

The DMES community was thrilled to start the 2023-2024 with a rating of “Good” to underscore the hard work being done by our students, parents, faculty and staff. This was especially exciting given that, over the brief life of our school, we’ve risen from a rating of “Below Average” - just one point above “Unsatisfactory” – to just four points shy of the “Excellent” rating that is our collective target. We are proud of this achievement and what it means for student learning.

As we’ve worked towards this goal, we’ve done so with the understanding that parent support and involvement are critical elements of student success. Thus, the 2023-2024 DMES SIC determined that we would work to recruit more parent volunteers. The first step was connecting with the DMES PTO to assess the need. Thereafter, DMES SIC members sent numerous communications to parents via social media and newsletters. Though we got some response to this, we still needed more. DMES SIC volunteers then attended parent events to advertise volunteer needs, and we got a wonderful response. As a result, we established a new model of recruiting volunteers, focusing on the parents who are already showing up on campus and offering them specific ways to be further connected to school events.

Continuing last year’s DMES SIC initiative, we continued to diversify our use of social media for communication, adding Instagram to the mix. We now regularly communicate with our parents via our website (currently undergoing a major update), Facebook, Instagram, email, text, phone messages, and Smore.

In addition to increasing our number of parent volunteers, DMES continued to enjoy the community partnerships that are so essential to the wellbeing of our community. Among these partnerships are Converse University, Fairview Baptist Church, Furman University Diversity Leadership Initiative, Hand in Hand, ID Clifton Church, Junior League of Spartanburg, JW Woodward Funeral Home, Kids Club, Kiwanis Club of Spartanburg, Mary Black Foundation, Rotary Club of Spartanburg, Spartanburg County Sherriff’s Office, St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, St. Paul United Methodist Church, United Way of the Piedmont, and Wofford College.

We were pleased to celebrate student accomplishments in more ways than ever. We continued our partnership with the Spartanburg Kiwanis Club to host quarterly celebrations during which parents and guardians joined us to recognize Terrific Kids. Additionally, our PE coaches began monthly recognitions of PE Students of the Month, and our Orchestra teacher did the same with Orchestra Student of the Month. We were so excited to have a DMES 3rd grader tie for tenth place in the Regional Spelling Bee and have a DMES 4th grader selected for the prestigious SC State Honors Choir. Additionally, the DMES Robotics Team again competed in a FIRST LEGO Robotics competition, and DMES once again earned the designation as a National Beta Club School of Merit.

As DMES continues to live into its Vision of a “community of empowered leaders and goal achievers,” the DMES Student Council led our school in giving back to our community. They planted bulbs around the school (emerging at the time of this writing!),

collected food for Miracle Hill, made holiday gifts for the Mary Black ER staff, built a Free Little Library at Converse University, visited Wofford College, held a hygiene drive for Hand in Hand, and acted as leaders in many school events and functions!

DMES students continued to excel in the arts. Over the course of the school year, every DMES student had the opportunity to perform before an audience. Moreover, they participated and placed in numerous visual arts contests – including the Piedmont Community Fair, Spartanburg celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and our DMES Art Show hosted at 1800 Drayton. Additionally, DMES music teachers volunteered to come in early during the week to lead chorus, Ukulele Club, and Rock Band - an initiative that resulted in an especially well-received presentation at our state's Music Educator's Conference. Additionally, a DMES PE Coach established an Archery Club that meets after school three days a week, and DMES teacher volunteers again led a Girls on the Run Club. Nearly half of our 5th grade students participate in the Band or Orchestra program!

Last school year, the DMES 5th grade team proposed DMES's first overnight field trip, and the spring of 2024 sees our students taking an exciting journey to Charleston, SC. Our students and faculty worked to supplement Title I funds towards this adventure, and the group will enjoy a visit to a barrier island, the SC Aquarium, the International African American Museum, the USS Yorktown, downtown Charleston, and Fort Sumter.

Finally, DMES K5- 3rd grade teachers, reading coach, reading interventionists, and administration successfully completed LETRS, an especially rigorous two-year course on the science of reading. This cohort is among the first in our state to have done so.

The DMES SIC is so proud to detail these accomplishments and excited to consider the positive impact they portend for our children!