

Dearborn school system seeks the "Model School"

Delia Habhab. The Arab American News. Dearborn, Mich.: Feb 24-Mar 2, 2007. Vol. 23, Iss. 1098; pg. 15, 1 pgs

DEARBORN - The Dearborn Public School district (DPS) is launching a "Model School Project," an initiative aimed to join together parents, faculty and community members in an effort to improve the school district.

The project is a joint effort between DPS and the Dearborn Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), and will involve everyone from local business owners to city government representatives. The program is geared toward anyone who has a genuine interest in being directly involved with the school system, and will essentially allow community members to create their ideal learning environments.

The project will result in a blueprint that will be used to form the perfect school system. The objective is to incorporate components from the final product into the current system. Rather than completely restructure the district, the aim is to take the best ideas and suggestions offered during the process and use them to further develop the schools. As the district moves ahead with its strategic planning for the 2008 school year, this distinctive program is sure to introduce new ideas

For years, DPS has been recognized as a leader in educational programs and academic excellence. DPS Communications Coordinator David Mustonen is optimistic about the project, which will likely lead to an enhancement of an already reputable school system.

"We want to start with a blank slate, with no restrictions or limitations," said Mustonen. "The question we will be posing to the participants is: 'If you could design the perfect school district with no boundaries, what would it look like?' We want to encourage creativity in this process."

DPS has always recognized the importance of the role of parents in their children's education. This program takes that idea one step further by giving parents and other participants the opportunity to take a more hands-on approach.

Participants will take part in workshops beginning March 2, which will allow project volunteers to begin brainstorming and developing ideas. The workshops will provide them with background on the school district, as well as information that will help them move ahead with their own ideas. The project committee will focus on several core elements, including educational methodology and, curriculum, before and after school programs, roles and relationships, state and federal government relations, and student transitions.

The response to the project so far has been generally positive. Rarely does such a unique program come along that encourages the participation of an entire community. Numerous community members who have heard about the initiative through word of mouth have already expressed an interest in participating.

"By pulling together talent from all over the city, we are hoping to end up with a great model for a school district," continued Mustonen. "The finished product will be an archetype of what an ideal school should look like."

DPS and the PTSA encourage all community members to join in this effort. Further information on the Model School Project can be found at www.dearbomschools.org.