



## Public fearful of four-day school week



Superintendent Dan Maeder provides background on the Davis County Schools' decision to study the possibilities of implementing a four-day school week at a town hall meeting Monday night.

**By Karen Spurgeon, Publisher**  
The public had a chance to react to proposals of a four-day school week at a public forum Monday night, and several community members expressed fears that a four-day week would result in a deteriorating work ethic and reduce quality of education.

Brett Barnhart, co-owner of Hoskin Elevator, said his business is open five to seven days a week. "How will I hire employees for that schedule years down the road," he asked. "Will I find employees who are willing to work that schedule? I don't think we should be training for a four-day week."

Bob Closser asked what the measurable benefits of a four-day week would be for students and the school district. He said test scores drop marginally under those circumstances and a four-day week becomes the status quo. "That becomes the new norm," he stated. "This (four-day week) becomes

a patch and doesn't fix the problems. When we look at what the kids need, we know they need structure."

Closser said the market in education is changing and people can take their kids to school wherever they want. Looking ahead, he predicted competition from online classes as well. "We (Davis County) need to offer the best education we can," he commented.

One mother was especially concerned about children who have IEPs (Individualized Educational Plans). "Those kids need that fifth day in a structured schedule," she said. "What are they going to do at home on Fridays?"

Don Walton, a member of the schools' 4-Day Week Study Committee, said some schools have experienced benefits from the four-day schedule. WACO's average daily attendance has increased from 88% to 94%, he said, and behavior has improved.

"We have to realize in the last 20 years our workforce, work habits, etc. are undergoing major changes," Walton

said. "The four-day work week might not be too far away."

Supt. Dan Maeder said he could see "clear benefits" for high school students when it comes to work-based learning opportunities as they would have Fridays free for work experience.

A four-day schedule would also align with Indian Hills' schedule and many DCHS students are enrolled in IHCC classes.

"The question is, what does the four-day schedule do to the little students," Maeder commented.

"We're not here to sell this (four-day schedule) to you," Maeder continued, "We just want to have this discussion, then come to a consensus."

Alexis Henderson, a member of the Study Committee, said she didn't want Davis County to base its education on what the smaller communities of WACO and Moulton-Udell are doing. (The Study Committee just completed three Zoom sessions with staff members from those schools and heard mostly positive comments on the four-day week.)

Josh Husted, a teacher and coach at Davis County, expressed concern about the potential inactivity of students on the fifth day of the week.

Henderson, too, was concerned about what kids would do on their day off. She works at Success Bank and said on professional development days, she sees kids running around in the bank's parking lot unsupervised.

Traci Wiegand, owner of Wigwam Daycare and Preschool, said, "I want to prepare our kids for Davis County Schools, and I want quality staff care."

Wiegand said she can't pay for quality staff with irregular daycare attendance. "The four-day week will take more away from daycare than the five-day week," she added. "School age kids are difficult to care for in daycare. We put all different ages in one room after school. A four-day week will cause us to take a look at what we're doing."

Debra Fox said she is a single mom, and the four-day schedule would

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## Bride quizzes Harris about property tax reform

*Bride: 'I have seen the senate tax reform proposal and it scares me to death'*



State Representative Austin Harris listens intently as DCDC Director John Schroeder discusses workforce issues at a legislature forum Friday, Feb. 10.

Property taxes became the big topic of discussion during Austin Harris' legislative forum in Davis County Friday morning.

Harris, State Representative from District 26, believes the legislature must implement property tax reform during this legislative session. "Failure is not an option. We have to get this done," he said.

Davis County Supervisors' Chairman Ron Bride was on hand to question the proposed tax reform and ask how rural counties could possibly fund necessary services with a reduction in taxes.

"I have seen the senate's tax reform proposal and this scares me to death," Bride said. "It looks like we would only get about two-thirds of what we are getting now. I'm not sure we can cut any. I'm just not sure how we can do it."

"You can't trust your local officials to spend money responsibly?" Bride asked.

Harris said legislators are looking for feedback. "We're looking at capping the (property tax) increase at 7% and looking at a rollback," he said.

While the legislature is looking at reducing property taxes, Jake Bohi, an EMS worker at Davis County Hospital, expressed his concern about the future of EMS services in rural Iowa. "In five years, I can see no ambulance service in Davis County," Bohi said. "What do we need to do to start the process for getting this tax-supported?"

Bride said the county does have \$7,500 budgeted for this essential service.

Don Walton, Bloomfield councilman, asked about the prospect of a flat tax for income tax.

"The things that happen in Des Moines seem to cut revenue when we need more. This scares us when folks who aren't familiar with how rural Iowa works make the decisions," he said.

Bride continued to expound on the increasing costs the county is facing.

"There are so many things we have to fund in this inflationary period," he said. "Our ICAP insurance went up \$70,000. Our IT company has been providing back-up service, but they no longer want to do this and they're talking about going to the Cloud. That's very expensive, but we have to think about cybersecurity."

"At the same time, the state is buying down property taxes. They agreed to a backfill several years ago, but didn't

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## Funding for road repairs is big concern for Davis County

Finding the money to repair Davis County's secondary roads is becoming a big concern according to County Engineer Ryan Schock and the Davis County Supervisors.

Schock reported he would be giving a presentation to Davis County Farm Bureau members Monday night, Feb. 13, on county road maintenance and the budget constraints the secondary roads department must work with.

"We're limited with what we can spend on roads, and if the legislature passes tax reform, I don't know what we're going to do," Schock said.

Supervisors' chairman Ron Bride is also concerned that the county has not yet seen any infrastructure

money from the federal government following the Senate and House passage of Biden's infrastructure bill.

"This was a huge bill that was supposed to go for roads projects and charging stations," Bride said. "So far, there is no money coming down from this."

Getting down to a specific need, Schock said Ice Avenue south of Drakesville has a four-mile stretch that has bumpy ruts 3/4" to 2 inches deep. Denco Highway Construction quoted a cost of \$198,000 to repair the road with slurry seal (emulsified asphalt), but that only works to about 1" in depth, Schock said.

Denco suggested a better fix might be micro-surfacing the road for \$225,000. This process would fill in

2" ruts and put a wear surface on the road that would last approximately five years.

Schock and the supervisors will be looking for options on how to finance the project despite projected tax cuts.

City councilman Don Walton visited the supervisors Monday morning regarding snow removal on the west end of the trail from the historic bridge on the McGowen Recreation property to Parkview Avenue.

Walton said he thought for some time the city was responsible for snow removal on that section of trail and the county was responsible for cleaning the snow off the portion from the historic

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## Davis County Care Facility fined for resident abuse

The Davis County Care Facility on Otter Trail was one of five care facilities for the elderly and disabled in Iowa cited recently for death, injury and resident abuse.

Other care facilities cited were Trinity Center at Luther Park in Des Moines for a resident death, One Vision Oak House in Fort Dodge for resident abuse, Cedar Falls Health Care Center for resident abuse and resident injury, and Risen Son Christian Village in Council Bluffs for resident safety.

In a February 7 article, Clark Kauffman of the Iowa Capital Dispatch

reported the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals had proposed a total of \$105,250 in state fines against the facilities.

"All but \$1,000 of those fines are being held in suspension while regulators at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services determine whether to impose federal fines in place of any state penalties," Kauffman wrote.

Following is Kauffman's report on resident abuse at the Davis Care Facility as it appeared in the Iowa Capital Dispatch:

"The Davis Care Facility

of rural Bloomfield, which houses people with intellectual disabilities, was fined \$500 for resident abuse. According to state inspectors, a certified nursing assistant at the home, which is owned by Davis County and managed by Optima Life Services, sprayed water in the mouth of a female resident, put a washcloth over the resident's mouth, put hot water in the resident's ears, and told her to shut up, all while providing the resident with a shower.

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\$1.25



### Newton qualifies for State Meet

# DC bands perform 5-12 concert

*Soup supper will help fund Florida trip*



Amy Cook rehearses the seventh and eighth grade band in preparation for a concert on Feb 16.

The Davis County High School and Middle School Bands will host their annual 5-12 Band Concert and Soup Supper Thursday, Feb. 16.

The soup supper is scheduled for 5:15-6:30 p.m. in the DCHS cafeteria and will feature a wide variety of soups, relishes, and desserts. The concert will be performed in the DCHS gym beginning at 7 p.m.

The 5th Grade Band will perform "Old McDonald Had a Band" arranged by Higgins and "Power Rock arranged by Sweeney.

The 6th Grade Band will perform "After-shock" by Clark and "Rock-A-Saurus Rex!" by Molter.

The Middle School Jazz Band will play "Rumba Latina" by Lopez with trombonists O'Bannon Miller and Grayson featured on solos and "Along for the Ride" by Story with Isabelle Henderson featured on tenor sax.

The 7th and 8th Grade Band will play "Colliding Visions" by Balmages and "A Dark and Stormy Night" by Romeyn.

The DCHS Concert Band will perform "Malaguena" arranged by Michael Sweeney, "Afterburn" by Randall Standridge, and "An Irish Legend" by Ed Kiefer.

The DCHS Jazz Band will play "Living in a Dream" by Doug Beach and "Fat Cat" by Doug

Beach. The combined 5-12 bands will perform "Dr. Rock" by Pearson and Gott to end the performance.

There is no admission for the concert.

In addition to the soup supper, the DC Music Boosters are raffling a quilt at the concert. All proceeds will go toward meals for the students going on the Florida band trip in June. Tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20. Tickets can be purchased at Making Memories, from any high school band or choir student, or at the door. The tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20.

# Preschool celebrates Global School Play Day



Students in Danelle Howard's preschool class playing as part of Global School Play Day.

**By Kimra Hines, Reporter**  
Wednesday Feb. 1 was Global School Play Day.

According to Danelle Howard, Bloomfield preschool teacher, "This day was created to celebrate how important playing is to a child's development and well-being. In schools we have so much to teach

children in one year that playing often gets pushed to the side."

Howard's students were invited to bring in a toy to share with the other children as they played in the classroom for the day.

Six educators started the grass roots effort in 2015. According to a Global School Play

Day press release, the organization stated — "Schools are eliminating recess. Teachers are assigning more and more homework. Parents schedule every waking minute for their kids. Young children have become addicted to their devices — skyrocketing anxiety and stress."

## 4-DAY WEEK: Daycare, special needs discussed

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have to pay for 11 more days of daycare if the school goes to a four-day schedule. "That would cost about \$300," she said. "And sometimes not enough children show up and they have to cancel. If there is no daycare, I have to take off work. And the daycares that do stay open — what will their rates go to?"

"My son would rather go to school than daycare," she said.

One couple in the audience, parents of twins entering kindergarten, felt the four-day week would make it difficult to fill daycare positions for one day. "And that's what we would need," they commented.

Closser responded, "We keep hearing from other schools that these things worked themselves out. I would like to know what that means. More than half the kids in our district are on free and reduced lunch and we're going to add to their grocery bill?"

One person in the audience asked about alternatives for solving student problems.

Maeder answered, "We have a consortium of school districts that have therapy classrooms. We have a few kids we take to Blakesburg. We are seeing more and more unacceptable behaviors and seeing more aggressive parent behavior toward staff members. It's important our community knows that and understands that."

"The big problem is our society doesn't get behind our teachers like we used to. We need community and parent support when we make decisions."

The audience member asked Maeder, "Why not bring in more resources

rather than shoving them out the door?"

Maeder replied, "We have to consider their needs whether a four-day or five-day week. This is part of the decision-making process. Your comments will be heard and will help the study committee make a decision on their recommendation to the board."

### Leading up to the decision

As the session began Monday night, Maeder said the forum was called to bring the community together to decide whether to consider implementing a four-day week. "Our motto is 'One community, one goal, the best that we can be,'" he said. "We want to represent the community's values and wishes."

Maeder said there are two factors that led the district to consider a four-day week: the stress level of the staff — especially with elevating behavior problems — and the difficulties in attracting and hiring quality people.

"Davis County does not intend to reduce the hours of instruction or the number of hours teachers work," he said. "But the days of instruction will be longer."

Maeder presented three "key understandings" that he said needed to be considered when making the decision:

- The most important factor in student achievement is the quality of the teacher. "We must hire and retain high-quality people," Maeder said. "This has been a high priority for Davis County."

- There is a teacher shortage throughout the state.

- Current efforts to attract teachers to Davis County include a highly competitive wage scale for certified and classi-

fied staff, early resignation incentives, hiring incentives, and full-time subs added to fill sub needs as well as provide a reservoir of talent to fill future staff openings.

Following the town hall meetings, the study committee, which represents a broad spectrum of the community, will make a recommendation to the school board, which will make the final decision on the school's calendar.

The calendar options for moving forward include a traditional five-day schedule, switching to a four-day schedule, or opting for a hybrid schedule that would begin the school year with five-day per week instruction and transition to a four-day schedule.

Maeder said none of the three schedules would reduce the hours of instruction or the hours of work for teachers. "Those hours of work would just be structured differently."

The state requires 180 days or 1080 hours of instruction, Maeder said, and all but a handful of Iowa schools have selected the hour option. Davis County currently meets the hours of instruction standard with a 170-day calendar plus professional development days.

"Now we meet the hourly calendar and exceed that by five days. This gives us built-in time so that we don't have to make up snow days," he said.

Several times during Monday night's forum, Maeder assured the crowd of approximately 30 people that the administration and the Study Committee were not there to "sell" the four-day week. "We want to have this discussion then come to a consensus," he emphasized.

## HARRIS: Discusses medical malpractice lawsuits

From Page 1A

keep it up. The worst thing you can do is make taxes a rollercoaster," he warned.

Bride said the county passed a Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) proposal several years ago with 100% going to property tax reduction. The LOST money was later split with 50% going to roads and 50% to property tax reduction.

"It the state decides to send our LOST money to Des Moines and piecemeal it out, rural counties will take it on the chin," he stated.

Bride has offered to sit down with Harris and thoroughly explain the details of Davis County's budget.

Harris began the forum by summarizing the legislature's accomplishments to date, including the commitment to grant \$7,600 in Educational Savings Accounts to students attending private schools — the same amount given to public schools in Supplemental State Aid (SSA) per student.

Walton said he doesn't believe the ESA program will support rural Iowa. "We will spend \$918 million in the first three years for this program and it will go up from there. When these funds go to private schools, that will hurt public education."

Mark Hoffman mentioned the state's \$2 billion surplus, but "at \$350 million per year (for ESAs), you will chew that up in a nine-year span," he said. "Is that fiscally responsible?"

Harris explained the money is being spent for the students, not the school systems.

Harris also explained the legislature has eased restrictions on how school districts can spend money they have in unspent designated funds. "We are allowing more flexible spending," he said. Many restricted funds can now be spent on salaries and educational materials.

"We want to take restrictions off public schools. The worst style of management is micro-management."

While the original proposal for increasing Supplemental State Aid (SSA) requested a 2-2.5% increase, 3% was designated. "I don't think the governor has signed this yet," Harris said. "But Davis County and Albia said they could work with this."

Harris said he met with three hospitals— Davis County, Appanoose County, and Monroe County — to discuss medical malpractice lawsuits from the perspective of providers and victims.

"All say they're one

lawsuit away from bankruptcy," he said. "We put a cap on non-economic damages. This passed the house and the senate."

Harris said he is the vice-chair of the State Government Committee, and that committee is making an attempt to streamline state government for the first time in 40 years. "We are looking at eliminating vacant positions and combining positions," he said. "This could save \$200 million."

As the conversation shifted to education in the trades, DCDC Director John Schroeder stated the need to prepare students for skilled labor positions in the areas of plumbing, electrical, and construction.

Others in attendance, such as SIEC Manager Greg Proctor called for licensing reform to encourage and increase the number of plumbers and electricians in the area. Proctor commented that there are those who will do new construction plumbing, but "no one wants to do service plumbing."

Harris will hold two more public forums at the Davis County Development office: March 3 at 8 a.m. and April 7 at 8 a.m.

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