

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Wilmette Public Schools

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: February 24, 2020

To: Members, Board of Education

From: Building Principals
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Subject: 2019-2020 Strategic Plan Updates: Continuing Initiatives

BACKGROUND

On September 23, 2019, the Board of Education approved the implementation of the 2019-2020 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 Initiatives. The New Strategic Initiative update will be presented in March.

Delivering a Nutritious School Lunch Program

During 2018-2019, a School Nutrition committee, comprised of parents, staff, and administrators, was established to review the District 39 lunch program. The first step in the review process was to conduct a survey of parents/guardians and students. The intent of the survey was to determine if parents and students were satisfied with current food options, felt the options met nutritional standards, and whether the options were desirable to students.

Overall, the results of the surveys were very positive. In order to improve the nutritional quality and food services, the committee is using last year's survey results to focus on developing recommendations to revise the current lunch program to provide "cleaner" options, calculate cost impact and how nutritional facts/information are shared with students, staff, and parents. Many new items have been tried this year including pork carnitas, whole wheat bagels, BLT chipotle chicken wraps, potato crusted pollock fish. In addition, food services have increased the variety of fruits offered at the schools. For example, at Highcrest students are now able to purchase fresh cut fruit bowls at the deli line in addition to the hot lunch line. Also, at Wilmette Junior High students are now able to purchase fresh cut fruit bowls at the deli in addition to the hot lunch and a la carte lines. At the elementary schools, all students are now able to select from a variety of cut fresh fruit options on a daily basis. The monthly menus highlight a new "cleaner" item to bring attention to this option as well as included in principal newsletters to reach parents. District 39 students hear new food items announced during morning announcements and/or displayed on screens.

Once a new menu item has been introduced two and/or three times, students are surveyed to gather their input. In addition to surveying students following each lunch period, all students and parents will be asked to provide feedback on overall satisfaction with food services and nutrition quality. District 39 also conducted focus group style discussions with kitchen staff to get their unique perspective on the menu changes as well as the impact on providing these items such as preparation time. As a result of the focus groups, the committee will need to take a closer look at the amount of time needed to prepare and cut all of the additional fresh fruit and new menu items. The incremental labor cost will need to be reviewed in conjunction with the lunch fee recommendation in May.

Student Growth through Differentiation & Personalization

The Board of Education was presented with an annual Fall Assessment Report¹ during the October Committee of the Whole meeting and the Board of Education meeting. Throughout the year, the administration has focused on reviewing assessment data, sharing data with staff, and addressing ways to support student growth. The following are examples of the action steps taken at each school:

- Engaged staff in learning intervention and progress monitoring strategies during staff meetings.
- Reviewed student data with specialist teams which includes reading specialists, psychologists, and principals to support the Response to Intervention (RtI) process.

¹ Fall Assessment Report: <https://bit.ly/2V5HZEE>

- Participated in data-driven problem-solving meetings facilitated by Intervention Leadership Team members.
- Dedicated staff meetings to encourage a culture of data use by engaging staff on the use of qualitative and quantitative data to inform instructional decisions in content areas.
- Maximize the strengths of specialist roles by serving as a co-teacher and a resource to support students. These specialists may serve on a Student Assistance Teams (SAT) or function individually: psychologists, learning behavior specialists, social worker, differentiation support teachers, and technology teachers.
- Analyzed end-of-year state assessment results so that principals can meet with grade level groups and collaborate on developing a plan to celebrate strengths while addressing areas for improvement.

District 39 will continue building the capacity of staff to address the needs of students and present a student growth update in the spring.

Designing a Kindergarten Enrichment Program

During the October 28, 2019 Board of Education meeting, Board members received an update on the new program called the Kindergarten Enrichment and Enhancement Program of District 39 or “KEEP39.” KEEP39 will provide kindergarten families with an optional, in-district kindergarten enrichment program designed to enhance the instruction provided to students through D39’s high-quality half-day academic kindergarten program. KEEP39 will include enrichment and exploration through a variety of activities and purposeful play designed to offer opportunities for students to enhance development as critical and creative thinkers as well as responsible and productive lifelong learners.

The Kindergarten Enrichment Program Development Committee, comprised of four Kindergarten teachers, Administrator for Curriculum & Instruction, and elementary principals, has continued to meet and developed the program’s framework. This framework includes lesson ideas and activities that will enrich learning in literacy, math, social studies, science, socialization and purposeful play. It will also provide enhanced social emotional experiences to inspire kindness, empathy, and resilience as well as embrace inclusivity and diversity. For example, a lesson may focus on fostering the ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts. The students may be introduced to this core competency through literature (specifically through characters in a book) and then reinforced throughout the week during purposeful play or other interpersonal interactions. The next lesson would be to use this ability to recognize emotions and understand how it may influence behavior.

District 39 is excited to meet this long standing need in our community by providing families an option for a kindergarten enrichment program within their neighborhood school to complement the existing academic kindergarten programming. Kindergarten enrichment will be offered to Central and Harper families during the 2020-2021 school year with plans to extend the program to Romona and McKenzie families pending the success of the program and completion of construction projects at each of these schools to support program expansion. District 39 has included a Kindergarten Enrichment page on the district website so that families may access KEEP39 information including how to enroll and/or register.

Building School Culture and Community

District 39's "Building School Culture and Community" initiative focuses on enhancing each schools' culture and connectedness. Administrators, staff, and students have embraced this initiative and have added to the list of accomplishments outlined on the Strategic Plan. For example, since the start of the school year, District 39 has:

- Hosted school-based celebrations and community-building activities to kick off the school year
 - Celebrating Our Values: Central students and staff gathered for an all-school assembly in August. Central students came together in song and pledged to treat each other with dignity and respect as part of their "First Class Central" theme.
 - Celebrating Our Goals: As part of the "Together We Make Harper" project, students and staff wrote their goals for the year on paper dolphins and taped them to a Harper mural located in the second grade hallway.
 - Celebrating the First Day: McKenzie staff organized a Hollywood-style red carpet welcome for returning students and families on the first day of school. Each student was celebrated as they embarked on their year-long journey of learning and growing at McKenzie.
 - Celebrating Special Days: At Romona, students are treated to a special luncheon with their principals during their birthday month. Students with August birthdays received mustang sunglasses in celebration of their bright futures.
 - Celebrating Our Actions: Students at Highcrest receive "Hawk Feathers" from teachers and staff to recognize instances where they exhibit Honest, Accountable, Welcoming, Kind and Safe (HAWKS) behavior. The feathers are used in a raffle where students can win prizes each week.
 - Celebrating Each Other: Students and staff at Wilmette Junior High are working together to create team and classroom identities. Students also participated in a merit challenge in September to celebrate safe, responsible, respectful and inclusive actions.
- Provided all staff with anti-bias/inclusion training led by the Anti-Defamation League
 - October 14, 2019 Institute Day: Allyship in the Face of Hate - Responding to Bias Incidents in Schools
 - Staff learned strategies for responding to bias and equipping educators with skills to decide when and how to challenge incidents.
 - January 15, 2019 Staff Meetings: Practicing Zero Indifference
 - Staff learned how to respond effectively to identity-based name-calling and other bias-based behaviors within the school community.
 - February 17, 2020 Institute Day: From Identity to Practice - Understanding our own biases and what to do with them.
 - Staff engaged in meaningful conversations about how our identities shape our engagement with students, families, and colleagues and how to ensure that all members of a school community feel welcome.
- Led Social-Emotional Learning lessons and classroom community-building lessons within classrooms and homerooms across our District
- Continued to teach and celebrate kindness, empathy and inclusion through various efforts

- Participated in a district-wide Unity Day celebration of kindness and inclusion
 - On October 23, 2019, staff and students wore orange in support of Unity Day and engaged in discussions about joining efforts to stand up to bullying by being united for kindness, acceptance, and inclusion.
- Hosted/offered educational presentations and events to engage families, community members, and residents focused on strengthening partnerships and offering insight and information on topics of interest to our school community
 - Allyship in the Face of Hate (December)
 - Coping with and Overcoming Anxiety (January)
 - *Like* Movie Screening & Social Media and Discussion (January)
 - Understanding How Identities are Impacting Students Today (February)
 - Fostering Resilient Learners (February)

District 39 has partnered with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook to hold community discussions on topics such as hate, bias, diversity, identity, and an inclusive culture for all. Other events were also hosted in partnership with District 39 PTOs/PTAs, New Trier Township districts, and/or Family Service Center.

District 39 has more public events planned for March and April on the following topics:

- Preparing for Transitions
- Parenting in a Digital Age
- Engaging in Difficult Conversations around Conflict, Bias, and Diversity
- Long-Term Planning for a Child with Comprehensive Needs

In addition, each school has organized other learning experiences engaging a variety of stakeholders in improving District 39 culture and community. During the presentation, D39 will highlight an example of each action step listed under this initiative.

Creating Flexible Learning Environments

The Learning Commons spaces provide students with opportunities to explore and collaborate together in ways not possible within more traditional spaces. It is about utilizing student voice, increasing student engagement, heightening collaborative learning, and prioritizing students' learning environment needs.

With the help of the Board of Education, District 39 has completed a significant, multi-year, district-wide facility improvement effort. The last ribbon cutting ceremony of the new Learning Commons took place at Highcrest Middle School on January 27, 2020. This means that all of our students pre-K through 8th grade now have access to a state-of-the-art learning center designed to enhance collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity. The development of these spaces has been a community effort involving staff representation and partnerships with PTAs and PTOs to raise funds for furniture. Additionally, each school received generous financial gifts from District 39 Educational Foundation.

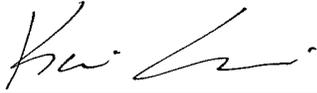
At Highcrest Middle School, the work continues as staff and students shift their attention to the Outdoor Classroom/Garden Project now that construction has been completed. Tom Martin along with Deb Samyn and Kevin Clark of The Lakota Group worked with students, teachers,

administrators to gather information about insights of the project. The process began with a survey to Highcrest students to gather opinions and over 500 students responded. The students were asked to rate images of landscape elements and activities using 1-5 stars. In summary, the responses identified math and science as favorite subjects, a colorful wall and planter, tree house reading area, and many whimsical elements such as large board games. During the February 2, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting, The Lakota Group presented their design suggestions and options. After reviewing the design and cost estimates provided by the Lakota Group, District administrators recommended moving forward with finalizing plans and looking for additional funding.

CONCLUSION

District 39 administrators and staff have worked diligently toward achieving the goals and/or outcomes of the 2019-2020 Strategic Plan. The Board will be presented an update on the New Strategic Initiative in March and a full Strategic Plan review in June.

Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,



Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D., Superintendent