

Regular Board Meeting Public Comment Responses 4-8-25

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION: Mr. Lett

- Wants an independent investigation into the circumstances for the recommendation for his termination.
- He said the District has failed to prove the 20+ claims against him.
- He is being mistreated. DFT didn't support him.
- The witnesses were dishonest at his hearing.

Public Comment Response:

At the November 13, 2024, Board Meeting, the Board voted for Mr. Lett to be suspended without pay for 30 days. He has appealed that decision to the MI Tenure Commission. A hearing was held in that matter and the parties are awaiting a decision from the assigned Administrative Law Judge.

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION:

- Do we have enough money to keep schools going on for next year?
- Do we have enough money for summer school?
- If this is going on and the President has so much power, why are Board members so calm?

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

There are no immediate signs that Federal and State Education funding would be cut so dramatically by next school year that the District would not operate schools next year. The District is receiving grant funding from the Ballmer Group to fund K-8 summer school this year and next year. We plan to use Title I for high school course recovery and Bridge Programs for incoming 9th graders. There is summer school also for ESE students through ESE state funding.

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION: Eddie People, National Action Network**

- He just returned from National Action convention where a new superintendent for New York who said he likes his students to read from a book, not a computer. This superintendent's salary was \$105k per year with 912k students.
- But Vitti has 50k students and his salary is over \$300k per year.

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

The Chancellor of NYDOE receives a salary of \$415,000 plus additional other financial incentives. NYDOE has Regional Superintendents, they are equivalent to our Assistant Superintendents, and they supervise a network of schools. The average NYDOE Regional Superintendent salary is approximately \$200,000. Dr. Vitti is not the highest paid Superintendent in Michigan, but DPSCD has the most students.

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION:

- Thanked Board for acknowledging the need to fix roofs.
- She wants to know about College Advisors because each high school doesn't have one.
- The ESE Dept. potential changes are very important. It is essential that the Board stay close to these families with self-contained classrooms being moved.
- This new plan is duplicating the Oakman school model.
- The problem with this ESE Dept. is compliance and ESE not following-up.
- "If you don't get this ESE compliance together, y'all gone have a gang load of lawsuits."

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

High schools can purchase College Transition Advisors through school-based Title 1 funding. During budget reductions after COVID (loss of enrollment due to pandemic; end of COVID funding; inflation; and need to increase salaries), the District no longer funded the position. The proposed ESE program location changes does not attempt to recreate the Oakman school. The District is already running self-contained ESE programs/classrooms in general ed schools. This is not new. Instead of spreading these programs out throughout the District we are planning to concentrate them in certain schools to limit the number of times ESE self-contained students need to transfer schools; offer more self-contained programs in more feeder patterns and closer to parents' homes; improve staffing, services, IEP completion times, attendance, and achievement of ESE self-contained students.

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION: Joyce Jennings

- Seems like DPS has been experiencing Project 2025 since 1999.
- She wants to see swimming offered as a life skill to all children in the city of Detroit.
- We have a lot of families dealing with housing instability. She wants to see school districts work with the city and advocate for home ownership.

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

The District has invested in restoring a pool within each of its feeder patterns at the neighborhood high school or a large K-8 to continue its legacy of teaching children to swim. The District's community team is always looking for partners to provide families and parents with more information about finances and home ownership.

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION: Ernest N. Riley

- He wrote a book titled "Keep Dreaming" a journal for children to write down their aspirations.
- It will help mental illness and creative writing.
- He wants to partner with DPSCD.

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

Please submit your book to be reviewed as part of the Local Authors Panel process, please complete the required form, which can be found here. Additional information about the Local Authors Panel is also available on the District's website. To request a contract with the District, please review the District's RFP website www.detroitk12.org/procurement.

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION: James J. Beasley, Jr.

- The report card shows that reading is too low. He can help.

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

Please use this link to bid for literacy RFPs www.detroitk12.org/procurement

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION: Lauren Chapman

- How many libraries does the district have?
- Why weren't any of the literacy funds directed to libraries?
- Librarians can curate literacy experiences for many students simultaneously.
- With \$3M, 25 librarians can be employed in a year.
- Swimming is a life skill.
- Cody and Pershing currently have pools and should have pools at the new ones.
- Drowning and reading are both things that need to be addressed.

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

All District schools have libraries. They are used in traditional ways such as taking out a book and reading it, studying, or working on a computer. However, the District has invested millions of dollars in classroom libraries to promote independent reading in the classroom and purchased books to use as part of the day-to-day curriculum. The District also invests in digital libraries that provide access to more books to a student than any traditional library can. The District does not fund librarians due to an overall lack of funds for other needs (modern facilities, even higher teacher salaries) and the shortage of certified librarians. The District believes that its investment in classroom libraries, digital libraries, access to books in the day-to-day curriculum, or academic interventionists who work with students one on one and in small groups with students will yield stronger improvements in literacy than librarians.

The limited funding the District possessed to invest in facilities considering the greater need did not allow the inclusion of swimming pools at the new Pershing or Cody. These costs would have taken funding away from districtwide projects, such as HVAC upgrades. In addition, both schools have public pools.

Cody High School Public Comment Answer:

Brennan Pool at Rouge Park – Only 1.5 miles from Cody, this Olympic-sized pool is located in Detroit's largest public park and is adjacent to the new Brennan Recreation Facility.

Pershing High School Public Comment Answer:

Adams Butzel Recreation Complex – Approximately 2 miles from Pershing, this facility offers an indoor pool, gymnasium, and youth-focused programming.

Other nearby options (within 5 miles) include:

- Kemeny Recreation Center – Near Cody, offering indoor pool access and youth programs.
- Butzel Family Center – Near Pershing, offering community services and recreational facilities.
- Wayne State University Natatorium – Near Pershing, with periodic community swim hours and youth events.

These community-based resources provide students with access to swimming instruction and recreational use without the cost burden of constructing on-site school pools.

We also acknowledge concerns regarding the absence of a dedicated library space in the designs for the new schools. Libraries have long been central to the learning experience, providing quiet environments, access to books, and a space for exploration and study. While the new school designs do not include a standalone library room, the importance of reading and research remains a top priority. Instead, both Cody and Pershing will feature flexible learning commons—open, adaptable spaces integrated throughout the school that support literacy, access to materials, collaboration, and academic development.

Students will continue to have access to:

- 1:1 Technology – Each student will receive a personal laptop or tablet for use at school and at home.
- ****Digital Library Services**** – Including 24/7 access to:
 - E-books and audiobooks
 - Academic databases and research tools
 - Multimedia and writing resources
- ****Access to Physical Books**** – The district remains committed to maintaining physical reading materials. A curated collection of books will be available to students through mobile carts, classroom libraries, and shared media areas within the learning commons.

While the books may not be housed in a single central room, physical books will remain a part of the school experience and accessible to students as part of their academic day. This modern layout allows the district to maximize space and flexibility while continuing to prioritize literacy, research, and reading for both academic success and personal enrichment.

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PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION: Samuel Madden

- Parent at DIA.
- At last committee meeting where he asked about no gym or recess. Now, she has gym.
- She now has gym but he wants to know why she can't have gym and art at the same time on an alternating basis.

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

The parent's child will have access to gym this quarter. Each school does its best to rotate the electives of gym, art or music and others.

PUBLIC COMMENT QUESTION: Tabron Joe

- If anything must be cut due to US DOE funding, will Dr. Vitti's salary be cut?

PUBLIC COMMENT ANSWER:

If the District would need to balance the budget through salary reductions, then Dr. Vitti's would be reduced as well.

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