A Look Inside

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Our Schools. Our Community. Our Pride.
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Mission Statement

The mission of the Fort Dodge Community School District is to encourage and assist each individual to achieve his/her level of educational excellence. To accomplish this mission, community input will be used to develop goals and action plans that include prudent allocation of necessary resources.

Vision Statement

In order to realize high student achievement, every learner experiences an engaging curriculum in a caring learning community every day.

Whether academics, performing and visual arts, athletics, or activities, the Fort Dodge Community School District offers a wide variety of experiences and opportunities to engage all students, leading to a future of success.
Overview

The Fort Dodge Community School District is a valued and dedicated district with nearly 3,500 K-12 students, committed to serving the Fort Dodge community and surrounding areas.

The Fort Dodge Community School District works hard to meet the individual needs of each student. Through differentiated instruction, as well as English Language Learners, Talented and Gifted, Special Education, and other support systems we are able to provide every learner with an engaging curriculum. Students consistently exceed the national percentages in reading and math on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development.

The Fort Dodge Community School District is able to offer the advantages of both a large and small school. Our low student-teacher ratio allows teachers to focus on the needs of each child. Classified as one of the larger districts in Iowa and the largest in the area, we are able to provide students with numerous academic and extracurricular opportunities, focusing on 21st Century learning.

We believe parent and community involvement is also an important key to student success. Throughout the history of Fort Dodge, being a Dodger has become synonymous with a quality and diverse education that allows students to succeed in academics, the visual and performing arts, athletics, and various activities. We welcome parents and community members as true partners in every child’s educational journey.

Students of the Fort Dodge Community School District follow the Iowa Core Curriculum, focusing on 21st Century learning techniques that enrich and engage students’ learning experiences.
Leadership

A seven member Board of Education oversees the operation of the District. Its members are elected by residents and serve four year terms without pay. The Board meets in public session twice a month. Our board members are dedicated to taking action that leads to student achievement and the best opportunities for kids. They engage the public in decision making and are committed to demonstrating accountability to our taxpayers.

Superintendent Doug Van Zyl, selected by the Board, is the District’s chief administrator and is assisted by an assistant superintendent, directors, principals, and assistant principals.

District Staff

Our district takes pride in our highly qualified educators. 100 percent of our teachers are certified by the state of Iowa in their specific field, while nearly half hold a Master’s Degree in education, an indication of knowledge and expertise.

Teachers at all grade levels participate in professional development activities in order to continuously improve learning strategies. Educators in our district believe in differentiated instruction to accommodate the needs of the brightest students as well as those students in need of assistance. A mentor program provides support for teachers new to the District.

We believe the recipe for educational success in the Fort Dodge Community School District is a dynamic learning environment, individual instruction, and a supportive and devoted staff. Staff members in all our operations are dedicated to the care of our students, facilities, and community. We believe every student in our district can succeed.
Our elementary program is designed to provide students with the essential elements on which to build a successful educational career. A clear, well-articulated and developmentally-appropriate curriculum is the strength of our schools. Our five elementary schools house grades K-4 and provide students with instruction in basic skills such as literacy, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, and technology. To prepare for kindergarten, a District preschool program is available to all children in the community and housed within two of our elementary buildings. Another preparation program, Transitional Kindergarten, is available for 5-year-old children to provide them the emotional, academic, and social skills needed before entering kindergarten.

Our curriculum is aligned across the District and encourages learning through the Iowa Core Curriculum. Classes meet with special teachers in the areas of physical education, health, music, art, library-media, and computer. Self-development skills and formative assessment are important areas of focus. Elementary students meet with teachers for small group instruction every day based on their reading levels.

Technology is introduced to our students as early as kindergarten. Technology education includes becoming familiar with keyboarding and computer programs, learning how to create presentations, using the internet for research, and writing and presenting reports. Recently, our 2010-2011 kindergarten class used Flip cameras to video and assess a public speaking presentation. Our basic program is also enriched by such activities as field trips, guest presentations, special events, and assemblies to applaud students for academic accomplishments.
Our two middle schools, Fair Oaks (grades 5-6) and Phillips (grades 7-8) provide students with a well-rounded and rigorous curriculum. In addition to the core classes of English, math, science, social studies, and reading, our students’ academic day includes opportunities in physical education, music, art, technology, family and consumer science, health, and foreign language.

Our middle school team structure provides opportunities for individual instruction and support. Students learn each day with the same group of teachers and students, allowing them to work daily in a cohesive and familiar environment. Students have one homeroom teacher and then move to different classrooms within their team throughout the day. Students develop a feeling for working with multiple staff members and movement from one area to another. Middle school provides students opportunities for maximum growth and understanding of major ideas and disciplines. Students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills and explore special interests.

Throughout their middle school years, students may also elect to take performing arts such as band, orchestra, or choir. Instrumental music lessons are also offered to all students. Students may also elect to participate in concerts, musicals, and several performing groups, giving them opportunities to showcase their training and abilities. Students at Phillips may also choose to be involved in athletics and various clubs. Athletic opportunities allow students to compete and travel at a state level, preparing them for the variety of activities and involvement opportunities offered at the Senior High.
With over 200 courses from which to choose, Fort Dodge Senior High has a reputation for offering one of the most extensive learning experiences in the area. Our high school’s comprehensive program is designed for students in grades nine through twelve with diverse abilities and goals.

Our program includes advanced placement (AP) courses, honors classes, opportunities for concurrent college credit from Iowa Central Community College, postsecondary enrollment options, as well as vocational articulation and health occupations classes. Our broad choice of electives allows students to prosper in relation to their interests and future plans. Fort Dodge Senior High offers five advanced placement courses that encourage accelerated learners to further their skills. At the end of the course, students can obtain college credit by taking the AP exam. Similar to advanced placement, honors courses are enriched curriculum. They offer the same material in greater depth to develop a high level of thinking and problem solving. Prerequisites to these classes generally include a teacher recommendation or a high enough score on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills or the Iowa Tests of Educational Development.

Fort Dodge Senior High offers up to 30 Iowa Central Community College courses which allow students to gain both high school and college credit. These courses are taught at the high school by Senior High instructors. Students from surrounding school districts come to FDSH every semester to benefit from our college curriculum. On average, students graduate with a semester of college completed, an opportunity to save money and get a head start on a college education. Our postsecondary enrollment option allows senior students to enroll part time at an eligible community college or university. Students may attend classes on the college campus, while receiving both high school and college credits.

Opportunities in industrial technology are also a popular choice for many students. Senior High’s Industrial Technology Department offers a wide range of courses that focus on manufacturing, building trades, automotive, and metals. Articulated credit allows students to receive college credit in certain vocational courses. This process eliminates the duplication of courses at the college level.

Many of our programs at Senior High take pride in the ability to expose students to their future interests. Through our Health Care Department, students gain an understanding for the skills and knowledge required in a health related career. Our classrooms are equipped with hospital beds and technology that allows students to practice basic lab activities.

With over 25 school-sanctioned extracurricular activities, 21 athletic teams, and an outstanding band, orchestra, drama, and choral program, there are plenty of ways to get involved at Fort Dodge Senior High. A variety of extra-curricular activities give students opportunities for personal expression and growth, extending friendships, and the opportunity to contribute to their school and community. As the largest district in the surrounding area, our Activities and Athletics Department has the ability to offer a wide range of programs such as boys’ and girls’ soccer, swimming, tennis, Debate, and Speech. Our certified coaches and directors include a majority of Fort Dodge teachers who encourage participants to succeed at all levels. Many of our students continue to pursue athletics and the arts at the collegiate level.
Fort Dodge Senior High

Academics

A wide range of relevant curriculum that pertains to students’ real interests allows them to pursue their aspirations.

Students involved in Computer Programming design iPhone Apps for the Apple market while learning programming and design skills.

Each year Vocational Technology students receive conference and state recognition for their expertise and skills.

The Half-Marathon Course, a course within the Physical Education Department, prepares students physically and mentally for a half-marathon run each semester.

The Board of Education frequently recognizes students for their accomplishments. Above, the Board congratulates a student after receiving an academic merit award.

An equal opportunity employer
Did you know?

- The Senior High graduation rate in 2010 was 90.5%, just 2 tenths short of the state goal.
- Approximately 130 graduating seniors in 2011 received scholarships totaling a combined $819,535.
- The course catalog has nearly 200 classes from which students can choose.
- Senior High offers five Advanced Placement courses taught by FDSH instructors: AP Chemistry, AP English Literature and Composition, AP American History, AP Calculus, and AP Physics.
- Senior High offers nearly 30 concurrent college courses through Iowa Central Community College. Taught by FDSH teachers, students rarely need to leave the building.
- Post-secondary enrollment options also allow students to take college courses on the Iowa Central Community College campus, promoting rigorous educational pursuits.
- Senior High’s Industrial Technology program offers education in building trades, automotive, manufacturing, and metals. The department offers articulation, allowing students to receive college credit and avoid duplication of learning.

Senior High’s Journalism II is a lab course producing the school newspaper the “Little Dodger.” Students work as staff editors, writers, and photographers. The newspaper can also be found on the Web.
The Fort Dodge Community School District believes extracurricular activities are an important part of the educational experience, giving students the opportunity to take pride in their interests and contribute to their school and community. Fort Dodge Senior High offers 21 different athletics available for boys and girls and 25 different activities for students to become involved. Each year Dodger teams and organizations receive state and division recognition awards.

The Boys’ and Girls’ Basketball teams play each home game with a crowd of Dodger students and fans cheering them on.

FDSH is the only district in this area that offers boys and girls soccer. This year, the Girls’ Soccer team finished the season ranked 13th in class 3A.

The Senior High Music Department offers a variety of musical groups and is known for their numerous Division I ratings received each year.
The Fort Dodge Community School District is committed to the use of technology to support and improve our educational program, to communicate with our community, and to prepare our youth for life in the 21st Century. Our K-12 technology curriculum ensures that all students gain the knowledge and skills to access, process, and communicate information using computers and related equipment, such as Qomo tablets, digital projectors, document cameras, and various educational software.

During their K-12 experience, students use computers in their classrooms and computer labs to write, conduct research, use the internet, create multimedia presentations, compose artwork, and for many other educational projects. Using Skype and e-pal programs, students in the District also communicate with learners across the world. At Senior High, our teachers have expanded their regional boundaries. Our French instructor teaches various levels of French via internet to students in partnering Iowa districts. Students at the Senior High may select from several additional computer-related courses that range from computer aided drafting to computer programming and publication design. The Senior High is equipped with wireless internet, allowing students to work from laptops with uninterrupted access.

The uses of technology are coordinated by our Technology Department and Teacher Librarians who work with teachers K-12 to determine the best ways to integrate technology in the classroom. Staff members receive professional development instruction and support on integrating technology into their educational tasks. Our district believes in the importance of using technology to its fullest potential.

Technology also plays a critical role in the communication process. Our automated phone system allows parents and guardians to be notified of schedule changes or important events in a timely manner. Infinite Campus is our tool for parents and students to access instant, online student information, such as assignments, attendance, report cards, and class schedules. Our website, www.fdschools.org, is complete with calendar events, current information updates, and newsletters. All these resources allow us to promote educational excellence by enhancing our communication with parents and guardians, staff, students, and community members.
Fort Dodge Community School District is committed to help each child achieve his/her level of educational excellence. As a District, we understand that not all children develop educationally at the same rate, but our team is committed to ensuring that every child leaves school every day feeling successful. The Special Education Department does this by providing specialized instruction and a variety of educational programs for students who cannot sufficiently benefit from only general education.

Our goal is to ensure that all students ages 3-21 with disabilities receive a free, excellent education that meets the student’s needs in the least restrictive environment. This means that special education services are provided in the general education classroom to the maximum extent.

Fort Dodge Community School District’s Special Education Department offers a continuum of educational resources for students with disabilities. Programs such as Head Start, preschool, early learning centers, and Transitional Kindergarten are offered to children from 3-5 years old. Programs at the K-12 level focus on everything from academic and behavioral needs, to significant cognitive delays and mental health issues. The Senior High also provides five programs in which the curriculum focuses on work experience.

The Fort Dodge Community School District is in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), requirements outlined by the Iowa Department of Education. According to state targets in 2011, our District excelled in areas of transition, demonstrating our strength to prepare students with special needs for a postsecondary setting or the world or work. Last year, 100 percent of our special education students age 16 and above received measureable, annual IEP goals and transition services.

Determining the need for special education services is done by utilizing a collaborative approach. A problem solving team of parents/guardians, school instructors and staff, and a representative from the area education agency (AEA) will work together to review interventions and identify areas of concern.

If a student is found to be eligible for special education services, then an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed which sets goals/objectives for educational needs as well as necessary accommodations, such as, transition services for students with disabilities who are 14 years old or more. The IEP is created by a team of individuals who understand the student’s needs best. The plan honors individual learning styles and meets the student at their current level.

Our District is committed to providing quality programs and resources for students with specials needs to enhance the independence, growth, and success of each student.

Our Special Education Department is under the direction of Lis Ristau, director of preschool and special needs. For more information, contact Lis at 515-574-5675 or by e-mail at mristau@fort-dodge.k12.ia.us.
The mission of the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program is to provide educational opportunities for intellectually gifted students so they may reach their full potential. The Fort Dodge Community School District provides a K-12 Talented and Gifted curriculum designed to meet the unique cognitive and affective needs of intellectually gifted students. To identify gifted students, children in kindergarten and first grade participate in instructional lessons which require original, critical, and higher level thinking skills. Students who demonstrate accelerated abilities in these lessons will participate in small group instruction on a regular basis with TAG teachers. TAG teachers work with students to teach advanced skills and strategies and to provide the social and intellectual stimulation they need. TAG teachers are also available as a resource to assist classroom teachers with strategies for differentiation and other resources supporting the academic needs of gifted students. Students involved with the program may also participate in special interest activities which include Quiz Bowl, History Day, Invent Iowa, Spelling Bee, Math Bee, Math Counts, and writing competitions. At the high school level, TAG students are presented with challenging opportunities such as advanced placement classes, honors sections, and college courses. When appropriate, research-based curriculum, independent studies, and mentorships are also available for Senior High’s accelerated learners. A TAG advisor assists Senior High students in achieving their academic goals and aspirations.

Fourth grade Talented and Gifted students received merit awards and sketch books at the University of Iowa Belin-Blank Center’s Vision of Inventiveness.
Diversity

The diverse atmosphere of the Fort Dodge Community School District enriches the educational opportunities for all its students and broadens their views about the political, economic, and social realities of a diverse society. Approximately, 22.9% of our students are members of minority groups. Some of these students are also newcomers to the United States, and through our ELL (English Language Learners) program students learn how to adjust to our language, culture, and education.

Each year, exchange students live with Fort Dodge families and attend school in our classrooms, giving students an understanding for diverse national backgrounds. For several years, an exchange program at Phillips Middle School has allowed French students and teachers to visit our school and community. In exchange, for the first year, Phillips’ students and teachers traveled abroad during the summer to visit their French acquaintances.

Fort Dodge Community School District has a diverse student population that enhances the educational experience for all students. Our diverse atmosphere and learning environment expands students understanding for the diverse and culturally abundant world we live in.
Community Use of Buildings and Facilities

The facilities of the Fort Dodge Community School District are owned, maintained, and supported by the public. Community groups' use of school facilities helps to foster community ownership in our schools. When facilities are not in use for school purposes, the District actively seeks to respond to the educational, recreational, and cultural needs of the community.

Many of our facilities are made available for other school districts and local, social, and civic organizations. Dodger Stadium, a historic landmark, is a place where many community teams call home. Home to Senior High’s football, marching band, baseball, track, and soccer teams, the stadium is also used by Iowa Central Community College, Saint Edmond Catholic Schools, and is the location for many youth and community events.

Other facilities available to community members and our neighboring districts are resources such as Dodger Tennis Courts, Butler Tennis Courts, school gymnasiums, auditoriums, and Senior High pool. The District takes pride in enhancing our community through its use of resources.

Dodger Stadium, built in 1939, contains a football stadium, track, and baseball field all enclosed by a red brick wall. The stadium is one of many facilities made available to the community.
Community Service

The spirit of service is a core value at the Fort Dodge Community School District. Although Fort Dodge students are not required to participate in community service, a vast majority do. Our aim is to foster the habit of service and provide students with the opportunity to positively contribute to our community. Beginning in kindergarten, teachers emphasize the importance of positive character and service through Character Counts. The community program integrates skills such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, caring, fairness, and citizenship into the classroom at each of our schools.

At the elementary level, students can be seen each year Jumping for Heart, in which they jump rope and fundraise hundreds of dollars for the American Heart Association. The first grade science unit “Water, Water Everywhere” involves the study of oceans and water animals, including a service project to save the manatees. Elementary schools have also participated in “drives” for food, clothing, and supplies for the Beacon of Hope Men’s Shelter and local food banks.

Students at Fair Oaks and Phillips Middle School participate individually and as a school in community service activities. Classrooms and athletic teams have volunteered their time with the local organization Pride in Community Appearance (PICA). Through PICA, students participate in trash clean ups and landscape projects to help beautify our community. To help those in need during the 2010 holiday season, Fair Oaks Middle School students and staff donated over 2,000 items to local food banks and homeless shelters, while students at Phillips Middle School showed their gratitude for the men and women stationed overseas by writing letters of appreciation and sending over 25 care packages.

At the high school level, students are encouraged to volunteer as active members of their community. Each year, our athletic and activity groups participate in at least one community service project. These projects range from participating in the Webster County Relay for Life, volunteering with the Domestic/Sexual Assault Outreach Center, holding a “Pink Out” basketball game to raise funds for breast cancer, or flipping pancakes during a community breakfast. During the holiday season, Senior High is known for having one of the largest “Giving Trees” in the area. Students and staff work together to provide toys and clothes to children in need, donating over 500 gifts in 2010. Students involved in National Honor Society organize two blood drives each year which allow students, staff, and community members to donate blood to the local blood bank. Senior High students may also elect to participate in the Sliver Cord program. The program is a distinguished volunteer service award available to students who earn a minimum of 25 volunteer hours in our community each year. Students who obtain 100 hours by their senior year will receive a Silver Cord to wear on their robes during graduation festivities.
The Fort Dodge Community School District Foundation was created in 1985 as an independent non-profit organization designed to support the Fort Dodge schools. The Foundation is an active fund raising organization working to establish a significant endowment that will support our students and schools for years to come. The goal of the foundation is to take our students and schools above and beyond by providing resources that are outside the scope of the District’s budget.

The Foundation funds activities, programs, and learning environments that promote academic, artistic, and athletic excellence. These activities may be forging new territory in the classroom, providing teaching tools and technology, or enhancing facilities.

The organization manages annual donations and funds donated through various trusts and estate planning. Their largest fundraiser, the Foundation Dinner Dance, is in place to generate funds for an endowment. A fourth of the funds received at the annual fundraiser are placed into an investment account with the purpose of generating long term support. The Foundation, with the help of Dodger supporters, continues to offer a unique depth and breadth to our students’ educational experience.

A few of the projects the Foundation has recently helped fund:

- The purchase of Qomo Tablets as an educational tool
- State Library Books
- GPS Heart Monitors for the Physical Education Department
- Playground Equipment for Feelhaver Elementary School
- Wrestling Mat at Phillips Middle School
- Little Dodger Newspaper Printing
- Technology Upgrades at Fair Oaks Middle School
- Flip Cameras for classroom projects
- Thermoscans for the Nursing Department
- Debate Team Nationals Trips
- New band and choir uniforms
- District soccer program
- Reconditioned Ed McNeil Baseball Field
Each year, the District’s Art Purchase program allows the Board of Education to purchase select art work from students at the elementary, middle school, and high school level. The framed pieces are then displayed in the board room and in buildings around the District.

Communications

Additional information about the Fort Dodge Community School District is available by contacting the Director of Communications Ashton Newman at 515-574-5668 or by e-mail at anewman@fort-dodge.k12.ia.us. Visit the District website for updates and further information:

www.fdschools.org