



Destination 2028!

2023-2028 Strategic Plan
and Portrait of a Learner



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“When you find a subject that you are passionate about it opens your mind to explore more.”

- 5th Grade Student



• UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT •

IGNITING GENIUS, EMPOWERING STUDENTS

OUR **VISION**:

The unrelenting pursuit of the extraordinary school experience.

OUR **MISSION**:

To ignite genius and empower students to advance the world.

WE **BELIEVE**:

The school experience is built upon a strong academic foundation within a safe, secure environment.

In the joy of learning.

In student choice and ownership of learning.

In the genius of each child.

In developing integrity, compassion, and empathy.

In developing grit, perseverance, and a passion for learning.

In empowering students to be thinkers and change makers.

In the power of curiosity.

In the power of team.

In taking risks and not settling.

Our students, as engaged citizens, will positively impact their community and the world.

BELIEF STATEMENT: We must seize opportunities to revolutionize the traditional school system to better prepare today's students. A wise investment in time and resources will radically change and improve the school experience.



We Are DMUSD, A Great Place to Be

DMUSD is a district of thinking, inspiration, and impact. Our students experience a high quality instructional core defined by strong academics and superb instructional practice. We chart the course through high standards, top-performing staff, and meaningful learning experiences. Engaging, flexible learning environments are alive with critical thinking, real-world applications to solving problems, and curiosity that is encouraged via creativity and innovation.

WE ARE DIVERSE.

There are over 39 languages spoken by students in DMUSD, including Mandarin (Putonghua), Korean, Spanish, Russian, Farsi (Persian), Japanese, Hebrew, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Cantonese, Portuguese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Turkish, Kannada, German, Ukrainian, Marathi, French, Italian, Bulgarian, Bengali, Serbo-Croatian (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian), Taiwanese, Hungarian, Gujarati, Polish, Filipino (Pilipino or Tagalog), Urdu, Swedish, Indonesian, Punjabi, Rumanian, Amharic, Armenian, Pashto, Iranian Languages, and Other non-English languages.

WE ARE ACTION ORIENTED.

We are deeply committed to the unrelenting pursuit of the extraordinary school experience. The future demands we think flexibly; learning requires we vary routes; and the world demands we empower each student. Our world is defined by exponential change. As we lean into the future and seize opportunities to revolutionize the traditional school system, how might our children multiply their influence and impact? How will we drive design and innovation, inspire one another and expand our thinking? How will we ensure students develop the competencies needed to thrive today and tomorrow? This is our call to action!

WE ARE ALL LEARNERS.

In DMUSD, we emphasize the importance of being a lifelong learner. Among our staff, over 79% of our certificated staff hold a master's degree or higher. We value professional learning for every adult, all in service to our students.

WE ARE INCLUSIVE.

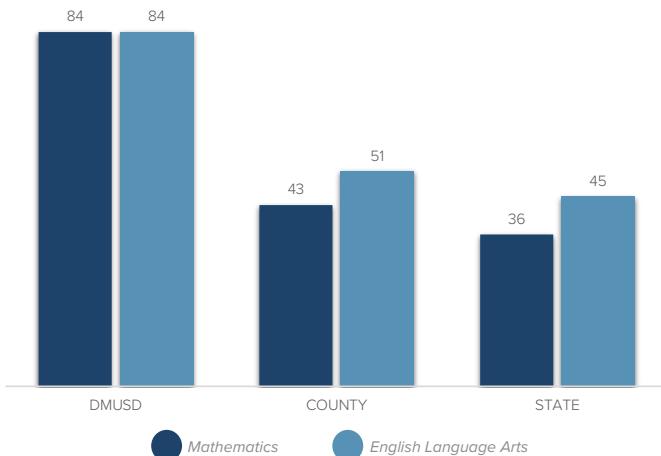
We believe in creating a place for learning where every child matters and every child and adult feels valued, safe, and heard; where every child, family member, and staff member know they belong; where relationships matter. We create opportunities for our community to come together to learn, to share ideas and perspectives, and to better understand one another.



WE ARE ACCOMPLISHED.

Our schools have been recognized both nationally and at the state level for excellence in education and school board governance. DMUSD schools are celebrated as National Blue Ribbon Schools, California Distinguished Schools, and California School Boards Association Golden Bell Award winners.

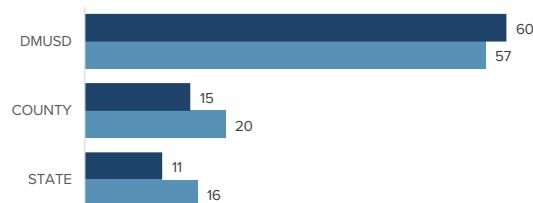
Smarter Balanced Assessments 2021-22
percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards



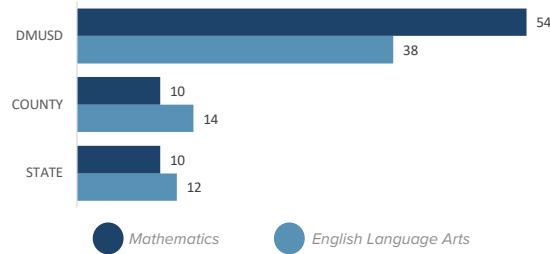
WE ARE EXCEPTIONAL.

DMUSD students perform at exceptionally high levels academically. Our students scored in the top 1% of elementary school districts in the state of California in both Mathematics and English Language Arts. Our students receiving special education services and those who are learning English significantly outperform state and county averages.

Students receiving special education services
percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards



English Language Learners
percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards



DMUSD by the Numbers

9 schools serving grades K-6 & preschool

3,841 Total students

594 Staff members

1 of 8 California school districts with Aaa Moody's Rating for fiscal responsibility

6

STEAM+ disciplines:
Art, Innovation Technology,
Music, PE, Science, & Spanish



“I get excited to see my teacher because she is kind. She smiles when she sees me and she makes learning fun!”

- Kindergarten Student

OUR SUPERINTENDENT



I am honored to share *Destination 2028!*, DMUSD's Strategic Plan, a collective vision shaped by the insight, care, and passion of our entire community. This plan represents months of thoughtful engagement, beginning with an open invitation for students, families, educators, staff, and community partners, where every voice could play a role in shaping our future. Together, the core competencies were identified that every DMUSD student needs to thrive in an ever-changing world: adaptability, critical thinking, global citizenship, emotional integrity, a learner's mindset, and depth of knowledge.

Following the development of our Portrait of a Learner, diverse educational partners contributed ideas, reflections, and aspirations through meetings, design sessions, and surveys. Their input helped determine the goals, objectives, and strategies that now anchor this plan. From there, the Strategic Design Team crafted language that aligns our vision and mission with the competencies our community values. The final stage invited partners to review and refine the draft, ensuring our plan authentically reflects the hopes and needs of our district.

Destination 2028! charts a clear and ambitious path for continuing our unrelenting pursuit of an extraordinary educational experience, to ignite and empower students to advance the world. Today's learners must think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate with empathy, and engage deeply with meaningful, rigorous learning. As we reimagine the traditional school experience, we continue to ask what matters most to our students: What inspires curiosity? What teaching practices engage them? What experiences help them see themselves as capable, creative, and powerful learners?

As we begin this next stage of our journey, I invite you to stay connected with our progress and celebrate the milestones ahead. Together, we will bring this vision to life by ensuring each student benefits from innovative learning, caring relationships, and opportunities that spark joy, purpose, and limitless possibility.

This is DMUSD, where extraordinary things happen every day!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marisa Janicek".

Marisa Janicek
Superintendent

OUR PRESIDENT



As Board President of the Del Mar Union School District, I am proud to support *Destination 2028!*, a strategic plan shaped by the voices, values, and aspirations of our community. This plan reflects a shared commitment to ensuring every student experiences learning that is engaging, meaningful, and designed to prepare them for an ever-changing world.

From the outset, the Board was committed to a strategic planning process that was thoughtful, inclusive, and rooted in community partnership. Students, families, educators, staff, and community members contributed their perspectives to help define the competencies, priorities, and guiding principles that anchor this plan. Their collective insight ensures *Destination 2028!* is both ambitious and grounded in what matters most for our learners.

The Board is confident in this strategic direction as we move from vision to action across our district. Together, we remain committed to stewarding a plan that honors DMUSD's strong foundation while thoughtfully guiding our district forward. We look ahead with optimism and purpose as we work to provide an extraordinary school experience for every student.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.S. Kholos".

Alan Kholos, Esq.
Board President

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

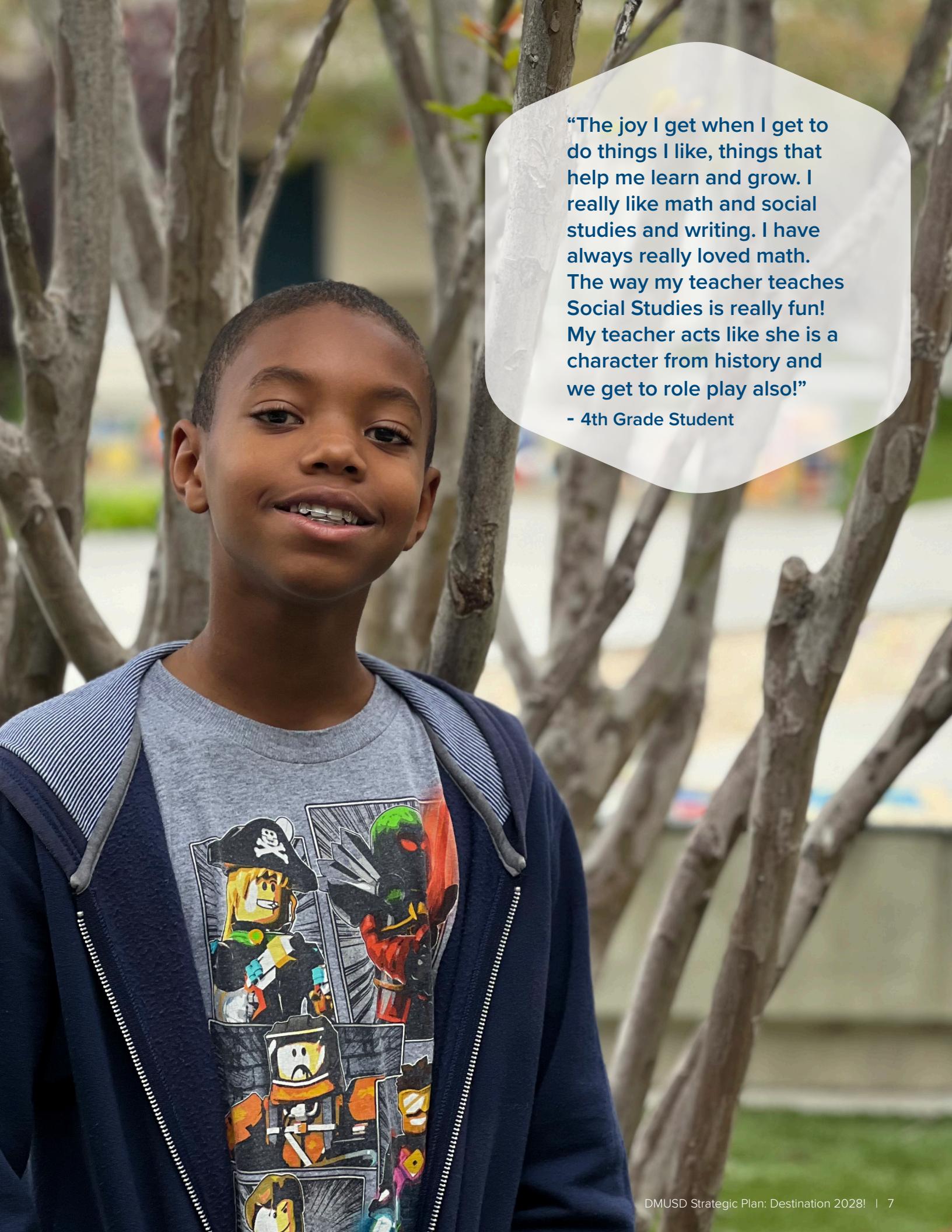
Alan Kholos, Esq., President

Bill Porter, EdD, Clerk

Katherine Fitzpatrick, Member

Gee Wah Mok, Esq., Member

Doug Rafner, Esq., Member



“The joy I get when I get to do things I like, things that help me learn and grow. I really like math and social studies and writing. I have always really loved math. The way my teacher teaches Social Studies is really fun! My teacher acts like she is a character from history and we get to role play also!”

- 4th Grade Student

Members of the DMUSD community, including students, parents, teachers, district administration, business leaders, and elected representatives, identified the vision for this strategic plan by articulating the Portrait of a DMUSD Learner. This process began in August 2022 and concluded in May 2023 with the participation of hundreds of educational partners throughout our district.

The Portrait of a Learner process began with a comprehensive analysis of the present state of DMUSD and identifying what our community values for our learners. The next step in the process identified four **Levers** to help our Portrait come to life in DMUSD's updated Strategic Plan. Based on input from educational partners throughout the strategic planning process, **Five-Year Objectives** were established for each Lever and will guide the district's work. **Priority Actions** are identified annually and serve to advance our district toward achievement of the Five-Year Objectives.



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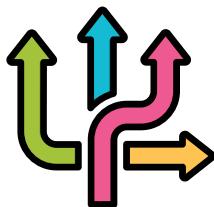


“The Strategic Planning process was a very thoughtful approach to identifying the big ideas and specific actions we can engage in to bring about our vision for student success. The process showed high regard for the input and feedback from all educational partners, resulting in a path forward that is inclusive of diverse perspectives.”

- DMUSD Teacher

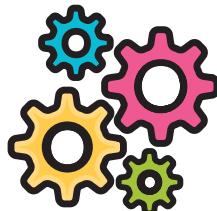


Our Portrait of a Learner articulates our community's aspirations for all our students, identifying the skills, mindsets, and competencies that our students need for success in this rapidly changing world.



ADAPTABILITY

- Works effectively in a climate of uncertainty and changing priorities.
- Demonstrates agility in thoughts and actions.
- Responds productively to feedback, praise, setbacks, and criticism.
- Understands, negotiates, and balances diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions.
- Demonstrates flexibility when engaging in various roles and situations.



CRITICAL THINKING

- Improves the quality of one's own thinking by being inquisitive, curious, and reflective.
- Seeks out information, discerns between sources of varying quality, analyzes both sides of an argument, and proposes solutions.
- Applies disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence.
- Identifies, evaluates, and prioritizes solutions to difficult or complex situations.
- Implements and reflects critically on a solution.



GLOBAL CITIZEN

- Values and embraces diverse cultures and unique perspectives through mutual respect and open dialogue.
- Demonstrates personal, civic, social, local, and global responsibility through ethical and empathetic behaviors, and understands the local and global implications of civic decisions.
- Contributes and takes action to make the world a better place.



EMOTIONAL INTEGRITY

- Demonstrates awareness, sensitivity, concern, and respect to connect with others.
- Exhibits empathy, self-awareness, conflict resolution, confidence and the ability to learn from mistakes.
- Builds positive relationships, works collaboratively and makes decisions based on personal values and goals.
- Acts with empathy and compassion to make positive contributions to the world.



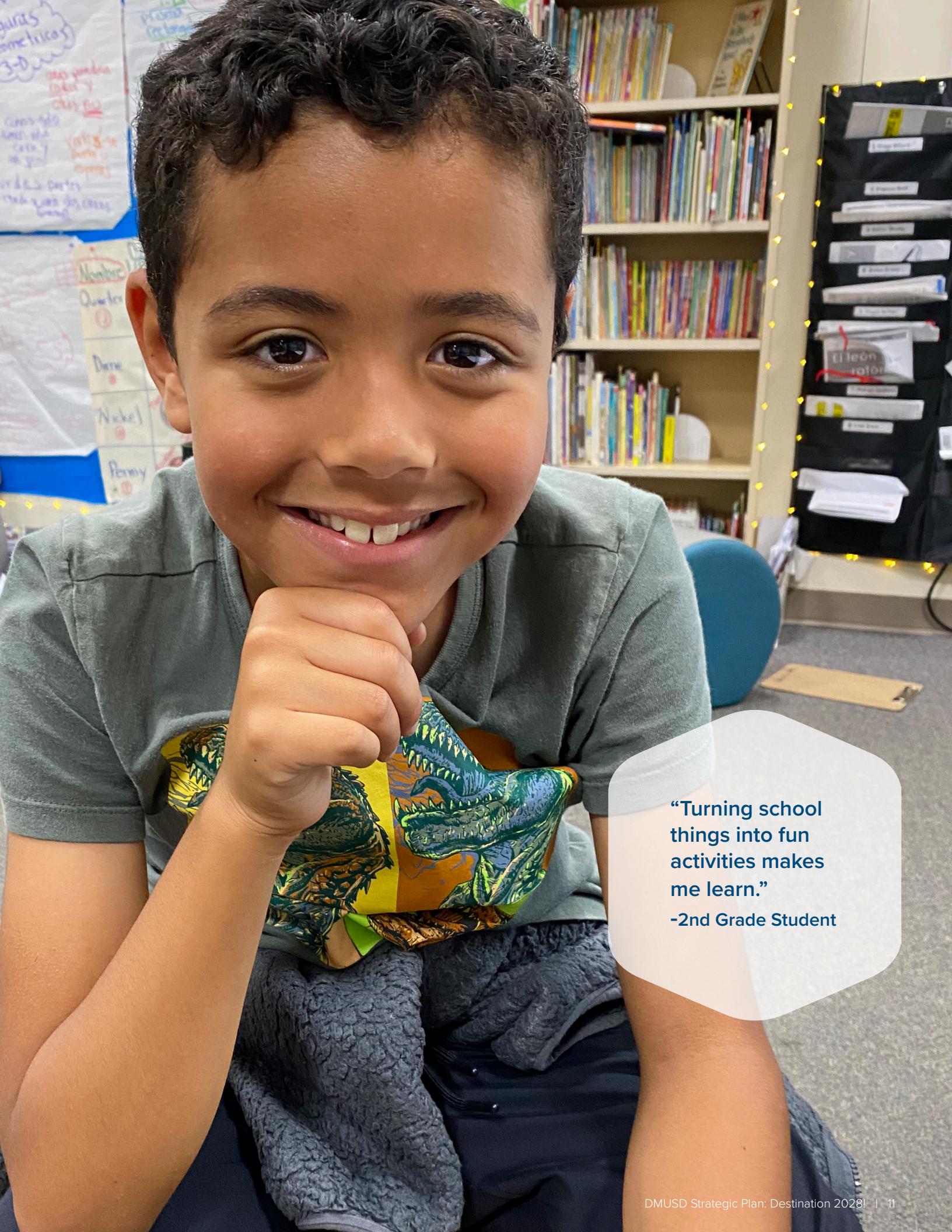
LEARNER'S MINDSET

- Embraces curiosity and eagerly explores the world around them.
- Possesses the desire to learn and confidently perseveres through new and/or challenging learning experiences.
- Finds and maximizes opportunities to actively listen and elicit diverse perspectives from others.
- Develops positive attitudes and beliefs about learning.
- Demonstrates agency and ownership over one's learning.



DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE

- Develops and draws from integrated and connected knowledge across academic disciplines.
- Transfers knowledge in combination with new learning to deepen understanding, influence conclusions, and seek solutions.
- Applies content knowledge in routine and innovative ways in real-world situations.
- Acquires knowledge through the process of thinking deeply by applying internalized structures for organizing thinking.
- Articulates thoughts and ideas effectively for a range of purposes and audiences.



“Turning school things into fun activities makes me learn.”
-2nd Grade Student

Destination 2028!

DMUSD STRATEGIC PLAN

Our work as a District begins with these priority areas:

01. LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Every learner receives equitable access to a strong academic core and high-quality instruction so that students think and learn across disciplines, connect multiple ideas, create new knowledge, and engage in breakthrough thinking.

02. RESPONSIVE AND CARING CULTURE

Individuals are respected and valued for their unique contributions and diverse perspectives. There exists a shared commitment to a culture of excellence grounded in empathy, compassion, and common purpose.

03. STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

Human capital, fiscal resources, and facilities intentionally align in support of the extraordinary school experience.

04. DESIGN INFLUENCE

Rich and meaningful learning occurs at the intersection of purposeful, engaging learning, innovative thinking, and a compelling curriculum. The physical environment across all learning spaces supports rich and meaningful learning by influencing how individuals interact, their behaviors, and their engagement in authentic personal and collective learning.

Learning Experience

Every learner receives equitable access to a strong academic core and high-quality instruction so that students think and learn across disciplines, connect multiple ideas, create new knowledge, and engage in breakthrough thinking.



"I love the community in DMUSD, and I also love the professional learning opportunities that we receive. I truly believe the curriculum and pedagogy that we have in place helps every teacher grow and each child reach or exceed their potential."

- DMUSD Teacher



Five-Year Objective 1.1

Students' academic growth and proficiency will be impacted by a strong academic core that serves as the foundation on which the school experience develops.

Five-Year Objective 1.2

Students develop essential skills and competencies as a result of teacher actions based on instructional practices grounded in research. Students know how to carry out the thinking skills required when they initiate learning in response to inquiry, engage in meaningful tasks, and solve problems.

Five-Year Objective 1.3

Students think critically and apply learning to relevant real-world contexts. Students' curiosity and creativity are promoted as they seek out problems and formulate innovative solutions. Students generate questions, exhibit flexibility in thinking, and are excited by challenges.

Five-Year Objective 1.4

Students demonstrate academic success through personal, authentic learning tasks which value unique, individual learning styles. Students play an active role in the assessment of their progress throughout the process of learning. Reporting of student progress is aligned to current pedagogical practice personalized to each student.

Five-Year Objective 1.5

Students are exposed to a variety of technology and are agile in their creation and use of technology. Students' use of technology is directly linked to their passions and deep understanding of the global impact.

Responsive and Caring Culture

Individuals are respected and valued for their unique contributions and diverse perspectives. There exists a shared commitment to a culture of excellence grounded in empathy, compassion, and common purpose.



“Our district is so progressive in making sure everyone is included. Every student voice has a place in our classrooms. Our district is empowering our students to use their voice and engage in thinking and deep conversations with each other. Our students are going to be the future leaders because of what we are doing.”

- DMUSD Teacher



Five-Year Objective 2.1

The school community demonstrates a shared purpose and commitment to a safe and healthy environment rooted in shared accountability where each individual is valued, supported, and personally invested.

Five-Year Objective 2.2

Students and staff demonstrate compassion and empathy as part of a school community that embraces diversity and promotes meaningful relationships.

Five-Year Objective 2.3

Students' personal genius and unique talents are cultivated through an equitable learning experience that provides a sense of belonging and purpose, propelling individuals to thrive in a diverse society.

Five-Year Objective 2.4

Students and staff apply their understanding of different cultures to effectively communicate, collaborate, and interact with empathy.

Five-Year Objective 2.5

Students understand that their engagement with content via social media has positive and negative impacts, and they make informed decisions about content creation and consumption. Students accept responsibility for creating digital content that has a positive impact on humanity and society at large. Be nice.

Stewardship of Resources

Human capital, fiscal resources, and facilities intentionally align in support of the extraordinary school experience.



"I love how the learning environment is fun and encouraging. I love school!"

- 6th Grade Student



Five-Year Objective 3.1

Leverage strategic partnerships and professional affiliations, both locally and globally, to expand our thinking and apply best practices to the education setting.

Five-Year Objective 3.2

Manage and align district resources to strategic plan priorities and initiatives in order to maintain and strengthen district programs and practices.

Five-Year Objective 3.3

Engage in proactive, fiscally responsible multi-year planning in order to maintain a prudent budget and strong reserve. Advocate on a state level for adequate funding that impacts unfunded and underfunded programs, including dependable ongoing state facilities funding, funding for Transitional Kindergarten, special education funding, etc.

Five-Year Objective 3.4

Maximize the impact of Measure MM Bond funds at all District schools to address facilities' needs, community priorities, and student learning.

Five-Year Objective 3.5

Invest in the staff members' skills and expertise that impact the student experience and give the district its distinct character.

Design Influence

Rich and meaningful learning occurs at the intersection of purposeful, engaging learning, innovative thinking, and a compelling curriculum. The physical environment across all learning spaces supports rich and meaningful learning by influencing how individuals interact, their behaviors, and their engagement in authentic personal and collective learning.



“Having a mindset that students are capable of managing their own learning has created opportunities for students to use open, collaborative spaces to build critical thinking skills, creative confidence, and effectively communicate their ideas with others. Watching students collaborate in dynamic, flexible environments has been inspiring.”

- DMUSD Teacher



04.
DESIGN
INFLUENCE

Five-Year Objective 4.1

Students have choice and/or input about their learning environment, subject matter, learning approach, learning pace, and how they demonstrate understanding. Students' experiences build upon their passions, interests, and strengths.

Five-Year Objective 4.2

Students use open, indoor and outdoor collaborative spaces, and have access to educators who share the collective responsibility for student success. Students engage in purposeful learning matched to their learning styles and/or tasks.

Five-Year Objective 4.3

Learning environments are inclusive, relevant, responsive, and ever-changing in support of the unique interests, passions, and needs of each individual student. They inspire creativity and drive innovation.

Five-Year Objective 4.4

School facilities support student-centered learning, teacher collaboration, a positive climate, technology integration, flexible scheduling, and connection to the environment, community, and global network.

Five-Year Objective 4.5

Facilities support environmental sustainability and healthy learning practices: exposure to natural light, learning indoors and outdoors, access to fresh air, and spaces for physical and emotional regulation.



**“School is a watering
hole of friends!”**

- 5th Grade Student



Thank you

We are grateful to the students, teachers, staff, parents, and community members who collaborated with us to develop our Portrait of a Learner and Strategic Plan. Hundreds of people throughout our school community have helped shape this strategic plan by participating in Focus Groups, Portrait Design Team Meetings, Strategic Plan Design Team Meetings, and Surveys.



In order to ensure the DMUSD Strategic Plan is as clear as possible to anyone who accesses it, we offer this glossary of terms for reference.

Co-teaching: An instructional model that takes place in the classroom setting in which two teachers provide purposeful, collaborative instruction in order to provide differentiated learning opportunities for students, including, but not limited to, students with an Individualized Education Plan.

Conceptually-Based Mathematics: Mathematics instruction that is centered around developing a student's conceptual understanding of mathematics. Key components of instruction include, but are not limited to, frequent problem solving, an emphasis on student-developed strategies, mathematical discourse and questioning.

Cultures of Thinking: A learning environment where students are developing as thinkers and learners around dispositions such as reasoning with evidence, connection making, and perspective taking in which both individual and collective thinking is valued.

Design Thinking: A set of skills that prepares students to solve large, complex, cross-curricular, real-world problems by teaching them effective ways of learning and collaborating. It uses a process made up of discrete stages for creating innovative solutions. Students develop skills to solve problems confidently and creatively. Design Thinking draws upon logic, imagination, intuition, and systemic reasoning, to explore possibilities of what could be - and to create desired outcomes that benefit the end user (the customer).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The goal of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is to ensure every child receives equitable access to a quality education in order to develop their full academic potential and prepare children and adults to thrive in a diverse society.

English Learners: Students who are acquiring English as a second language.

Essential Elements of Instruction (EEI): Research-based teaching practices that offer a means of understanding how children learn and serve as a basis for making intentional teaching decisions before, during, and after instruction for students that positively impact student learning.

Facilities Master Plan: A long-range facilities plan that is developed to identify facilities projects and funding sources in order to plan for districtwide facilities needs.

High Quality Instruction: Research-based instructional elements that connect teacher actions with student performance.

LCAP: The Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) is an important component of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Under the LCFF all districts are required to prepare an LCAP, which describes how they intend to meet annual goals for all pupils, with specific activities to address state and local priorities identified pursuant to EC Section 52060(d). The LCAP is a three-year plan which is updated annually with extensive educational partner input.

Measure MM: The DMUSD Governing Board of Trustees voted unanimously to place a general obligation bond measure on the November 6, 2018 ballot, which was passed by the community. Measure MM generates up to \$186 million for construction, reconstruction, and modernization of DMUSD school facilities at all school sites.

Multi-tiered System of Support: The Multi-tiered System of Support framework is systemic, continuous, and predicated on high-quality first instruction, data-based decision making, evidence-based interventions, and assessment practices that are applied across all levels of the system to align resources and the supports necessary for each student's academic, behavioral, and social success.

No Place for Hate: "No Place for Hate® is an organizing framework and Anti-Defamation League partnership program for K-12 schools. The program is a holistic, school-wide approach to improving school climate that amplifies students' voices in creating the school they want and leverages the wisdom of teachers, administrators, and family members to achieve their school climate goals." <https://sandiego.adl.org/no-place-for-hate/>

Pedagogical Practice: The theory and practice of teaching pedagogy refer to the methodology and process of how educators approach teaching and learning using a specific curriculum with specific goals in mind.

Personalized Learning: Pedagogy, curriculum, and learning environments that meet an individual student's needs. The learning experience is tailored to learning preferences and the specific interests of specific learners.

Second Step Curriculum: "Second Step is a research-based social-emotional learning (SEL) program designed to improve students' social-emotional skills, such as emotion management, impulse control, problem-solving, and empathy." <https://www.secondstep.org/social-emotional-learning>

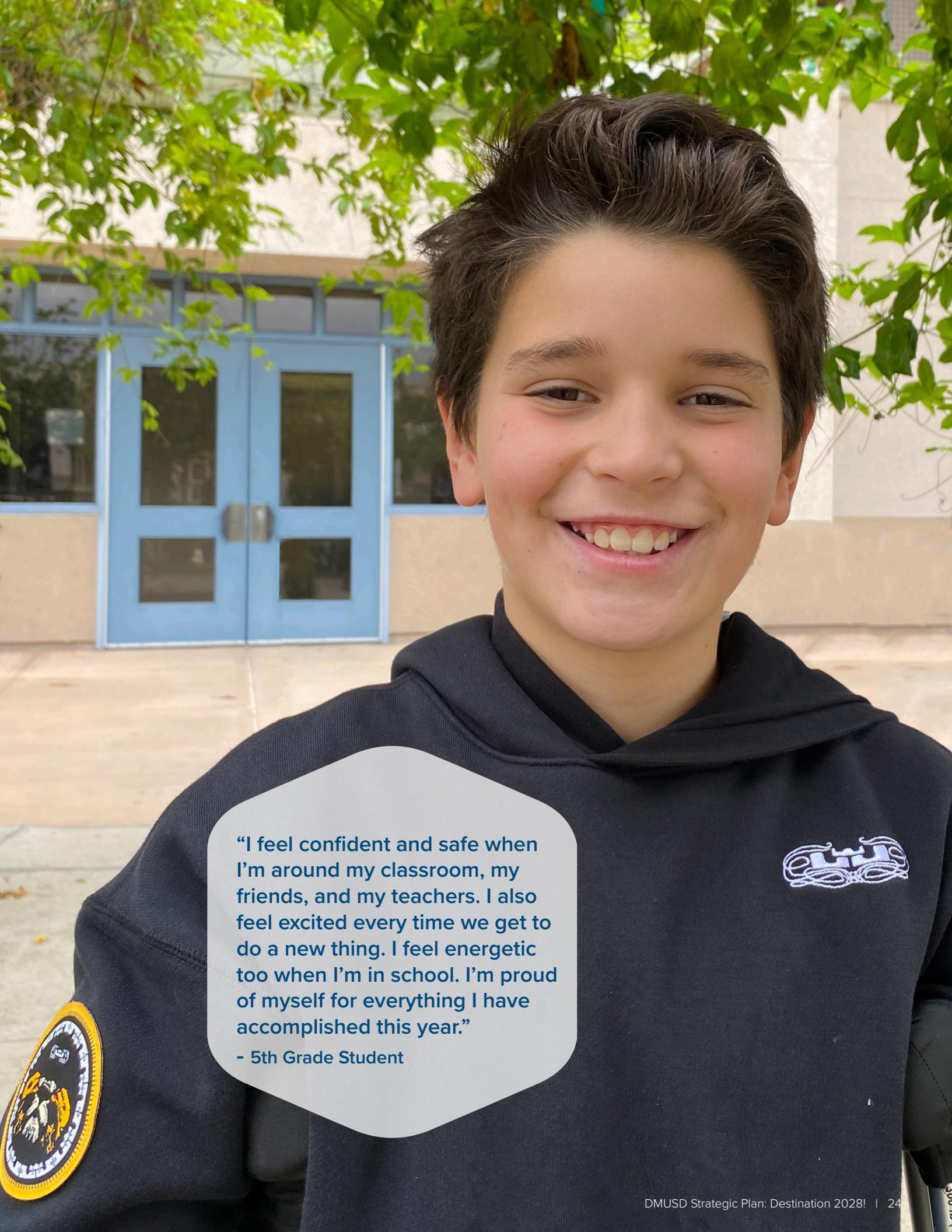
STEAM+: The DMUSD STEAM+ program provides robust and engaging instruction for students in the arts, science, physical education, and interdisciplinary learning. STEAM+ credentialed specialists facilitate rich, authentic learning experiences that prepare students for a future where they will think, innovate, and create.

Strong Academic Core: The foundation on which the school experience develops. It grounds the work and ensures students develop essential skills and competencies.

Student Agency: The capacity and propensity to take purposeful initiative. Students with agency do not respond passively to their circumstances; they seek meaning and act with purpose to achieve the conditions they desire in their own and others' lives. Student choice and ownership of learning are manifested in the learning environment, subject matter, learning approach, and/or pace. Students use mistakes and setbacks as opportunities to grow. Research-based approaches connect teacher actions with student performance.

Success Criteria: Description of student learning that clearly explains what students need to do, say or make in order to show mastery of a goal.

Tier One Academic Learning: Tier 1 Academic Learning is what "ALL" students get in the form of differentiated instruction for both academic and social-emotional learning. Tier 1 focuses on providing high-quality instruction that is aligned to California standards. Instruction is purposefully designed to ensure all students have meaningful learning opportunities where they develop critical thinking skills as they meet or exceed grade level expectations. Tier 1 instruction and support is differentiated based on the needs of students. Where appropriate, students receive extension opportunities, scaffolded support, and/or reteaching based on ongoing assessment.



"I feel confident and safe when I'm around my classroom, my friends, and my teachers. I also feel excited every time we get to do a new thing. I feel energetic too when I'm in school. I'm proud of myself for everything I have accomplished this year."

- 5th Grade Student





“Focusing on
every student,
every day”