

Dowagiac State of the Union Schools



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Why I Believe "Life is Great in Dowagiac"



Let me begin by saying that my definition of great does not mean perfect and that my perspective comes from having grown up, lived in, and worked in small to medium-sized communities throughout my life. Even though I have only been a community member for seven months, in that time, I have witnessed and experienced many types of kindness, friendliness, a willingness by others to be helpful and genuine acceptance from one and all. This is a reflection of Dowagiac's heart and why people choose to live, work, and raise their families in the community.

As a new community member who happens to be the superintendent of the school system, I have had the opportunity to observe citizens serving others in different ways. I have seen this happen through the giving of their skill, time, and even monetary funds. Working to clean, organize, and decorate different areas of the town to allow others to enjoy neighborhoods and the downtown area. It was inspiring to watch as a community member decided to make it her mission to collect 100 coats from the greater Dowagiac family to help students who were in need of a jacket for the winter. She didn't have to do this, but her heart said she should. With the help of many, the goal was significantly exceeded and included hats, gloves, and some boots for students in grades K-12. Simply put, as my wife would say, we just experienced "Hallmark moments" in this little city.

Now, some of you may be thinking this guy is wearing rose-colored glasses and doesn't know or see the challenges some are facing. Well, as I said, great doesn't mean perfect. I do, however, choose to focus on the positives while working to find ways to improve those areas that need it. It all comes down to your mindset. When we focus on the good around us, we are more positive and able and willing to achieve much more. The workload doesn't decrease, but it sure seems much more manageable, which makes it easier to achieve the goals we set.

Therefore, as we each keep our New Year resolutions going, I ask you to consider adding one more. Join me in the mindset that "Life is Great in Dowagiac." Let's dedicate our effort to recognizing the positives we all have in our lives, community, and school district. Again, I know we need to accept that we all have areas needing improvement, and acknowledge that no one is perfect, but let us give grace and mercy to others. Our growth and greatness depend on those who love living and raising their children here, and who also take action to share and enhance the community by sharing their positive opinions with others. We need to plant these seeds with our friends and family members inside and outside of the community with the hope that they will see the greatness that we all know exists here. We are stronger together and the more positive and welcoming we are will lead to others wanting to join us in the greatness that is in the Dowagiac community and schools.

That is why I say "Life is Great in Dowagiac" and I hope you agree.

Jonathan M. Whan, Superintendent

WELCOME NEW STAFF



TARA REINHARDT

High School: St. Joseph HS

College: Western Michigan University

Degree: MA, Literacy Studies

Assignment: Kindergarten, Sister Lakes Elementary

Previous Experience: 13 years as a first grade teacher at Kalamazoo Public Schools.

Family: Husband Jed, son Jaxon, daughter Avery, and Opal the family dog.

Interests: I enjoy being outside. I also enjoy reading.

I'm looking forward to...getting to know all of the students and staff at Sister Lakes.



MICHELLE ANDERSON

High School: Penn High School

College: University of Cincinnati, and IUSB

Degree: MA Social Work

Assignment: Student Advocate at Justus Gage Elementary and Patrick Hamilton Elementary

Previous Experience: 12 yrs. for the State of Indiana, Dept. of Child Services.

Interests: I enjoy spending time with my family and swimming is one of our favorite family activities.

I went into education because...I enjoy working with children and families. I have always had a passion to help others.

I'm looking forward to...getting to know everyone and having a successful year.

Cookies and Canvas at Kincheloe

On a chilly December evening Kincheloe families could be found enjoying cookies and canvas in the school gym at our Parent Fair. Organized by Title I teacher, Tami Small, with input from parents, we were able to have a fun-filled, educational evening complete with dinner and cookies.

The painting session kicked off our evening. Led by parent Ileane Kelly and instructional strategy support provided by teachers Sarah Posey and Ashley Horvath; snowman paintings appeared in no time. Staff provided strategies to support literacy and math. Parents also supported strategies by asking quizlet questions with a vocabulary emphasis. Painters learned about mixing colors, perspective and placement on the canvas.

Following the painting, students were treated to a read aloud by Kincheloe grandparent, Shirley Bontrager. She shared the story Stranger



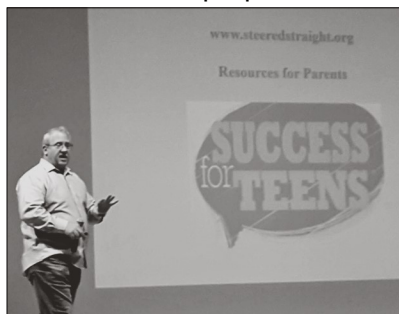
In the Woods. Dinner was served by Principal Cathy Stone, Secretary Patti Wiggins and Sodexo employee Connie Maleski. Families were served French dip sandwiches with chips. They were fantastic! Dinner finished up with cookies that were decorated by each family.

Everyone in attendance received a gift bag that included a resource book to do craft activities along with a few supplies to get them started. The parent fair provided an opportunity for parents and staff to converse and learn about curriculum, programs, and opportunities for engagement.

National Expert Shares Information About Dangers of Vaping With DMS Community

On Tuesday, December 17, 2019, students, staff, and members of the community were educated about the dangers of vaping and the negative impact it can have on the physical development of adolescents. The information that was presented was shared by national expert Michael DeLeon, who has experienced and witnessed the negative impact drugs, alcohol, and tobacco can have on a person's life, family, and community. We were fortunate to have Mr. DeLeon come to Dowagiac Middle School to share his message because of the generous support of Southwest Michigan University's Education Talent Search (ETS) partnership.

One of the memorable aspects of Mr. DeLeon's visit involved him meeting with students during their lunch periods after each of his presentations. He answered questions and provided more insight to those who were curious. Additionally, he left a plethora of informational booklets for students to read that discussed topics he lectured about such as the hazards of using inhalants, marijuana, alcohol, and vape products.



Mr. DeLeon has communicated that he plans on visiting Dowagiac Middle School again in the Spring to follow-up with the conversations he had with members of our school community. If you are interested in finding out more information about Mr. DeLeon and his message, you may visit his website at www.steeredstraight.org. There are many resources available for parents, students, and schools to help stay informed about this national epidemic.

Sister Lakes Students Love To Read

Every year the English Language Learner students that work with Mrs. Hohl, Mrs. Andrade, and Mrs. Skogen receive free books at Christmas to enjoy, read, share, and keep. The books include chapter books, short stories, picture books and books at many different reading levels. Students are always excited to pick out a book. The books are purchased by the staff members from Scholastic books, on-line sales, and from large department stores. It is very important for students to continue to build their love for reading outside of the classroom. This also helps students stay in the habit and practice all of the reading strategies they have learned so they can become better readers.



Union High School Culinary Arts Wins Competition

Dowagiac Union High School Culinary Class wins first place in Lake Michigan College's 11th Annual Chili Cook-Off. The teams had one hour to make a chili and cornbread meal from scratch for six judges. The contest rules required that all ingredients be bagged separately prior to cooking. The Chieftains won a total of five medals competing against fifteen other teams from area high schools. Andy Kruger, fourth-year Culinary Arts teacher, had this to say, "I am

very proud of our teams. They made a great chili and cornbread and

interacted with the judges very well. The teams have to be very well-organized, making a checklist of things to bring. If they forget just one thing, like a mixing bowl, then they can not make their cornbread. I am very proud of them for handling the pressure and not panicking when things went wrong."

The three teams selected to represent Dowagiac Union High School and compete at Lake Michigan College first won an interclass competition judged by DUHS staff, who sampled test recipes in the teacher's lounge.

At the Lake Michigan College competition, team "Chili Dogs" won first place on tablescape by using a space theme. They decorated their table with a blow-up spaceman and spaceship. They also had spaceship serving plates. Team "Chili Chili Bang Bang" won the coveted best chili

award. They used honey as their main ingredient provided by team member Caleb Luthringer, who does beekeeping in the summer. They completed the theme by decorating their table with beekeeping tools. Caleb also printed off several pictures used in a portfolio that the judges could review. Their serving

bowls were half coconuts filled with chili and a fresh slice of pineapple. The lead judge gave the Dowagiac teams a compliment on how they were the only

teams that introduced themselves to the judges in a creative way. Our third group, team "The Chill Chills" dealt with some adversity. They forgot the pre-cooked burger that they had previously prepared. Luckily the DUHS trio of teams brought extra burger meat as a planning strategy which allowed team "Chill Chills" to cook and sauté the meat and veggies on site. They won fifth place for tablescape, using a Christmas theme. We are looking forward to finding new and creative ways to make chili for next year's competition with a new batch of students! Congratulations to all of our "Chili Champions". We will be cheering for you to defend the title and bring home the trophy next year. Go Chieftains!



Front Row (kneeling l to r): Peyton Collett, Ruby Maggart, Leah Scholten, William Smiechowski, Heaven Maynard.
Back Row (standing l to r) Randy Luthinger, Brendan Lozano, Caleb Luthringer, Blake Juroff-Eichel, Anthony Wither, Jenna Davis, Anthony Kidd, Khloie Goins, Andy Kruger



Chili Dogs Team. Back Row: (l to r) Khloie Goins, Jenna Davis, Anthony Kidd, Heaven Maynard. Kneeling in front Andy Kruger.



Team Chili Chili Bang Bang. Standing (l to r) William Smiechowski, Anthony Withers, Leah Scholten, Caleb Luthringer. Kneeling: Andy Kruger



Chill Chills Team (l to r): Andy Kruger, Ruby Maggart, Peyton Collett, Blake Juroff-Eichel, and Brandon Lozano

Board of Education Recognition Month

January was Board of Education recognition month. In a time where the business of education is becoming increasingly more difficult, it is vital to keep in mind the community members who represent us on the Board of Education. Recognizing one for their service does not mean you agree with all the decisions made or actions taken, it is merely to thank them for their willingness to volunteer and serve.

School boards are responsible for decisions that are, in fact, sometimes extremely difficult or require reviewing and breaking down large amounts of information. They spend hundreds of hours learning in the community, attending school events at many different levels, attending training and professional development conferences, preparing for meetings, and participating in sessions where they determine the path of the district. Dowagiac Union Schools has a board filled with members who do their best to provide a quality learning opportunity for this community. They continuously look to a brighter future and believe Dowagiac is a great place to raise a family and educate children.

Because of this belief, and their dedication, I ask each of you to express your thanks to: Ruth Ausra, Carrie Freeman, Terry Groth, Ron Jones, Phyllis Sarabyn, Larry Schmidt, and Ronda Sullivan.

Local school board members play an essential role in public education. They look out for students by keeping the best interest for students in mind while making decisions about school programs. They are accessible to the public and help establish a vision for the school, community, and staff. School board members play an important role in ensuring that students get a quality education with public tax dollars. I have been blessed to work with more than a few quality boards during my educational career, and I believe that ours is among that group. Their commitment to public education is essential, and we are all blessed by their services. I look forward to working with all of our board members today and into the future. - Thank you, Jonathan Whan, Superintendent.

Update on Facilities

Unfortunately, the information I shared about the timeline for the completion of the Chris Taylor Field was wrong. I am sorry for that as well as very disappointed, but it will get completed. On a good note, the marquee sign at the corner is up and running. Thank you, First Source Bank and Wolverine Insurance, for your donations that helped us be able to have such an excellent communication tool.

In addition, due to the gracious donation of a community member, next spring, we will be adding a black fence with brick pillars that match the wall of the sign and the main entrance to the field. This will increase the atmosphere and appearance of the athletic complex. This following picture is not an exact match, but we hope it will help you visualize where we are headed. There will be 27 pillars distributed around the field with six to nine on each of the four sides of the complex.

Also, due to some creative solutions in different bond projects, we were able to add significant upgrades to the Varsity Softball field. We have added new concrete sidewalks, new seating areas, new fencing, replaced the infield surface, and pitching mound as well as improvements to the outfield turf. We will be adding new bleachers before the season opener as well. We can't wait to see our athletes take the field and experience success in, basically, our new softball complex.



As for the rest of the district, the last of the punch list items are being completed quickly and we will soon, except for Chris Taylor Field, be done with the bond projects. We will continue to utilize our maintenance budget to sustain the progress and improvements that have been completed throughout the district. Again, on behalf of the Board, staff, and most importantly, our students, THANK YOU for graciously supporting the district through the bond.

- Jonathan Whan, Superintendent

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

September 2019 Caleb Luthringer, Union High School, Kaden Stokes, Dowagiac Middle School, Uriel Cortez, Justus Gage, Travis Ridenour, Kincheloe, Shail'al Hatches, Patrick Hamilton, and Ace Clark, Sister Lakes

October 2019 Jaleana Payne, Union High School, Johnie Cole, Dowagiac Middle School, Brianna Grove, Justus Gage, Ramon Vargas, Kincheloe, Nolan Nearpass, Patrick Hamilton, and Journey Snay, Sister Lakes.

November 2019 Ryan Allen, Union High School, Reagan Williamson, Dowagiac Middle School, Faith Wadley, Justus Gage, Zoey Ausra, Kincheloe, Lucy Mead, Patrick Hamilton, and Myah White, Sister Lakes.

December 2019 Abraham Guernsey, Union High School, Gabby Neumann, Dowagiac Middle School, Bella James, Justus Gage, Kyler True, Kincheloe, Brody Brewer, Patrick Hamilton, and Tyler Feirick, Sister Lakes.

CONGRATULATIONS!



**Hall Walking
is now open to the public
Monday—Friday at
Union High School
5:00-7:00 PM**

• Walkers are asked to use the East entrance. (student parking lot)

DUS FOUNDATION—HELPING TEACHERS AND STUDENTS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

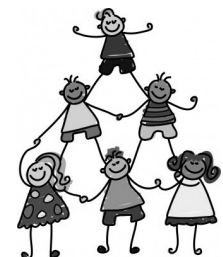
The Dowagiac Union Schools Foundation was created in 1984 to provide funding for educational opportunities that fall outside of the school's operating budget. The Foundation's goal is to supplement, expand, and diversify learning experiences of Dowagiac Union students. The Foundation is supervised by a Board of Trustees—volunteer citizens who serve without pay. The following mini-grants were approved in October:

- 1) Flexible seating for kindergarten at JGage \$370 and Special Ed at Sister Lakes—\$340
- 2) 8th grade transportation cost to Vo-Tech—\$455
- 3) 6th & 7th grade frog dissection project —\$512
- 4) Classroom library seating at JGage—\$233
- 5) New pottery wheel at Union HS—\$1374
- 6) Transportation for all 3rd–5th graders to the South Bend Symphony—\$2154
- 7) Hero store supplies at Pat Ham—\$300
- 8) Senior Citizen Fall Luncheon—\$1000
- 9) Robotics—\$2000
- 10) Transportation for 4th & 5th graders to State Capitol—Sister Lakes—\$2670
- 11) Transportation for field trips for Pat Ham's 3rd graders—\$452
- 12) Starfish Circus—\$1000

Another opportunity for staff to submit applications for mini-grants opened in January.

The Foundation is a registered non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. If you would like to make a TAX DEDUCTIBLE contribution to the foundation, please send your contribution to:

Dowagiac Schools Foundation, 243 S. Front Street
Dowagiac, MI 49047.



8th Graders Explore Career Pathways

In mid November, DMS 8th grade students had the opportunity to attend Southwest Michigan's student "MiCareerQuest" held at the Kalamazoo Expo Center. At this program, students were able to engage in simulated activities that highlighted a number of career pathways. A few of the many interactive displays held at this event included: riding in an ambulance, dressing up as a fireman, performing karaoke onstage, using various tools and equipment from the construction trades, manipulating a flight simulator, creating digital images as well as many others.

Although our students still have time to decide upon a future career path before they graduate, this event helped give them a closer look at some other possibilities outside of those they are already familiar with.



MiCareerQuest
SOUTHEAST

Pat Ham Learns All About Nouns

At Pat Ham, our first grade students have learned all about nouns and how they are all around us. They have learned that nouns are the people, places, and things that make up a community. Using an extension activity from the district's new Tara West English Language Arts curriculum, both Miss Eastman's and Mr. Leazenby's classes created a bustling "noun town" similar to our own.

Students brainstormed what nouns would be found in town such as a mall, schools, a mailman, and animals you might see while taking an afternoon stroll around the town. Our classes then set out to create a town full of nouns. The color-coded nouns quickly filled our town and the result was amazing! Our "noun town" came alive with people shopping and walking their dogs just like you would see here in Dowagiac.



Dowagiac Union Schools

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Teamwork Makes The Dream Work at Justus Gage

Michelle Anderson, K-5 Advocate, stopped by Mrs. Hannapel's fifth-grade class and guided an activity aimed at helping students discover the importance of working together, positive communication skills and developing resilience when faced with failure. Mallory Bakeman summed up the lesson best by saying, “Everyone has a job, the team hurts if someone sits on the side and doesn't do anything. It's important to figure out how everyone can contribute.” Classmate Justin Statler added, “and never give up, keep trying even when you don't get it right away.”



Justus Gage Hero Expectations



A number of staff members are participating in SWPBIS which stands for School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Series. SWPBIS is a three-year project that helps schools develop and or improve a culture that promotes positive school climate. Staff members are preparing lessons and activities for our school-wide “HERO” expectations in regards to specific locations: cafeteria, hallways, playground, classrooms, etc. Justus Gage staff is very excited about incorporating school-wide expectations into a Jeopardy Game which in turn helps reinforce these expectations.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

The Dowagiac Board of Education recognizes that discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, height, weight, handicap or disability is not conducive to equal educational opportunities for students nor conducive to the proper operation of the schools for employees. The Dowagiac Board of Education and employees will comply with all federal and state laws pertaining to discrimination and will provide for the following: The appointment of an employee to coordinate district actions to comply with district policies and with Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, amended July, 1973; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, sub section 84.5; Title II of the Americans with Disability Act of 1990; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; and make accommodations if necessary to ensure that the lack of English language skills is not a barrier to admission and participation in activities. All complaints, inquiries, and requests for information relating to discrimination in the Dowagiac Union School District should be directed to: Stacy Ritchie, Director of Finance, District Coordinator for Title IX, Title VI, Title II, Section 504 and the Age Discrimination Act, 243 S. Front Street, Dowagiac, Michigan 49047, Telephone: 269-782-4400.