



*A Listening Report & Path Forward*

# INSIDE THIS REPORT

Page 1

## INTRODUCTION

*Superintendent's  
Message*

Page 2

## ENGAGEMENT

*by the Numbers*

Page 3

## SHINE

*What We Must  
Celebrate & Protect*

Page 4

## SHIFT

*Where We  
Can Grow*

Page 5

## DREAM

*The Future We  
Imagine Together*

Page 6

## MOMENTUM

*From Listening  
to Action*



This past fall, we invited our students, families, staff, and community members to share what *shines* in DMUSD, what needs *shifting*, and what you *dream* for the future of our district.

More than 1000 voices responded through surveys and listening sessions across all nine schools. Students, educators, families, and community members took the time to reflect thoughtfully and honestly. Every comment was read. Every perspective mattered.

We listened. We learned. And we are ready to lead forward together.

The Shine • Shift • Dream engagement process was designed to celebrate what makes DMUSD extraordinary while also creating space for growth and imagination. We asked three simple but powerful questions: *What is going well that we should celebrate and protect? What would you like to see improved or done differently? and What exciting possibilities do you imagine for our future?*

The responses affirmed so much of what makes our district strong. At the same time, you challenged us to improve and continue evolving. Most importantly, you shared bold dreams for our district.

As shared during our December 2025 Board of Trustees meeting, this publication reflects what we heard at a high level and outlines how your feedback will shape our next steps. Listening is not a single event, it is an ongoing practice. We are committed to continuing this conversation as we move from insight to action.

Thank you for being engaged partners in the future of Del Mar Union School District. Together, we will continue building schools that shine, grow, and dream boldly for every student.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marisa Janicek". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the "With gratitude," text.

Marisa Janicek  
Superintendent, Del Mar Union School District

# Engagement

*by the Numbers*



**30**

**LISTENING IN-PERSON  
SESSIONS WITH  
STUDENTS, STAFF &  
COMMUNITY**

*Ensuring voice at  
every school.*



**826**

**ONLINE SURVEY  
RESPONSES**

*Submitted by students,  
families, and staff.*



*more than  
1 in 5*

**FAMILIES ENGAGED**

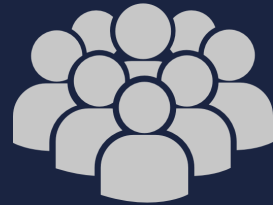
*Family participation was  
in person and online.*



**74%**

**STUDENT  
PARTICIPATION**

*A strong majority of our  
3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade students  
shared their voice in the  
online survey.*



**100%**

**SCHOOL  
REPRESENTATION**

*Every school community  
was represented by  
student, staff, and  
family voice.*



## *What We Must Celebrate & Protect*



We heard again and again how much you value DMUSD's **exceptional educators, caring school communities,** and **high-quality programs and facilities** that support students both academically and socially. That affirmation reflects who we are and what we prioritize every day. We are committed to designing rich, meaningful learning experiences that engage students deeply and nurture both curiosity and character.

We invest intentionally in the expertise of our instructional staff and take great pride in their skill, professionalism, and dedication to continually elevating the school experience for today's learners. STEAM+ was consistently identified in surveys and focus groups as a standout program, and DMUSD remains committed to staffing STEAM+ with credentialed specialists who bring expertise and a strong commitment to student learning while filling their learning studios with joy and curiosity.



We also prioritize the environments where learning takes place. Thoughtfully designed physical spaces across our campuses support collaboration, creativity, and inquiry. As a District, we remain at the forefront of creating exceptional learning environments, transforming classrooms and shared spaces to reflect the importance of process, exploration, and student-centered learning.



### **EXTRAORDINARY EVERY DAY**

*Scan the QR code to hear students across DMUSD share their perspective.*



*Where We Can Grow*

You also challenged us to examine and prioritize areas where we can better meet the needs of every learner. While some feedback was difficult to hear, it was valuable and necessary. Your comments were carefully reviewed and deeply valued. Several key themes emerged, including the need to **strengthen communication, enhance supports for students**, particularly English language learners, to **continue improving aspects of the lunch program**, and **embrace emerging technologies** in meaningful ways.

When you asked us to strengthen communication and continue building a connected community grounded in trust and transparency, we took that to heart. We reevaluated our engagement strategies and expanded our communication plan to increase access, and ensure clearer, more consistent outreach. As part of this effort, we launched a Budget Roadshow to create open dialogue with our community, providing opportunities to ask questions, share perspectives, and better understand the district's financial priorities.

We agree that strengthening student supports is essential, and we have implemented a special

education parent liaison committee, increased staffing for special education and intervention, and expanded the parent/guardian learning opportunities to better serve both students and families.

While meals are prepared fresh each day by our Child Nutrition Services (CNS) team, San Diego Health Department regulations require that certain standards be met, including packaging items such as apples and pears due to the lack of kitchen facilities at our school sites. Within these parameters, we will continue exploring additional options to reduce waste and enhance meal offerings. The district also regularly gathers feedback on school meals, and CNS taste testing will be added to the new Superintendent's Student Advisory Council meetings.

With a new Board Policy on Artificial Intelligence, we formed a committee of educators, and held student, staff and parent roundtables to create additional guidance and guardrails that describe best practices in a safe digital environment with district approved tools. In the coming school year, we will build on using emerging technologies as we fully implement Magic School for AI which provides support, sparks creativity, and improves student learning outcomes. This will help ensure our students are prepared for a rapidly evolving world, while protecting what matters most: student agency, critical thinking, creativity and human connection.

As the world continues to change, we appreciate your support as we remain forward-thinking. Our schools focus on learning rooted in deep thinking and conceptual understanding, grounded in our Portrait of a Learner. Students engage in complex tasks, develop transferable social skills, and learn to innovate and adapt. Technology is embraced as a powerful tool, but human connection, critical thinking, and collaboration remain at the heart of the DMUSD experience.





## *The Future We Imagine Together*

We were inspired by your **bold and imaginative dreams** for our schools. While state mandates and financial constraints limit some possibilities, we deeply value the creativity and care behind each idea.

You shared dreams of waste-free lunches and expanded STEAM+ opportunities which include dance, theatre, and orchestra. Students imagined field trips to Disneyland and even hosting the symphony on campus. We also heard over and over of an interest in expanded language offerings, such as French, German, and Mandarin. We will continue to evaluate our district priorities and shift where we are able to , in partnership with our community.

Some dreams are already becoming reality. We have prioritized and included funding for additional shade, more supports for our special education program, and measures to maintain the academic excellence that DMUSD is known for in our budget planning. Even when we cannot implement every idea immediately, your vision helps guide our long-term planning, , and we look forward to continuing this work together as we shape what is **possible for our students**.



# Momentum

*From Listening to Action*

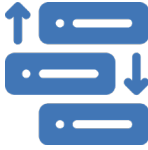


## LISTEN & CONFIRM

*We believe that every voice matters, and actively listen to our community and verify the needs behind the feedback to ensure we fully understand both the opportunities and the challenges before moving forward.*

## SEQUENCE & PRIORITIZE

*We thoughtfully map out next steps, aligning them to district goals, and integrate priorities into our planning and budget to ensure responsible and sustainable action.*



## IMPLEMENT & MONITOR

*We strategically put plans into motion with clear timelines and accountability, regularly reviewing and revising the progress to ensure we are achieving meaningful results.*

## SHARE & CELEBRATE

*We transparently report at Board meetings, highlight milestones such as ribbon cuttings, and share progress through our Extraordinary Every Day stories, and district and school communications.*



## REPEAT

*We intentionally continue the conversation with our community, reflecting, refining, and responding as needs evolve, because listening is not a single event.*

The people are the brightest aspect of DMUSD! It's a community of people working together to provide the best for our students. • One of the brightest aspects of DMUSD right now is the incredible dedication and expertise of our staff. Our teachers, specialists, and support teams consistently go above and beyond to meet students where they are and help them thrive. • I'm proud to be part of a district that values innovation, collaboration, and the whole child. From our engaging programs to our supportive community partnerships, DMUSD continues to lead with heart. • A sense of connection and community that makes me truly proud to be part of the DMUSD family. • We are student-centered and will move mountains for our students. • I like that you can bring your parents for events. It is very fun connecting with my mom during lunch. • If we can create a district where teachers are supported and students' needs are at the center, DMUSD will continue to be a place we are proud to be part of. • My greatest hope is that DMUSD will truly value creating an extraordinary school experience for ALL students. • I am proud to have such good teachers that care about how we learn and grow. • I love my friendships with my friends because they are kind, caring, and supportive. • I like the STEAM+ program especially technology, robotics, and Innovation Technology. • I learn a lot in art, music, science, and PE. I tell my parents about my achievements in STEAM+. • I like the leadership opportunities for kids. I like being involved and you feel like you are contributing. • I like the teachers because they are all kind and help me learn in different ways. • STEAM is shining the brightest — we get to do fun projects and learn in cool ways • Everyone here is kind and welcoming, and it makes me proud to be part of this school. • It would be great to have more clubs or learn more languages like French or German. • I wish we could have more clubs and activities that match our interests. • I dream of a school with better playgrounds, comfy places to sit, and more space to learn. • I hope we can have more chances to work together and continue being kind to each other. • We have highly-trained, dedicated, professional teachers who provide cutting-edge student-centered instruction. • Eliminate half days. • Clear pathways for majorly disruptive behaviors districtwide protecting other students and teachers. • Focus on Special Ed and the needs of those students as well as the teams that support them. • Strong connection between schools and families, great school teachers and staffs, inclusive and good cultures. • Strong STEAM+ programs, amazing staff members and Special Ed support for students, very supportive parents/PTA, teacher professional learning opportunities, beautiful campuses, great communication from district office. High academic expectations and exposure to high level content. • The teachers, program structure, they are open to explore other cultures, the classrooms... all shine. • School lunch quality has declined over the years. • Kitchens in our school sites so we can have more options of fresh food versus packaged food that travels well. • Limit screen time on ipads and computers, more face to face learning and interaction. • I would like the school library to let you pick whichever book you want no matter if it's fiction or non-fiction. • Overall transparency - better communication, open communication, fiscal transparency. • Special Education Support and Behavior Support. We need to refocus our thinking and strategies for more support for teachers and staff around the high need for behavioral support. • Prioritize spending for programs and staffing that directly benefit students. Increasing staffing at school sites-specifically full-time counselors, full-time STEAM+ teachers, and special education support providers-will significantly benefit students. • The students make everyone feel welcome and that they matter. Teachers do too, but we are lucky because it's both. • Leadership opportunities for kids - I like being involved and you feel like you are contributing. • I like the Learning Commons. • I love that the lunches have a variety of delicious options. • I like the atmosphere of the learning because I feel engaged and I like playing with my friends on the playground. • Hands-on activities are fun.