



District Feedback Form

We received 3 concerns regarding the Prom Grand March being held in the auditorium.

Julie Bushman

Dear Mr. Carolan and the DE School Board Members. I'm writing to all of you to express my concern about having the grand march in the auditorium for our prom. I attended the grand march for the first time last year and I was very disappointed and concerned. I was told to go early or I wouldn't have a seat so I did. I arrived an hour early to save seats for my parents and my husband. There were a good amount of people (mostly elderly) that also arrived very early. Unfortunately, by the time grand march started the auditorium was filled to well over capacity. Many people around me made comments about the fire code, safety of the overcrowded area, people sitting on the steps and wondering why this event didn't take place in the gym like most other schools? The students were so far away from the photographer and they didn't seem to know where to walk/stop while walking through the auditorium. I felt bad for the families that said they told some family members not to come because it is so crowded and not enough chairs for everyone. Just think of the money spent for the kids to attend this event and then hold it in a place that family members can't fit in and enjoy the special moment for their children/grandchildren. It was not safe and very disappointing. I have recently heard that again this spring the grand march will take place in the auditorium. It should be in the gym. Please make a safe change for our community. I know we were breaking the fire code and it is not right that extended family members are not able to come and see this event. Please please take time to consider this request carefully. People have been complaining about this for years. It is time for a change. Thank you.

Bridget Ideker

Good afternoon ladies! (emailed to Julie Austinson & Linda Nelson)

I looked around the website for somewhere to submit a concern, but couldn't find anything to submit electronically so you two ladies are getting an email!

I have volunteered to help with the Post Prom Committee this year. During our last meeting, we had reviewed seeing if the gym could be used for grand march and / or the dance. I guess it was decided that the grand march is to stay in the Auditorium. While I can see the stage as a good place to 'present' the couples, I have serious concerns about the safety of those attending the grand march.

Brian and I went last year to see Will and Brooke during grand march. We went over an hour early, and were very glad we did. We were able to get a seat for us and for my 86 year old Mom who came along. However, as it got closer to starting, it was evident that there was not enough safe seating for all the community members who want to attend. The aisle on both levels were filled with people sitting, there were people lined up on the sides standing 2-3 deep. The overflow went into the auditorium entry ways and into the hall ways. The kids had a hard time getting through the crowds at some point. The MCs even made a joke about the number of people and how crowded/hot it was in there. I saw a LOT of elderly people needing to stand.

I am concerned about the safety of jamming that many people into the auditorium for an event that lasts greater than an hour. If there were to be a need for people to exit quickly, it would have been mass chaos. There is no way the attendance was under what the fire code states for the space.

I would like to voice my concern and ask that another avenue be discussed as to space for the grand march.

Thanks ladies for all you do for DE!

Bridget Ideker, RD, LD
Olmsted Medical Center, Outpatient Dietitian, Diabetes Education Coordinator

Kari & Paul Wendt

Dear School Board and Superintendent It is with great concern for our students and community that I am writing you. The Auditorium has been the traditional location for the Prom Grand March. Unfortunately this location is not of adequate size for our students, their families, and the community. Last year there were people sitting in the aisles, on the floors, and people were still told to squish in. There were also many people standing in the hallways and doorways that never made it in because there was not even a place to stand. Not only is this a fire and safety concern for all it is a disappointment for many. The Post prom committee has offered to help the prom

committee both physically and financially. By mandating the prom committee hold Grand March in the gym the prom and post prom committee can work together to provide a safe, enjoyable, viewing of the students for all. Thank you Kari Wendt Post Prom President

Todd's Response

The responses to Bushman and Ideker contained similar information.

Thank you for sharing your concern about the Prom Grand March. Your message was passed to me because addressing these types of issues falls among my responsibilities as principal. I am sharing with you in this message the same information I have communicated to a couple of other parents who expressed concerns about how Grand March has gone in the auditorium in recent years.

Prom happens under the leadership of the students in the Junior Class. Members of the class raise the money, plan and organize the events, and do the work to prepare for the events. Under the guidance and supervision of the Prom Coordinator and within the bounds of safety and financial means, the kids exercise their responsibility and leadership to make these decisions, including where they want to hold Grand March. As of right now, they have decided they still want to hold Grand March in the auditorium. I certainly understand this, as the auditorium is far superior to the gym as a venue for this type of event in every regard except space. It better fits the formality of the event, the lighting is better, the sound is much, much better, and so on. At this point that is as far the discussion with the students has gone, but we plan to talk more with them.

Our Prom Coordinator, Lora Allen, and I have been talking about the issue of Grand March for several weeks. I copied Lora on this message. We fully agree that we cannot continue to safely do Grand March the same way if it is to be held in the auditorium. There are just too many people who have shown up in recent years, which is not a bad thing at all! Besides the safety issues, the crowding has caused frustration and some adults have even behaved in an uncivil manner.

Lora and I need to have another conversation with the students to explain all the issues and concerns. Please rest assured that when we talk with the students, our job will be not to take a position on what they should do, but to make sure they make a fully informed decision. To that end some of the things we will discuss with them are:

- We will explain the problems and safety issues we have had in the auditorium, which the 11th grade students are probably only minimally aware of. (They were 10th graders last year, and even if they did participate in Grand March, they would have been focused on themselves and their classmates, not what was happening in the audience.)
- We will tell them that if they want to have Grand March in the auditorium, they will need to limit the number of people who can attend by coming up with some sort of a ticket system whereby each kid in the Grand March is limited to a certain number of tickets for guests so that the total number of tickets does not exceed the number of seats. We will also give them the typical number of students who have participated in Grand March, the total maximum seating in the auditorium, and help them do the math about how many "tickets" that would be per student. Their other option is to use the gym.
- If the kids still decide to keep Grand March in the auditorium, we will suggest and help them explore options for live streaming the event into the Commons and/or online.
- We will be honest that some people would likely be upset that not everyone could attend in the auditorium, and some people would likely be upset by the less optimal venue of the gym.
- Although the Junior Class has class officer who were chosen by their classmates as representatives, we will remind them that they can certainly seek the input of more students if it would help them make their decision.

I am a strong advocate for maintaining and supporting the students' responsibility and decision-making power as much as possible for events like Homecoming and Prom, so I won't mandate where they need to hold Grand March. I would not want them to feel like they are being undermined by the adults in school after being told that an event is their responsibility and they are doing most of the work. These events are ultimately about the kids and for the kids. They also provide important educational and leadership development opportunities for the young people in our school.

I have always greatly admired and appreciated what the Post Prom parent group does for our students to plan a safe and fun after-Prom activity. As a community-based parent volunteer group that is separate from the school district, this group has not had a role in Grand March or Prom, which are school-sponsored events. I think it is important that the students continue to be the driving force and decision-makers behind those events with the support and guidance of the school staff people who are their designated advisors. But I will certainly extend your offer of assistance when I meet with them.

Parents and community members will hear more about this year's plans for Grand March and Prom as the planning continues in the Junior Class.

Thank you again for your communication.

Todd Rowekamp
Principal, Dover-Eyota High School/Middle School
toddrowekamp@deschools.org
(507)545-2631 ext. 205