four-week breaks on three occasions during the school year. So, it’s not really accurate to compare that research with a balanced calendar such as the one followed at Hill Elementary, where students have an eight-week summer and shorter one-week breaks three times during the school year. These intersessions also provide additional learning opportunities for students if parents elect to have their students participate.

“We have a unique opportunity here for our district knowing what we have already experienced at Hill Elementary with its balanced calendar,” Lieske said. “Whether you are supportive or in opposition of the balanced calendar, I hope what you’re observing is a school district that is being highly transparent and doing a whole lot of research and work to see how our community feels about it.”

Lieske has given 22 presentations, including three community forums, about the possibilities of implementing a district K-12 balanced calendar over the past five months. Additionally, parents and staff have been surveyed several times about the concept. Lieske recently shared the presentation with the Davison Area Chamber of Commerce where members showed their support of the balanced calendar.

Last week, postcards were sent out to all parents and guardians of students in the district seeking their input on whether or not the district should implement a K-12 balanced calendar. Those receiving a postcard have been asked to select the box best indicating their choice and place it in the mail on or before Friday, March 13. All staff members will also be surveyed once again.

Lieske is hopeful to have enough responses to make a recommendation to the board by May as to whether or not the district should move forward in implementing a K-12 balanced calendar school year in the future.

“However, if the district does feel more time is necessary to gain more information and input or provide further communication to the community, then that will occur,” Lieske said.