



# Denair Unified School District

## Community • Excellence • Commitment

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## **Denair Board of Trustees welcomes community input regarding proposed restructuring, including charter school and parcel tax initiatives**

### **Our Beginnings**

The Denair Unified School District has proudly served our community for more than a century. From the first small classrooms in 1902 that included multiple grades to the four integrated campuses we share today, our teachers and staff have provided a quality education to generations of Denair families ... as well as newcomers to our region.

Denair schools have been the springboard for young men and women who became prominent business and community leaders, successful farmers, members of our military, doctors and nurses, police officers and firefighters, teachers, attorneys, accountants ... the list goes on and on.

There is a rich legacy shared by those of us who bleed Coyote purple.

### **Overcoming Adversity**

A few years ago, however, our school system faced a serious economic threat. Like many districts all over California, Denair Unified was negatively affected by a dramatic drop in state funding, all tied to the collapse of the housing market.

Difficult, painful choices had to be made. Reductions in staffing and salary were necessary to assure that mission we all share – educating our sons and daughters – would go on. Through it all, the board and administration worked with staff to minimize the impact on the classroom. We all knew that our responsibility was to serve our children to the best of our abilities.

We also recognize that, for some in our community, their trust and confidence in our district was shaken. We respect that and know we must work that much harder to earn it back.

Fortunately, the worst of that painful era is behind us.

### **Power of the Present**

In the past four years, our dedicated teachers, principals, specialists and everyone else in the district have come together to add dynamic courses.

There is a dual-language immersion program at our elementary campus. Our high school offers academic pathways in agriculture and criminal justice that earn students college credits. We have instilled a college-going culture at all campuses, increased academic rigor across the board and added some amazing new teachers.

Despite those many successes, critical challenges remain. The most serious of those is enrollment, which today sits at 1,272 students. That's 38 fewer than we anticipated in our 2017-18 budget, which translates into roughly \$300,000 less state revenue coming into the district this school year.

Denair Elementary Charter Academy continues to add students, but that growth has been offset by declining enrollment at our middle school and high school.

Identifying the problem is easy. Fixing it is not, but we are committed to working with the community to find a way.

### **A Bold New Future**

With your input, the board is considering whether a bold, new direction is necessary to advance the quality of education in Denair. We hope such a plan, if implemented, will become a model for innovation and academic success for all our students.

To that end, the board is considering its options, including establishment of a new charter school structure that encompasses multiple campuses – from kindergarten through high school. Such a structure would integrate pathways such as world languages and agriculture at every grade level.

One potential path contemplates a seamless academic progression that starts at elementary age and continues through high school graduation. Under this model, students will receive hands-on instruction from our staff, in-the-field experience, and access to instructional materials and lessons via computer.

In the months to come, we invite the Denair community to collaborate with us to further these ideas, including your participation in focus groups led by district staff. These are your schools and to develop the best plan, it's critical that parents and interested community members have an opportunity to participate, contribute ideas and be heard.

Our goal, through these community interactions, is to identify practical steps that will stabilize enrollment trends and lead to enrollment growth at the middle school and high school.

In addition to stabilizing and growing enrollment, the board is committed to recruiting and retaining the best teachers and staff for our district.

For that reason, our board is considering asking a parcel tax measure for the November 2018 ballot, to be voted on by the Denair community. In order to meet the projected shortfall in revenues necessary to provide competitive salaries and pay for other district expenses, we estimate the parcel tax would be proposed to be no more than \$100 per parcel per year – the equivalent of about \$8 a month.

The collected parcel tax money would be used to compensate our employees – our teachers, aides, specialists, campus supervisors, maintenance staff and others – at a level that is fair and competitive in the market.

A parcel tax requires two-thirds majority “yes” vote for it to be approved. For that reason, it is critical that the district provides its community stakeholders with all the relevant information for them to make an informed decision.

Through the planned community input sessions, we promise to actively and carefully listen in order to gather your perspective on these issues and gain your trust in developing a sound plan for the future of the district. Please look to future communications from the district regarding community focus groups on these issues.

Together, we can assure a bright future for Denair schools. We respectfully ask our staff, our students and their parents, and our community to work with us to make them happen.

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