

Cal

Communicator

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Preserving Tradition, Pursuing Excellence

Fall 2019



Communications

from Superintendent Dr. Dedrick Martin



Dear Caledonia School Community,

According to the Greek Philosopher Heraclitus, “change is the only constant in life.” This is especially true in education, and particularly this fall in Caledonia Community Schools (CCS). As we proactively embrace our new strategic vision of “Cultivating Agile Learners” who are prepared for the future, we have already started with several changes throughout our district to meet the needs of our students and the larger school community. Through multiple community forums involving over 200 parents, students and staff members as well as nearly 1600 survey responses, we were able to take a critical examination of where we are as a school system. Most importantly, we have used this critical reflection as a guide in the development of our new strategic plan and have taken action to prioritize and focus our work, our resources and our efforts towards maintaining or improving the high-quality learning environment that all CCS students and staff deserve.

Thanks to the critical self-reflection of the strategic planning process, we identified and took action in several areas within the CCS system by reinvesting some human and fiscal resources. I would like to take a brief moment to point out a few items, in the table on page 3, where we have already taken action on, as well as some changes yet to be made, for the 2019-20 academic year and beyond.

While items listed do not reflect every way that we have begun a broad-based and comprehensive reinvestment in our school system, I hope that it does provide a glimpse of the scope and seriousness of our commitment to ensure that we provide a safe, well balanced, and high-quality learning experience for all students. Furthermore, we will continue to provide periodic updates over the years of our progress on various initiatives related to our new strategic plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Dedrick Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Superintendent

Preserving Tradition ~ Pursuing Excellence



Strategic Focus Areas Investments

Teaching & Learning

- Addition of secondary music teacher and funding allotted for purchase of new HS band uniforms.
- Additional Sp. Ed. teacher for upper elementary CI program at DE and increase in Sp. Ed. teacher support at DLMS.
- Additional funding for upcoming purchase of new Math curriculum.
- Additional Middle School ELA curriculum adoption as well as related Professional Development for staff.
- Additional ELA Instructional Coach.
- Increased funding to support necessary technology replacements for students and staff.
- Increased building level discretionary instructional supply budget.
- Added new Pre-K classroom at Duncan Lake ECC.
- Purchase and implementation of STEM curriculum at Middle Schools.

Whole Child/Community

- Funding to support part-time Dean of Students to help with safety and student activity needs at each middle school.
- Increased funding for Student Support staffing and coordination of Social Emotional Learning needs in all buildings.
- Additional funding to upgrade girls varsity softball field (renovation costs exceeded remaining Bond funds).
- Additional security cameras in and around multiple facilities.
- Addition of locking entry vestibules, cameras and intercoms in all elementary buildings for safety.
- Replace inoperable PA systems in multiple buildings.
- Replace fire panel system for DLMS.
- Upgrade sound system for football stadium.
- Replaced stage curtain and LED stage lights at DLMS PAC.
- Resurfaced DLMS Student/Community Tennis Courts.

Fiscal Sustainability

- Increased athletic funding to reduce pay to participate fees for all students by \$25 and help better support club sports.
- Increased funding to support additional strength and conditioning support for student athletes.
- Increased funding to support necessary replacement cycle for student transportation (buses).
- Increased funding for grounds maintenance support.

Organizational Coherence

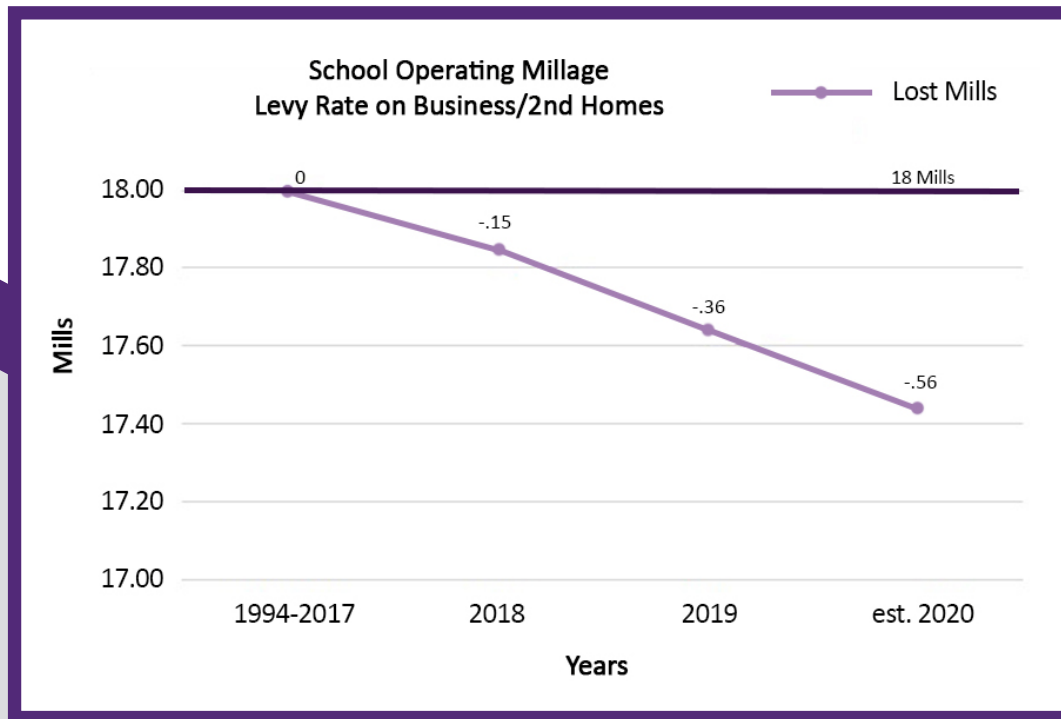
- Increased funding for added student service secretarial support at HS.
- Provided funding to purchase and transition to new software management system (Power School).
- Provided funding for new transportation software system and fuel management system.
- Added part time assistant to support over 1600+ shared time students in area private schools.
- Replaced/updated all card access at school security points.

Operating Millage

Last fall, our district was unsuccessful with a request to restore the operating millage back to the levy amount that has been in place since 1994. On November 5th, voters in the Caledonia Community School district will again see the non-homestead Operating Millage restoration proposal on the ballot. So you may be asking some reasonable questions such as what is an operating millage? Why is this millage so important to schools and how will it impact me?

Simply put, an operating millage is a local tax collection of \$1 for every \$1,000 of property value for non-primary property (i.e. this does not apply to the house that you live in or farmland) to support school operations. The millage rate of 18-mills was established by the state as the highest amount of taxes that can be collected on non-principal residence by schools. See chart below.

Why is an operating millage so important to schools, and how will it impact me?

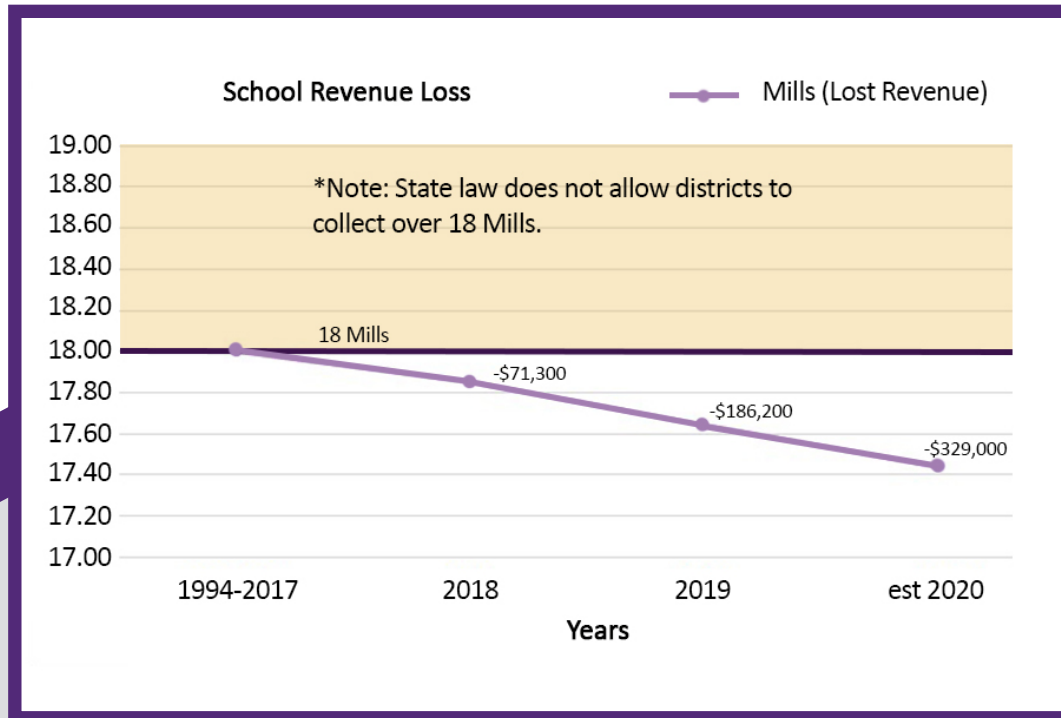


As you can see from the chart above, the operating millage started decreasing from the state limit of 18-mills in the year 2018 and is projected for a continual decline in the near future. With each year of decline, our district will receive less money even though our expenses of supporting academic programs, staffing, athletics, arts and other areas continue to grow. This operating millage accounts for nearly 17% of the total funds available to run our school district.

Things You Should Know

So what does that mean for Caledonia Schools? The chart below provides a graphic of how much funding is lost in real dollars as the operation millage rate decreases.

What does this mean for Caledonia Schools?



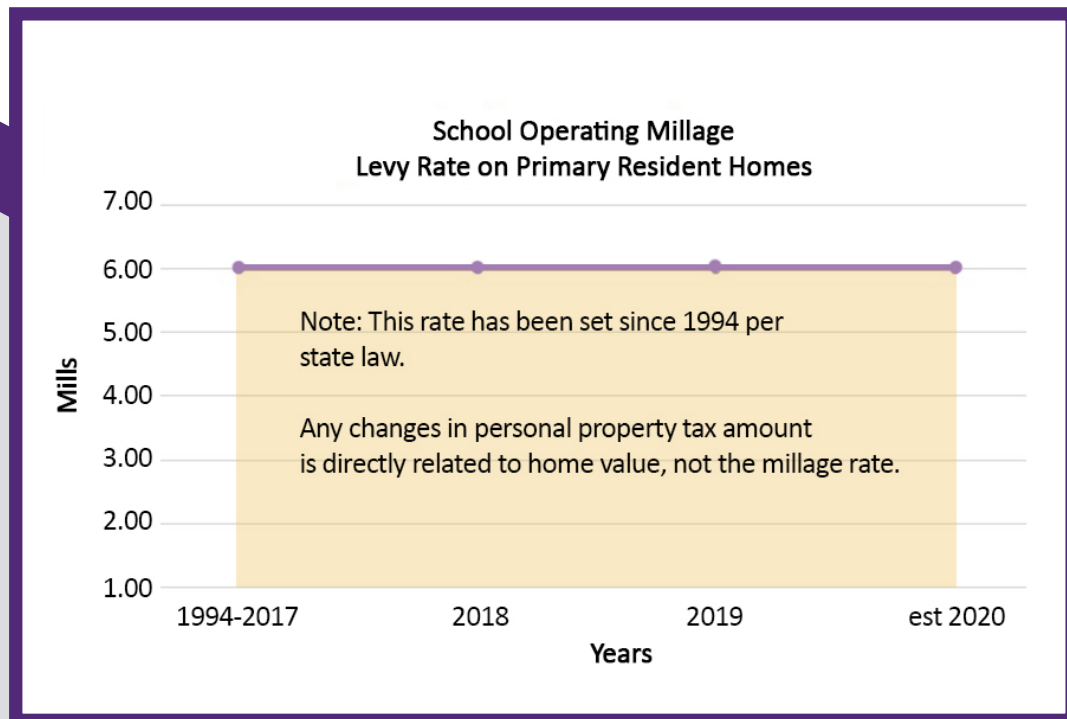
The chart above shows the lost dollar amounts that our district did not receive last year (\$71,000). Since the operating millage vote failed last November and the millage rate decreased again, our school funding will be \$186,000 less this year. If our community continues to grow as expected, it means that the millage rate will likely decrease again and our revenue to run schools could decrease to an annual loss of \$329K in the following school year.



Operating Millage

What does this mean for my home?

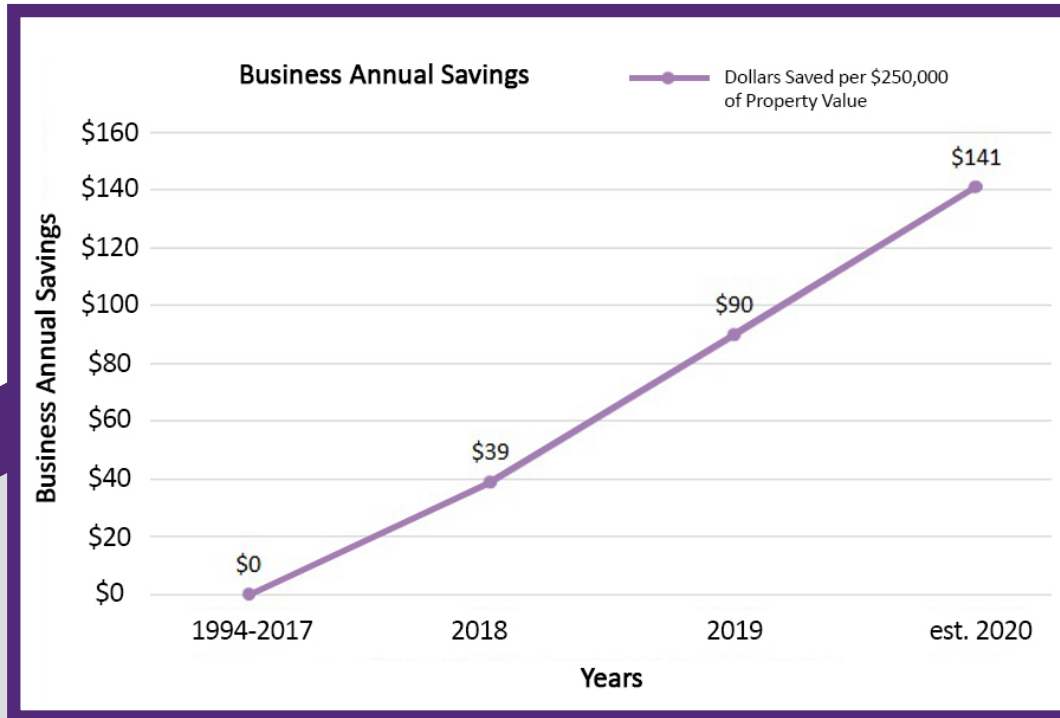
The Operating Millage Proposal on the upcoming November 5th ballot does not apply to the home that you live in (principal residence) or agricultural land. In fact, according to state law, school based property tax levies for your personal residence is an entirely different system and the rate has been capped at 6-mills since 1994. See chart below.



As you can see from the chart above, the tax rate of your home (6-mills) stays the same regardless of the ballot outcome. Think of this levy on your home in the same way as sales tax. If your home value decreases or increases, the amount you pay in taxes will decrease or increase accordingly (i.e. sales tax is 6% - if you buy a \$10 item you will pay \$.06, if you buy a \$100 item you will pay \$6 but the rate stays the same.)

Things You Should Know Continued

Given that the Operating Millage is a millage levied on non-principal residence, it will have a direct impact on business and vacation homes. See the chart below.



The chart above reflects the millage savings for business per \$250K in property tax value. In short, as the millage rate falls below the 18-mills that has been in place from 1994-2017, the more annual savings for businesses within the school district boundaries.

In summary, the request on the November ballot is simple. Our school community is growing; to accommodate this growth our schools seek to restore the millage rate at the same levels that we have utilized to support school operations for 24 years. You can see from the second chart, a continued decline in operating revenue will require our district to make some dramatic downward shifts in the near future that will impact everything from academics, staffing and operations.

Thanks again for your continued support of Caledonia Community Schools!

Operating Millage

Frequently Asked Questions

Before you head to the polls this November, we want to take this opportunity to make sure that you are informed on several key facts around the non-homestead Operating Millage.

1. What will the ballot language look like?

A sample of the Operating Millage Proposal wording for the November 5th ballot:

This proposal will allow the school district to levy the statutory rate of not to exceed 18 mills on all property, except principal residence and other property exempted by law, required for the school district to receive its revenue per pupil foundation allowance.

Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property, except principal residence and other property exempted by law, in Caledonia Community Schools, Kent, Allegan and Barry Counties, Michigan, be increased by 1.8 mills (\$1.80 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for the year 2020, to provide funds for operating purposes: the estimate of the revenue the school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2020 is approximately \$329,000 (this millage is to restore millage lost as a result of the reduction required by the Michigan Constitution of 1963 and will be levied only to the extent necessary to restore that reduction)? Yes or No



2. Does this Operating Millage apply to my home?

The non-homestead millage refers to the 18-mills that our schools levy on businesses and vacation homes. It does not apply to the home that you live in.

3. I pay property taxes to support the schools, how can you say that this millage will not increase my property taxes?

The state has established 6-mills as the millage rate on your personal home. This 6-mill rate has been in place since 1994 and will not be changed by the vote outcome. The 6-mills on property tax act the same as a sales tax. As your home increases or decreases in value, the amount you pay in taxes will increase or decrease accordingly but the rate stays the same for all homeowners on their primary residence.

4. Will my rent go up?

Rental property is considered as business property, not principal residence. As such, if the millage rate returns to 18-mills as in past years, this will increase the amount of property taxes paid when comparing to last year and this year. The decision to raise or lower rents based on a millage, or any other reason, is a personal decision for the property owner.

5. Will the state make up the difference in funding if the millage fails?

NO! The state will not make up for the shortfall of local tax collections.

School funding for Michigan is made up of three primary sources. The largest source of funding (approximately 72%) comes directly from the state of Michigan. **Our ability to levy and collect local taxes makes up the second largest source of school funding (approximately 17% or \$9+ million).** If our millage rate continues to roll backwards it will have a direct impact on staffing, academic and athletic programming in the near future. That will not be the responsibility of the state but our local responsibility.

6. Since our district is growing, don't we get more funding from the state and won't this offset the loss of operating millage funding?

It's true that our district will receive more funding when we receive more students. We are funded on a per-student count. What is also true is that with more students comes more expenses. The more we grow, the more we need to add teachers, support staff, purchase more instructional materials, more transportation costs, etc. In the recently released School Finance Research Collaborative study conducted by some leading experts around the country, it was determined that Michigan schools are particularly challenged as it relates to funding schools regardless of school size. So while adding more students will provide more funding, it can be argued that the amount per student is already not sufficient and more students alone will not solve the challenge of shrinking local revenue.

7. Is this a new tax?

No, this is not a new tax. Caledonia Community Schools has counted on and levied 18-mills ever since early 1994 until the first Headlee rollback in 2018. **In fact, in 2015 the voters of Caledonia Community Schools passed a 5-year Operating Millage with the expressed purpose to levy 18-mills from the years of 2015–2020.** However, due to a little known law passed back in the 1970's known as the "Headlee Rollback" amendment, the voters' intentions to continue with the levying of 18-mills on Non-Homestead property until 2020 has not been realized. Unfortunately, no one was able to predict that this 1970's law would eat away at the spirit and intent of the Caledonia voters in 2015.

8. If you can only collect 18-mills, why are you asking for a 1.8 mill increase? Wouldn't this result in more than 18-mills?

If the Operating Millage passes in November, this will raise the millage number above 18-mills but the schools are limited by law to only collect 18-mills. By raising the millage above 18-mills, it will provide a buffer for future millage reductions from the Headlee Rollback law from the 1970's. This buffer will allow the district to collect the full 18-mills as the voters intended in 2015.



BOND UPDATE

We are happy to report that all of the projects from the 2014 bond are finally ending! The projects completed over the summer were the pavement of the Kraft Meadows parking lot, HVAC controls and the fire panel replacement at DLMS. The completion of the high school track and varsity softball field will occur in September and October respectively. Once again, we want to thank the community for your support and patience over the past five years of this work.

2014 Bond Completed Projects

Beginning Balance \$41,134,586

Updated August 22, 2019

High School (Existing) \$738,073

- Furniture (entry offices)
- Safe and secure entry
- Repave bus exit
- Widen entry off Kraft at EL drive
- Replace some music equipment
- Tennis court resurfacing

Duncan Lake \$1,648,260

- MS Safe & Secure entry
- ECC Safe & Secure entry
- Fire alarm panel and pull stations
- Repave staff parking (East side)
- Unit Ventilators
- 7th and 8th grade exit doors/frames
- Repair/replace west gym doors
- Internal doors – hardware
- Add cafeteria drinking fountain
- HVAC Controls
- Fire panel system

Kraft Meadows \$1,361,901

- Safe & Secure entry
- Re-commission HVAC
- Replace water softener
- Carpet
- Domestic hot water
- Ceramic tile
- Add cafeteria drinking fountain

Caledonia Elementary \$497,828

- Replace roofing
- Lockers
- Generator connection
- Replace some drivit (resurface)
- Renovate individual bathrooms (10)
- Add cafeteria drinking fountain

Dutton Elementary \$248,210

- Lockers
- Generator connection
- Replace music ventilator and cab heaters
- Replace kitchen drain line to outside
- Replace walk-in cooler (mechanical only)
- Replace bathroom partitions
- Add cafeteria drinking fountain
- Replace cafeteria doors/frame
- Replace entry door hardware
- Replace boiler room door
- Playground

Kettle Lake Elementary \$382,338

- Lockers
- Exit drive from parking to Whitneyville
- Replace clock system with wireless
- Replace boiler room doors
- Add door from kitchen to cafeteria
- Repave west parking
- Classroom furniture 3 rooms
- Replace bathroom partitions in 4 bathrooms
- Add cafeteria drinking fountain
- Blinds in 4 rooms = 24
- Replace sinks counter tops 21 locations
- Replace some EIFS
- Playground

Paris Ridge Elementary \$38,251

- Add sidewalk across front

Emmons Lake Elem. \$286,783

- Safe & secure entry
- Add entry turn-out along drive
- Add cafeteria drinking fountain

Glenmor \$2,380

- Gutters

TMC \$692,562

- Replace driveway
- Replace bus parking

Athletics \$1,682,767

- Upgrade baseball field
- Add drainage to JV baseball outfield
- Varsity baseball press box completion
- HS track (and KMMS paving)
- *Varsity softball renovation

CalPlex \$88,841

- Parking 100 spaces gravel

Energy

- Replace metal halide lights with fluorescent at TMC shops

District \$4,004,647

- Technology upgrades
- Entry Kiosk for all buildings

New 9+ HS Building \$25,195,513

- 600 Student, 120,000 square feet

Fees/Misc Expenses \$4,290,631

*Costs that exceed remaining bond funds paid from Public Improvement Fund

Estimated funds available to complete bond: \$0

CAL Communicator

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The official newsletter of
Caledonia Community Schools

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Contact: zoetm@calschools.org

We would like to thank the many school coordinators, staff personnel and community members for contributions of time and information to this issue.

Your assistance is valued and greatly appreciated.

Community contributions that enhance the learning, safety and enjoyment of all Caledonia students, regardless of age, will be considered for community connections by contacting the editor.

Although not every contribution can be published due to space and time constraints, information and articles will be considered by the Caledonia Community Schools' staff.

Future editions of the CAL Communicator will be available electronically and can be found on our website at www.calschools.org

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The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies:

Superintendent
9753 Duncan Lake Avenue
Caledonia, MI 49316
(616) 891-8185

For questions regarding this publication's distribution, please contact:

zoetm@calschools.org
or the Administration Office at:
(616) 891-8185

The events, information and people included in this newsletter are only a representation of Caledonia Community Schools, and in no way reflect everything taking place at any of the schools/buildings or in the district.

Looking Ahead

According to the Michigan School Data warehouse, enrollment for Caledonia Community Schools (CCS) has grown by over 880 students the past decade! This certainly outpaces the norm for enrollment trends in Michigan schools during this time frame. Without a doubt, this data speaks to the attractiveness of living in a great community with excellent schools. Based on various demographic projection studies over the past few years, we do not expect to see growth at the same rate that we experienced over the past decade. However, if you take a simple drive throughout our 100+ square miles that makes up the CCS school boundary you will notice a number of new housing developments that will continue to spur growth for our school community for the near future.

While it is great to be an attractive and growing school community, growth does come with growing pains and fiscal challenges. With that in mind, our district administrative team has begun to reevaluate our instructional, capital and operational needs for the short and long term by way of a new strategic plan. In order to capture the collective knowledge and wisdom within our community, we have assembled three broad based advisory committees of teachers, parents and community members to help us examine the details of how we can reorganize our existing facilities in order to improve instructional alignment, maximize facility usage and minimize the impact of long-term costs associated with this growth.

During the close of last school year, we held several community dialogues to discuss moving to a K-4 elementary school environment, a 5th and 6th grade campus, and a 7th & 8th grade campus. We strongly believe that reorganizing our schools will be beneficial for instructional alignment and consistency of academic programming. Additionally, reorganization will create more age appropriate clustering for early adolescents. Finally, these moves should create additional seating capacity to accommodate more students without adding a tenth school building and the associated costs.

The first of the three advisory committees is the Instructional Impact Committee. The Instructional Impact Committee will deeply examine instructional issues around reorganization, help with two-way communication to a larger audience and provide recommendations to the administrative team. The second committee is the Operations Logistics Committee. This committee's charge is to examine issues around physical movement of equipment, potential building modifications, staffing assignments, and may other items related to the actual process of the necessary changes. They will also help with two-way communication and provide recommendations to the administrative team. Finally, we have the Community Impact Committee. This committee will examine district's needs related to funding and facilities. They will help to develop and implement a multi-phased approach to deal with upcoming millage and future bond needs. Please be on the lookout for more information over the course of the school year as our committees help our district examine various issues related to reorganization and help us chart a course towards creating an even better school environment.

Cal Communicator

A publication of Caledonia Community Schools

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Dear Caledonia Community Schools,

Football season has begun! With the simple mention of football, many people envision a fun time with friends and family through the great American tradition of "Tailgating" before a football game. I want to encourage everyone to come out and support our student-athletes while remembering that we are here to cheer on and support high school students, not college or professional athletes. In this spirit, and in conjunction with the Kent County Sheriff's Office, I want to remind everyone that under Michigan law, including local ordinances, the consumption or possession of alcohol on school property is prohibited.

Starting this year, you will see more signage around our facilities indicating that our school is a Drug Free, Weapons Free, Alcohol Free, and Tobacco Free zone. Our goal is to create a family-friendly environment that people of all ages can enjoy and to make sure that our spectators arrive and leave as safe as possible. We look forward to seeing you there to support our student-athletes in football and all other sports.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Dedrick Martin".

Dedrick Martin, Ed.D.

**THIS IS A
DRUG FREE
WEAPON FREE
ALCOHOL FREE
TOBACCO FREE
SCHOOL
ZONE**