

# The Dalles Chronicle

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## D21 board: dual language program feels rushed

By Neita Cecil  
The Dalles Chronicle

School board members had tough feedback Jan. 15 for proponents of starting a dual language immersion program, saying they liked the concept but the process felt rushed and lacked communication.

Backers, meanwhile, said the idea has proven popular with parents, and of 190 surveyed, 70 percent (132), said they would enroll their child in the program. Another 18 percent (35) said they might, and only 13 percent (25) said no.

They emphasized it would start small, in just one school in one or two kindergarten classes, and would grow one grade level per school year.

The plan as it stands calls for starting the program next fall—at a school site to be announced Feb. 27—with one or two kindergarten classes made up equally of native Spanish speakers and non-Spanish speakers, who would be chosen by lottery. Lessons would be 90 percent in Spanish, and would gradually become an equal mix of English and Spanish by the end of elementary school. Another grade would be added each year, and would ultimately go through 12th grade.

Comments from the North Wasco County School District 21 board came after teachers and other speakers were similarly critical of the process at the beginning of the meeting. (See related story.)

Superintendent Candy Armstrong said via email after the meeting that the dual immersion committee would meet to review the board's feedback and determine what to recommend.

She said, "The location is a major concern and the committee has definitely not determined a recommendation on location."

Colonel Wright teachers told the board in December they heard their site was being considered and they said it would force non-Spanish speaking teachers to be relocated to another school and the tight-knit Colonel Wright school would no longer be a neighborhood school but a destination school.

D21 board member Solea Kabakov said, "I completely support the program, it's the process to get there that feels flawed."

She said the committee studying it seemed small and didn't represent enough groups.

Board Vice Chair Jose Aparicio said that nobody who would benefit from the program was on the committee, "or even in the room," he said of the 40-strong meeting crowd.

Committee members include the superintendent, the principals of all three elementaries, the district human resources director, English Language Learner (ELL) teachers

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## Teachers criticize process

### Dual language program a good idea, but needs more input

By Neita Cecil  
The Dalles Chronicle

Teachers and parents told the D21 school board Jan. 15 a proposed dual language immersion program was a good idea whose time has not yet come.

Still needed, they said, was more communication with both staff and the community.

Joel Vaught, a Colonel Wright parent whose spouse is an educator there, said adding a dual immersion program is as long lasting a change to the district as the district's facilities planning process.

Vaught said the North Wasco County School District 21's ongoing facilities planning process has been "open, honest and collaborative," and the public has been invited to participate because the community has a stake in it.

In contrast, he said, the dual language immersion (DLI) process has been "secretive, closed and exclusive."

He said several Colonel Wright staff asked to be involved and were told no. "Those pushing this DLI implementation do not seem to have the same idea that the entire community has a stake in this process."

The D21 board itself was also critical of the planning process for the program. (See related story.)

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Barbara Pizzola walks the red carpet to the stage after being named Woman of the Year at the Distinguished Citizens Awards Banquet Jan. 16. The banquet is hosted by The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce. Mark B. Gibson photos

## Visionaries of our Time

### Awards banquet honors outstanding citizens

Mark Gibson  
The Dalles Chronicle

A host of citizens and businesses were recognized as "Visionaries of Our Time" during The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce's Distinguished Citizens Award Banquet at the Fort Dalles Readiness Center Thursday. The event also featured the Mid-Columbia Health Foundation's philanthropy awards, previously awarded at a second annual banquet hosted by the foundation.

The banquet is a Chamber kick-off for the coming year, and Connie Ford of Zim's Brau Haus was introduced as the Chamber board chair for 2020, receiving the gavel from former chair Andrew Myers. The seventeen board members were also introduced, as were 14 chamber ambassadors.

### Outstanding Awards

Lisa Farquharson, executive director of the Chamber, announced each of the Chamber's eight 'distinguished citizens,' noting that the theme of the banquet was "Visionaries of Our Time."

"When we think visionaries, we think of someone who thinks about the future or advancements in a creative or imaginative way. When you are in the presence of a true visionary, you can feel their power because they are focused and present. Tonight's honorees are a great example of 'visionaries' in our community," Farquharson said.

### Volunteer of the Year

The 2020 Volunteer of the Year award was given to Eunice Denudt, who was described as one who "does not sit idly and always has the need to serve others." Farquharson explained that in recent years, Denudt had suffered a stroke that left her, temporarily, unable to walk or talk. As she was learning again how to walk and speak, "an act of kindness spoke to her and gave her comfort and



Jim Wilcox puts his hat back on as he returns to his table after being named Man of the Year during the annual chamber banquet at the Fort Dalles Readiness Center.



Eunice Denudt, left, is escorted to the stage after being named Volunteer of the Year for 2020 at the Distinguished Citizens Awards Banquet. For more images from the event, visit [www.thedalleschronicle.com](http://www.thedalleschronicle.com).

peace. "She decided that when she had regained her speech, and her ability to walk, she was going to make sure that others would receive that same gift in the hope it would give them comfort," Farquharson said.

For over three years now, Denudt has been crocheting blankets for the welcome baskets at Columbia Basin care center. She has crocheted over 150 blankets, and each resident now has one.

"She never forgot the wonderful feeling to give her to have something handmade, just for her during her rehabilitation and the many moments of feeling down and

frustrated," Farquharson said.

### Youth of the Year

Honored as the Outstanding Youth of the Year was Jacob Field. "I had the honor of meeting our student of the year a few years ago, and was impressed with his level of collaboration, leadership, ingenuity and creativity on a team," said Farquharson.

Field is working to make sure elementary students, fellow high school students and the community have the opportunity to learn about STEM (science, technology,

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## Teacher decries unpaid hours, excessive demands

By Neita Cecil  
The Dalles Chronicle

Chenoweth Elementary teacher Mary Tyree told the D21 board last Wednesday she felt undervalued, unappreciated and exploited as a teacher.

She said she sent out a survey to district teachers and 120 responded. She said on average, they worked 10 extra hours a week outside their paid teaching hours.

Also, half of the respondents had a second job.

She brought a board that listed the various places in town where teachers held second jobs.

She said the extra unpaid 10 hours a week averaged to 400 hours a school year. "That's 50 additional 8-hour days not spent with my family. Fifty days doing work for this district and not resting, doing hobbies, seeing people we love and taking care of ourselves. We are all

hardworking people and as teachers expect to give of ourselves, but this has gone too far."

North Wasco County School District 21 Board Chair John Nelson, a retired teacher, said the same issues have plagued the profession for decades. He recounted being given a blanket years ago at one school he worked at, so he could stay warm on the nights he worked late, past the time the building heat was

turned down.

"There's never enough money to reward teachers with the money they deserve," Nelson said.

Tyree listed 40 initiatives, programs, committees and responsibilities she had, ranging from creating resources for lessons to grading papers to doing plays to remembering student health issues and which kids need more food, sleep, clothes, and love.

"The list goes on. I haven't even

asked anyone else," she said.

"I feel either you pay me to do all of this work or you stop asking me to do all of it. I'm not 'drowning,' as we like to say, I'm done. Twenty percent turnover in the district shows most people are."

She said, "there are so many programs, initiatives, new ideas, etc, happening now. You can't pay as much as Dufur can. The district has nowhere near the reserves it should have in the budget."

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