

**DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Wilmette Public Schools**

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: January 22, 2018

To: Members, Board of Education

From: Building Principals
Grade Level Administrators
Assistant Principals

Gail Buscemi, Business Manager

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Subject: 2017-2018 Strategic Plan Updates: Continuing Strategic Initiatives and Annual Business

BACKGROUND

On October 23, 2017, the Board of Education approved the implementation of the 2017-2018 District 39 Strategic Plan. The yearly planning cycle includes Strategic Plan updates. This executive summary report will focus on mid-year updates of the action steps identified under Continuing Strategic Initiatives and Annual Business. The updates on the New Strategic Initiatives will be presented in February.

Continuing Strategic Initiatives Updates

School Climate - Year 2 Developing

1. During last school year, District 39 administrators, teachers, Board members, and Community Review Committee (CRC) members provided invaluable feedback toward crafting a draft Statement of Inclusion. Earlier this fall, District 39 reviewed, revised, and adopted the following Statement of Inclusion:

District 39 believes inclusion plays a vital role in student growth. We are committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment that fosters a mindset of empathy, respect, and belonging for all District 39 students and staff. By respecting each person's unique identity, perspective, and learning style, we create a stronger community. We honor differences including races and cultures, genders and sexual orientations, abilities and aspirations, identities and affiliations, socioeconomics and worldviews. Embracing diversity prepares our students to thrive in an increasingly complex global community.

This statement supports the District's mission to "nurture, guide, and challenge students to become creative thinkers, collaborators, and socially responsible, compassionate, and productive citizens of a global society." It can be found on District 39's website on the Mission Statement page.

2. Each school developed ways to promote respect and celebrate differences among people. Here are a few examples:
 - Elementary students engage in Community Circles which are gatherings where all participants sit in a circle facing each other to facilitate open, direct communication. The format provides a safe, supportive space where students can talk about sensitive topics, work through differences, and build consensus.
 - In addition, students have shared aspects of their culture with classmates or sister school students as a way to increase awareness and appreciation for cultural differences among them.
 - Each schools' libraries (Learning Commons & classroom libraries) provide access to books that celebrate differences, diversity, and culture. For disability awareness, all teachers use read alouds to help promote and celebrate differences throughout the year.

3. District 39 takes each case of bullying seriously by investigating all reports submitted to administrators. Therefore, District 39 has prioritized the need to clearly distinguish age-appropriate social conflicts from bullying incidences so that students, teachers, and parents share a common understanding or definition. Also, principals have investigated ways to engage and utilize student leadership to help promote positive school climate and upstander behavior.
 - Elementary students receive lessons from teachers and/or social workers tapping into any applicable Second Step lessons. Student Council members are empowered to supervise and apply leadership skills during recess, lunch, and unstructured time in hallways. They have also actively promoted the use of the Buddy Bench.
 - Highcrest and Wilmette Junior High teachers engaged students in lessons about being upstanders. Students attended assemblies about disabilities like Handicap This!, One Revolution, and Think Kindness. Student Advisory Boards at Highcrest and Wilmette Junior High School have been formed to lead the #weare movements: #weareupstanders, #wearegrateful, and #wearegiving. Each month, the students focused on a new hashtag movement like creating kindness quilts for elementary students or giving back to their own school communities by greeting their classmates in the morning or serving them hot chocolate right before winter break.

- Administrators attended trainings to learn about how restorative practices promote healthy relationships, rebuild peer to peer or teacher to student relationships, and resolve conflicts. Principals and/or social workers provided professional development during staff meetings on topics such as social conflicts, bullying, and restorative practices.
- District 39 partnered with Family Student Services to offer a parent education event on “Navigating Social Conflicts”. On November 7th, parents of elementary aged students learned about how friendships, playdates, and group activities can be wonderful experiences for their child. Dr. Renee Dominguez and her team addressed the difference between social conflict and bullying and how parents can support their child in navigate these situations. Parents of grades 5-8 students experienced similar messages. In addition, the grades 5-8 presentation addressed how the tween years have become an increasingly more complex social arena due to the availability of social media.

School Attendance - Year 2 Implementing

1. District 39 provided an educational opportunity for parents and staff with a focus on the early indicators of students at risk for school avoidance. On December 6th, Jackie Rhew, cofounder for Center for Emotional Wellness of the Northwest Suburbs, shared with District 39 parents essential tools to building resiliency in children at any age. The presentation reviewed specific interventions designed to assist children in managing their anxiety, promote increased motivation, healthy goal setting, and active school engagement. Factors that contribute to school avoidant behaviors as well as ways to identify maladaptive coping responses were explored. In addition to the parent event, Jacki Rhew returned to present to District 39 paraprofessional staff on similar messages.
2. Continuous communication between District 39 and parents has occurred since the start of the school year as a proactive measure to improve student attendance rates. Parents have received monthly attendance updates for their child and resources on ways to support positive school attendance. Beginning in December, the attendance updates included grade level averages as a reference to understand their child’s attendance rate.

Student Growth - Year 2 Developing

Although District 39 provides an update on all continuing initiatives in January, a full report will be provided at the February board meeting on Student Growth and the Response to Growth Intervention plan. Next month, growth data will be available since the second administration of NWEA MAP assessment is currently taking place and will provide the additional data point required to measure student growth on this assessment. Having this data will provide the context needed for the developing growth model. The Board can expect a separate report and presentation on this initiative at the February board meeting.

Sustainability Planning and Practices - Year 2 Implementing

1. District 39 continues its sustainability practices across the district. Students have led efforts to recycle and reduce in a variety of ways. Food waste is composted in **all** six school cafeterias by students in first grade through eighth grade. This year, Ms. Lindsay McNaught conducted a garbage audit with her Integrated Global Studies students at

Highcrest Middle School on November 15th and 16th. The purpose of the audit was to determine if students and staff are sorting their landfill garbage into the appropriate containers. Students took the landfill bag of waste collected from all lunch periods and laid it on a tarp. Going through the garbage, they sorted the landfill garbage into the following categories: unopened items, compost, recycle, milk cartons, and landfill. The students discovered that approximately 20% of the landfill waste could be added to the compost bag while the remainder went into recycling with a small percentage being unopened food. These results demonstrated that there is room for improvement and the class will find additional ways of improving how waste can be sorted correctly.

2. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction has conducted a thorough review of existing curricula for environmental literacy goals and objectives. U.S. Department of Education identifies effective environmental and sustainability education as the following:
 - Interdisciplinary learning about the key relationships between dynamic environmental, energy, and human systems;
 - Use of the environment and sustainability to develop STEM content knowledge and thinking skills to prepare graduates for the 21st century technology-driven economy; and
 - Development of civic engagement knowledge and skills and students' application of such knowledge and skills to address sustainability issues in their community.

Environmental literacy is defined as knowledge applied to respond to an environmental situation or issue. The environmental literacy audit results confirm that District 39 curricula provides students with a multitude of learning opportunities. During the next cycle of Science and/or Social Studies Curriculum Review, these findings will provide a starting point for rich discussion, reflection, and revisions.

Learning Commons - Year 2 Implementing (Romona & McKenzie) & Year 3 Reflecting (Harper & Wilmette Junior High School)

1. Romona and McKenzie Schools are in their first year of having a Learning Commons. Both schools set goals to increase the use of the Learning Commons by 25% compared to the traditional LMC/Tech classes. Harper School and Wilmette Junior High School are in their final reflective year. Both schools strive to have 80% of their respective students demonstrating creativity, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration when engaged in learning experiences held in the Learning Commons.

Students have begun to experience coding districtwide. District 39 students participated in the Hour of Code which is a worldwide effort to celebrate computer science, starting with 1-hour coding activities. Teachers have used breakout boxes (resettable locks and boxes) to transform traditional learning experiences into those requiring critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills for students. Highcrest and Wilmette Junior High teachers are sharing how to apply the 4Cs in the classroom and identify ways these skills are enhancing learning. Teachers are noting changes to instruction as a result of the Learning Commons.

Annual Business Updates

Curriculum Review Committee - Year 1 Developing

The Grades 5-8 Related Arts Committee formed to review the learning opportunities offered to students starting in 5th grade through 8th grade. Prior to analyzing current course offerings in each grade level, the members discussed their beliefs about an effective related arts (exploratory) program. Although the philosophy/position statement is still in draft form, a couple of common beliefs surfaced among the members of the committee:

- All students need an opportunity to explore and learn about each related arts category with a gradual increase in student choice in the upper grades.
- There should be consistency in course offerings, length of course, and learning pathways that span grade levels.

Currently, the committee is engaged in reviewing existing course offerings, brainstorming additional course ideas, and matching courses to appropriate grade levels. The committee will continue its work in order to develop recommendations with the purpose of refining the student experience from 5th grade through 8th grade.

Revised Curricula Implementation - Year 2 Implementing

The English Language Arts Curriculum Review was completed last school year. District 39's revised writing curriculum is in its second year of implementation. The revised reading curriculum is in its first year of implementation. District 39 has continued its partnership with the Chicago Literacy Group, experts in the workshop approach, to provide on-going training and support to teachers. We have learned that in order to support the best practices embedded in the writing and reading workshop approach, a classroom needs a library containing varied text -- genres, topics, and levels. Last spring, Department of Curriculum and Instruction took inventory of current materials/books that support the goals/objectives of the revised reading curriculum. This inventory guided book purchases for students to access in their classroom libraries and more titles will be added in the next two years in order to complete the collections.

The World Language Curriculum Review was completed last spring and the revised curricula is currently in the first year of implementation - Spanish (K-8), French (5-8), German (5-8), and Latin (5-8). Teachers are reflecting on implementation, monitoring student progress, and identifying areas for improvement. The teachers have dedicated much time and energy to aligning performance-based assessments and rubrics with end of course expectations for performance toward proficiency. These expectations are aligned with the American Council for Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency levels. A continuous challenge is in the procurement of truly authentic language materials and experiences in order to provide a meaningful context for each unit of study.

The members of the Library Media Technology department continue to support the goals and standards embedded in the township Digital Citizen curriculum. Promoting positive digital citizenship is the responsibility of teachers, parents and students. District 39 has invited Dr. Kristen Mattson to the February Institute Day to engage staff in learning more about digital citizenship.

Last year, the Progress Reporting/Report Card Review Committee revised District 39 reporting documents for grades 1-4 by updating the standard descriptors to reflect the current Illinois Learning Standards. In February, parents of 1st through 4th grade students will receive their child's progress reports and a guide that explains each section. The revised grade level descriptors better reflect what students are learning and provide a more efficient, yet detailed description of student progress. The progress reporting document for Kindergarten is designed as a continuum of development. Each child's progress report takes into consideration the unique progression and development throughout the year. In grades 5-6, the teachers are focused on identifying existing evidence within D39 curricula to support teachers with reporting on student progress toward end of year standards. In grades 7-8, the teachers are engaged in professional development and discourse around standards-based practices. 2017-2018 school year is dedicated to learning for Wilmette Junior High School teachers. During the 2018-2019 school year, a review committee will be formed to review 7th/8th grade progress reporting documents.


Student School Day and Schedule - Year 2 Implementing

The K-4 scheduling committee is meeting quarterly to review strengths and/or challenges to the new elementary schedule. Friday early dismissals have been utilized by staff for student data review, curriculum planning, and collaborative time with members of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction can provide small group trainings and support.

CONCLUSION

District 39 administrators and staff have worked diligently toward achieving the goals and/or outcomes of the 2017-2018 Strategic Plan. The Board will be presented updates on the New Strategic Initiatives in February. Our work will continue and the Board may expect a full Strategic Plan review in June.

Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,



Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D., Superintendent