

Dedham Public Schools
Interim Superintendent's Update
April 5th, 2023
Day 132 of the 2022-2023 School Year

Teaching and Learning

Student government day. On March 22, Dedham Town Hall welcomed a group of students from DHS as part of Town Government Day. This annual spring event, which was reinstated this year following a break due to the pandemic, has been a favorite part of the civics curriculum, introducing students to their local government processes, departments and operations. This year, the 26 students who participated are all working on Civic Action Projects, focused on addressing current issues from a civics perspective, understanding the community mindset and the role local government might play in the issue. As students spent the day at Town Hall, they were able to meet and learn from our local experts as they addressed their project issues. The students whose projects are focused on school start time changes and an open campus at Dedham High School, were able to “serve” on the Dedham School Committee and had the opportunity to interview Principal Jim Forrest, School Committee members Chris Polito and Victor Hebert, and Interim Superintendent Ian Kelly. Students working on an anti-vaping campaign met and learned from officials in the Dedham Health Department. Students were able to visit other departments during their visit and also got to tour the new Dedham Public Safety facility, as well as consult with Police Chief d'Entremont who helpfully addressed public safety issues related to the start time and open campus projects.



State Government Day. Jack Watson and Susie Plunkett represented Dedham High School at Government Day at the State House in Boston. They were elected by their classmates, and were each assigned a role in State Government. This year, our students had the honor of being named Sergeant at Arms for the day. In this role, they were responsible for escorting the Lieutenant Governor into the chamber for her speech, after announcing her to the assembly. Additionally, they escorted the Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court into the chamber for her speech. After these important duties were fulfilled, they joined their fellow elected officials to debate and vote on mock legislation.

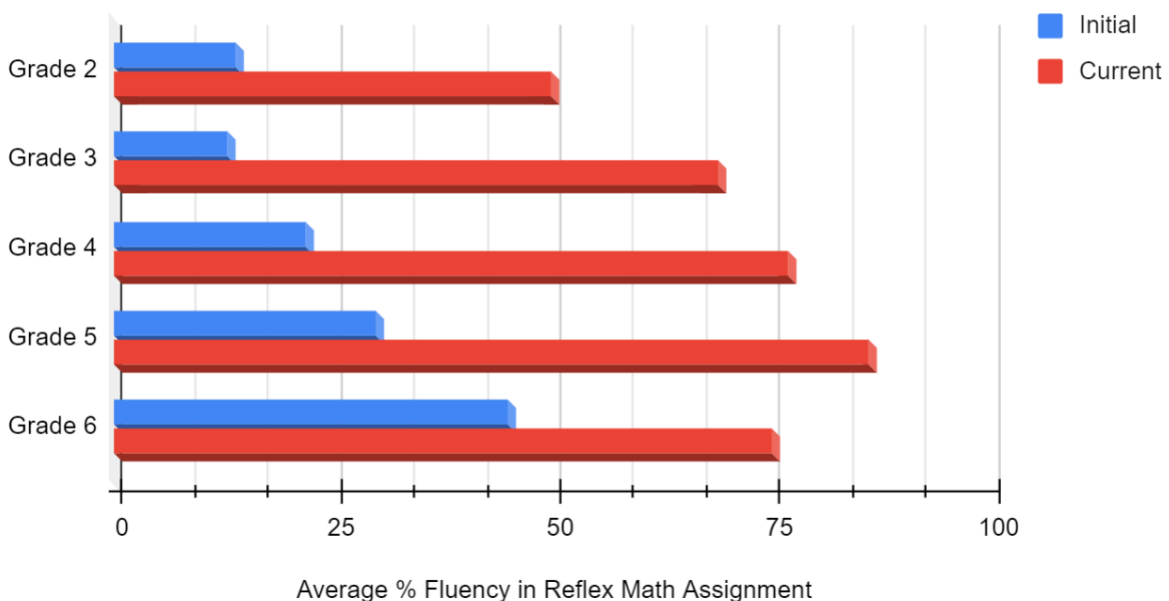
Trade & Post Secondary Fair. On April 4th, students had the chance to speak with professionals in the trades, cosmetology, real estate and behavioral health and learn about exciting opportunities for after high school graduation. A block of time during the fair was set

aside for parents and families to come in and speak with the organizations about career opportunities for students. All of these options at the fair do not require a 4 year degree to enter the field, but provide opportunities for full-time meaningful work. Organizations included Children’s Hospital, Bunker Community College, Naval Aviation Academy, National Grid, Mass Hire, and more.

Grade 5 Human Growth & Development Curriculum. Starting the week of May 8th, 2023, Physical Education teachers, School Nurses, and School Counselors will collaborate to deliver a series of lessons addressing different stages of Human Growth and Development. Communication will go out to families when they return from April vacation and information about the lessons (along with an opt-out) will be available on the DPS website. The district will hold a “Family Q & A” event on May 2 at 6:00 P.M. in the DHS Library to review the content of the lessons and answer any questions interested families may have.

Reflex Math. Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division form a basic foundation that all students need in order to advance and be successful with more complex math. Fast and accurate recall of basic math facts and a solid understanding of mathematical concepts helps students solve complex problems effectively and supports the development and mastery of new mathematical skills and concepts. Reflex Math uses [research-based methodologies](#) to take students through a [complete process of fact mastery](#). Students learn and practice facts in the context of fact families in addition and subtraction (1-10) and multiplication and division (1-12).

The data shared below shows strong growth in fact fluency at all grade levels while using Reflex Math. At the time of data collection (March 23, 2023) Grade 2 students were working in Addition/Subtraction 1-10 while the majority of Grade 3-6 students were working in Multiplication/Division 1-12.



Community Engagement

District Focus Groups. On March 30th, the District Curriculum Advisory held another round of focus groups for families. Babysitting was provided by high school student volunteers who work in our DELTA program and families had the chance to have dinner together before heading off to focus groups. On April 4th, the District Curriculum Advisory (DCA) reviewed transcripts from focus groups and identified several themes ([which can be viewed here](#)). The DCA will spend more time analyzing this information throughout the months of May and June. This data will be used to develop new priorities for the DCA as well as goals for the 23-24 school year.

Management and Operations

School Safety and Security. Last Monday, March 27th, our country witnessed yet another act of senseless violence taking the lives of children and educators in our schools - this time in Nashville, Tennessee just ten months following the devastating violence in Uvalde, Texas in late May of 2022. Our minds and hearts continue to be with the families, children, and faculty of the Covenant School. Less than 24 hours following the news of this shooting, Dedham High School experienced its second SWATting incident since early February. Hoax threats of violence have rattled schools and communities across the Commonwealth recently. These false alarms are dangerous, disruptive, and damaging to schools and communities. As a District, we are extremely concerned about the ongoing violence perpetrated against children and educators across the country and alarmed by the clear lack of care or concern for the safety of others evidenced by those responsible for the recent rash of SWATting incidents in Massachusetts. Our collective frustration and concern for the safety of our students, faculty, and staff is at the center of our work and we are ramping up our efforts to ensure the security of our learning spaces throughout the District. Our collaborative partnerships with the Dedham Police and Fire Departments continue and are stronger than ever. We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing support and expertise of our public safety officials in Dedham. The District is currently pursuing a contract with an outside agency to redouble our training efforts and emergency response protocols. At the same time we are revamping our internal emergency communication mechanisms and ensuring that capital improvement requests for FY 24 reflect the need for increased security infrastructure. This capital request includes new exterior doors for many of our schools, a safety vestibule for controlled entrance at DMS, keyless entry/lock systems, updated communication infrastructure, and modern interior video surveillance for Dedham Middle School. While we are proud of these efforts and the work that we do each day to maintain safety, we are saddened by the fact that we live in a world where this must be a focus for educators, families, and communities.

DHS Turf Field and Graduation. Mr. Forrest sent an email communication to DHS families earlier today providing an update on the turf field project and graduation. Delays at the state Department of Labor Standards have slowed the bid process down. While this is unfortunate for the replacement of the field it was great news to share with the class of 2023 as we are confident that construction will not be able to begin until mid June.