

TOWN MEETING OCTOBER 13, 2011



COLLATION OF POST-IT® NOTE RESPONSES

The Dallastown Area School Board welcomed district residents to its first Town Meeting of the 2011-2012 school year. The meeting followed a forum format utilizing concepts from a modified “Affinity Diagram.” (A tool that gathers large amounts of language data – ideas, opinions, issues – and organizes them into groupings based on their natural relationships.) Thirty-six (36) participants gathered in two classrooms of the high school, each facilitated by several School Board Members and District Administrators. Participants displayed their individual responses to each of two questions and the group-at-large discussed and agreed upon the appropriate headers (titles) that captured the essential links among grouped responses. ([Sign-in Sheets](#))

Question 1 (blue): *What are the great things happening in the Dallastown Area School District that should be continued?*

Header: Supportive Community

- ☞ Value education; support kids
- ☞ The no-tax-increase is a good start and should be continued.
- ☞ Community survey

Header: Fiscal Responsibility

- ☞ New emphasis on fiscal responsibility
- ☞ Energy Management Plan; longer term look at expenses

Header: General Quality of Education

- ☞ Class Size
- ☞ Great opportunities for students’ learning K-12
- ☞ Full Day Kindergarten
- ☞ The outstanding things the student body accomplishes, volunteering, academics, sports and numerous other activities
- ☞ Generally meeting the AYP is positive
- ☞ Libraries located in all the schools to encourage student reading

Header: Advancing Student Achievement

- ☞ Increased standardized test scores
- ☞ PSSA scores are very, very good
- ☞ AP (Advanced Placement) Offerings
- ☞ Leveling per academic ability
- ☞ Kindergarten Readiness – “bags” sent home over summer, etc.
- ☞ Fall and spring conferences as well as special nights. For example: 1st grade reading, to help parents with helping kids
- ☞ Excellent elementary education and foundation
- ☞ Increased rigor at the middle school level
- ☞ Increased rigor in Math and English at middle school
- ☞ Pushing foreign language down to seventh grade is great
- ☞ High school science department and instruction
- ☞ We have excellent, passionate teachers
- ☞ Curriculum maps posted

Header: DAIS (Dallastown Area Intermediate School)

- 🏰 Intermediate School
- 🏰 That 6th grade is out of the mid-school
- 🏰 Flexible grouping at DAIS

Header: School-to-Work Opportunities

- 🏰 Advanced Placement opportunities for HS student; Dual Enrollment opportunities
- 🏰 Students shadowing jobs they would like to pursue to see if that is what they are interested in.
- 🏰 Not sure if you still have this program: students going to programs ½-day to educate for future jobs – Mr. Stauffer used to head this.

Header: Use of Technology

- 🏰 Home Access Center
- 🏰 Love the integration of technology – For example: use of smart boards in classrooms
- 🏰 Use of Internet/email to help DASD to go green

Header: Beyond the Classroom

- 🏰 I believe the strategy of bringing “extra” programs (Twilight, Cyber, Special Ed.) back under the district’s roof is outstanding.
- 🏰 Extracurricular opportunities for the students
- 🏰 Continued support for athletics/extracurriculars
- 🏰 Athletics & Extracurriculars
- 🏰 Athletics (variety)
- 🏰 Sports Programs
- 🏰 Arts/Music Departments
- 🏰 Music Program
- 🏰 The Band
- 🏰 A strong PTO
- 🏰 Parent Advisory Group meetings with Dr. Weinberg
- 🏰 Courtyard of Honor

Question 2 (orange): What are the concerns, issues or questions that you have regarding the Dallastown Area School District?

Header: School Board Communication & Involvement

- 🏰 Would like to see school board members take a more active role in investigating important issue (i.e., like Mr. Jasmann did on Chartwells.)
- 🏰 School Board Members address issues individually – and address issues and look at all angles of issues.
- 🏰 The Board thinks it communicates to the public. It does not.
- 🏰 The new Town Meeting format is a step in the right. Comment: It seems to me this was enacted without the full board being aware. This is not acceptable Board behavior.
- 🏰 This meeting not a positive environment to address questions. Feels like a divide and conquer approach – approved by whom to conduct in this form.

Header: Communication

- 🏰 “Community fliers” restrictions causing low turnout for programs
- 🏰 Concerned about lack of parental involvement in child’s education
- 🏰 Communication/relationships between/with district stakeholders
- 🏰 Communication with the public is poor.
- 🏰 Lack of communication, Re: this meeting... Global Connect
- 🏰 Concern: Forum format instead of everyone in one room for Town Meetings
- 🏰 One night for a town meeting. Limit time to speak.

Header: Lower School Costs

- 🏠 Cut-backs in positions (and classes) that could possibly affect the student body in academics and extracurricular opportunities.
- 🏠 As a retiree I cannot afford the outrageous school taxes.
- 🏠 People are losing their homes, partly because school taxes are out of control.
- 🏠 Incredibly high cost per student compared to other districts with higher SAT scores.
- 🏠 What is being done to reign in ever-escalating expenditures in light of the present economic crisis?
- 🏠 School costs continue to escalate as the economy continues to be in crisis. How are you addressing this? Short term? Long term?

Header: Financial Concerns

- 🏠 Annual Report not published until after Town Meeting this year.
- 🏠 Salary/benefit controls
- 🏠 Salaries and Benefits
- 🏠 Salaries and benefits (too high)
- 🏠 Escalating teacher salaries and benefits
- 🏠 Funding of undergrad credits for employees
- 🏠 Potential reductions to extracurriculars in the midst of growing salaries and benefits.
- 🏠 Full-time law enforcement personnel at the high school.
- 🏠 Ever-increasing real estate taxes
- 🏠 Escalating school taxes
- 🏠 Exorbitant taxes
- 🏠 Taxes/Budgets/Finances
- 🏠 Start early budgeting process
- 🏠 Financial foresight and planning
- 🏠 An inflated technology budget and department
- 🏠 Spending out of control
- 🏠 Spending is out of control. At \$80 million dollars for a budget – this is a business and should be treated as such.
- 🏠 Controlling costs through coding. In order to control costs, the school should know where funds are going. Suggestion: all extra curricular activities should be coded for expenses. Example: football (cutting grass, maintenance, equipment, bus transportation, etc.) - At any period in time the costs can be examined in detail. Perhaps there are overlapping expenses that can be eliminated.
- 🏠 Concern: pay to play
- 🏠 Pay to play sports
- 🏠 No plan evident for acquiring turf fields to help our teams be competitive
- 🏠 Condition of auditorium seats
- 🏠 Funding of facility building projects while cutting services to students
- 🏠 Is the district considering closing an elementary school to conserve costs?
- 🏠 What will be done to help conserve costs?
- 🏠 Where is it (district) going?

Header: Staffing Concerns

- 🏠 Need to create supportive environment for students
- 🏠 Teachers' union and lack of concern for what is best for district
- 🏠 Discord between teachers and administrators
- 🏠 Concerned about the "inability" to no longer employ teachers that are not "working" (being utilized)
- 🏠 Re: Middle School – Teams of teachers need to work more cooperatively to avoid them all giving large assignments and/or tests at the same time.
- 🏠 Lack of leadership and accountability at the high school
- 🏠 Poor performing teachers achieving tenure/remaining at the high school
- 🏠 Inability to release non-performing teachers
- 🏠 Inability to remove or reprimand ineffective teachers
- 🏠 Poor-performing teachers do not yield higher results
- 🏠 Why is there no performance rating for teachers?

Header: Food Service Concerns

- ☞ Subcontracting food service to a for-profit corporation
- ☞ Lunch costs much higher than previous
- ☞ Lunch – more \$\$ - less food??

Header: Curriculum

- ☞ Gift assessment only @ Grade 2 & 3
- ☞ No foreign language program at elementary level
- ☞ Strings program at DAIS
- ☞ Taking fire prevention knowledge as not needed in the DAIS
- ☞ Bullying prevention
- ☞ New math program at HS
- ☞ High school math department
- ☞ New math curriculum and overall weakening of math department
- ☞ Math strength; Science strength
- ☞ ↓Class time for core classes in high school (not what it was before)
- ☞ Lack of consistent curriculum
- ☞ Elimination of instructional and support services for students as well as programs formerly offered
- ☞ Taking students out of class time for unrelated things (fundraisers)
- ☞ Need to encourage students to challenge themselves
- ☞ Focus on teaching to learn, not to pass standardized test
- ☞ What is the reason behind Library as a special at DAIS?
- ☞ Why isn't language being taught earlier than 7th grade?
- ☞ The prospective as to what a high school should be has been warped. Let's get back to basics. Providing EVERYTHING for the students does not prepare them for the future. What should a HS be?
- ☞ Why is there such a difference in what is taught – Level 1 vs. Level 2 vs. Level 3?
- ☞ How does the district plan to increase the graduation rate?

Header: Educational Climate

- ☞ Climate in district
- ☞ Climate toward students in high school – administration setting the tone
- ☞ Lack of response to parent/student concerns at high school
- ☞ Parental/Student/Personal Responsibility
- ☞ Sense of community/working towards the common goal of education

At the end of the Town Forum, participants and board meeting attendees were given the opportunity to peruse all of these responses through a “Gallery Walk” in the hallway.

The School Board will review and discuss these responses publicly at its regular business meeting on Thursday, November 10, 2011. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Theater Room of the High School. Please join us!