



New for this school year at Dakota High School in Macomb Township are decorative window coverings at the athletic entrance. Dakota's first day of school will be Sept. 3.

Photo by Alex Szwarc

Dakota principal previews school year

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"Cougar Day" took place Aug. 20 at Dakota High School Ninth Grade Center. Incoming freshmen received their class schedule and toured the building.

Photo by Alex Szwarc



Dakota High School Principal Kevin Koskos says a priority this year is studying the school's approach to cellphones, adding that Dakota wants to balance the needs of students with 21st century culture.

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MACOMB TOWNSHIP — With a new school year comes new students, new goals and even a new principal.

Many schools across Macomb Township will step into a fresh adventure next week with the first day of school.

C & G Newspapers caught up with Dakota High School Principal Kevin Koskos on “Cougar Day,” which familiarizes incoming freshmen with their schedule and more. Koskos began his tenure as Dakota principal in July.

Dakota — Michigan’s largest high school — is located at 21051 21 Mile Road in Macomb Township. The Cougars’ first day of school will be Sept. 3.

Koskos said a priority this year is studying the school’s approach to cellphones.

“We want to balance the needs of students with the 21st century culture,” he said. “We want to help them be less distracted, which allows teachers to utilize those tools to supplement instruction.”

A big aspect of cellphone and social media usage that Koskos wants to examine is the social and emotional angle.

“We want to help educate them and understand what is happening to them in terms of changing their wiring,” he said.

What he made clear to school stakeholders is that it’s not his style to come in as the new high school principal and quickly impact policies.

“We’re going to really study that in a lot more depth,” Koskos said. “We want to bring parents and students in the conversation and tackle that. There’s a whole other component to it that research is exposing — depression and anxiety — and how much comes back to their phones.”

His belief is that new digital connectivity with cellphones and social media has exploded in usage over the last three years, while at the same time, “The number of kids dealing with mental health concerns, anxiety and depression has been very parallel.”

Aside from cellphones, Koskos said Dakota is entering its second year as part of positive behavioral interventions and supports, or PBIS.

A federally funded program, PBIS supports schools in a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavior support.

“We’re looking forward to that program continuing to grow,” Koskos said. “We’re going to do some new things with our multi-tiered system of supports in terms of placement and interventions for kids that need help.”

When it comes to safety and security, what Dakota students will notice is a change at the main entrance on the east side of the school.

“That entrance is designed to make sure that when someone enters the building after being buzzed in, they aren’t going to have anywhere to go except the vestibule area, which will be enclosed,” Koskos said.

A set of doors will then be unlocked that can lead folks either to the guidance office or the main office door.

Construction on the main entrance, which students use when going to and from the Ninth Grade Center, should wrap up next month.

Also in terms of school safety, Koskos said Dakota has been working with the Macomb County Sheriff’s Office on digitally scanning and mapping the school.

“That will help enhance their efficiency to respond to any kind of emergency,” he said.

From a teacher’s standpoint, Dakota chemistry teacher and student government adviser Kelly Herberholz said she’s been prepping the laboratory the last couple of weeks. She’s worked at Dakota for seven years.

“Our science department is continuing a rollout with the new Michigan science standards, which are based on the Next Generation Science Standards,” she said. “We’ve had quite a few curriculum changes.”

Herberholz and science and history teacher Kyle Young, in an attempt to build school culture, started a high-five Friday program where kids greet each other outside in the morning.

“The first day of school, we’ll have teachers outside greeting the kids with the drum line and music, showing that we’re excited to be back,” Young said.

Around 2,900 students are enrolled at Dakota this year, nearly 700 of whom are freshmen.