

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Wilmette Public Schools

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: February 22, 2021

To: Members, Board of Education

From: Building Principals
Grade Level Administrators
Assistant Principals

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Administrator for Technology, Information, & Safety

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Assistant Director of Special Services

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Chief School Business Official

Subject: 2020-2021 Strategic Plan Updates: Continuing Initiatives

BACKGROUND

On September 21, 2020, the Board of Education approved the implementation of the 2020-2021 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.

Updates on the New Strategic Initiative is typically presented in March. This year's New Initiative is the District 39 Reopening Plan. Throughout this unique year, the Board of

Education has been receiving updates and reports on a regular basis and this will continue for the rest of the school year.

Designing a Kindergarten Enrichment Program

Background

For many years, District 39 focused efforts toward meeting a long standing need in our community by providing families an option for a kindergarten enrichment program within their neighborhood school to complement the existing high-quality half-day academic kindergarten programming. Over time and with careful, phased implementation planning by the Board of Education and administration, District 39 began preparing to offer a tuition-based, optional program to launch in Fall 2020 at two elementary schools: Central School and Harper School. 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.

During the 2019-2020 school year and throughout Summer 2020, District 39 began developing the Kindergarten Enrichment and Enhancement Program or “KEEP39.” KEEP39’s program goals included enrichment and exploration opportunities, purposeful play designed to offer opportunities to enhance development as critical and creative thinkers and activities to promote how to be responsible and productive lifelong learners. With these goals in mind, the Kindergarten Enrichment Program Development Committee, comprised of four Kindergarten teachers, Administrator for Curriculum & Instruction, and elementary principals, met 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 also provides enhanced social emotional experiences to inspire kindness, empathy, and resilience as well as embrace inclusivity and diversity.

Year 1 Implementation Mid-year Update: Enrollment

While preparing for the unique 2020-2021 school year, District 39 committed to move forward with offering KEEP39 at Central and Harper Elementary Schools. Although all adjustments required to adhere to health and safety guidelines were made, families were faced with a challenging enrollment decision. Initially, approximately 75% of Central kindergarten students and 87% of Harper kindergarten students were interested in participating in KEEP39 -- 70 and 66 students respectively. As noted in the chart below, the COVID19 pandemic had a significant impact on enrollment this year. However, District 39 is confident in the original interest numbers and believe they are a more accurate indicator of interest in future years.

KEEP39	Central	Harper
Total Academic Kindergarten Enrollment (June 2020)	93	76
Original Interest in KEEP39	70	66
Early August	54	50

Start of School	32	22
Current Enrollment	35	19

Year 1 Implementation Mid-year Update: Program Review

During this first year of implementation, the KEEP39 program review committee, comprised of KEEP39 teachers, principals of Central and Harper Schools, and the Administrator for Curriculum & Instruction, have met and will continue to meet throughout the year to conduct a program review. These meetings offer opportunities to discuss and reflect on program implementation. The feedback gathered from the review of programming elements will be used to guide any updates/revisions, if necessary.

During first semester, the members of the committee met on December 15, 2021 and January 12, 2021. These meetings focused on the teachers’ perceptions, reflections, and evaluations on how the goals of KEEP39 are being met as well as the benefits they observe in their students. For example, the teachers have noted the increased comfort and familiarity with the kindergarten setting, connectedness and sense of community with teachers and peers, and the benefits of the continuity throughout the day. In addition, they noted the elements they were not able to implement such as the highly interactive cooperative games. Those games were replaced with other shared learning activities that were more aligned with the health and safety protocols. Throughout second semester, the committee’s work will continue along with gathering feedback and input from students and families.

KEEP39 Phase II Update

The Board of Education has begun planning for construction at McKenzie and Romona Elementary Schools to accommodate KEEP39 programming district-wide as early as the 2021-22 school year, pending program evaluation and expansion. The construction recommendations have been reviewed with STR Architects and administration has requested the Board of Education to authorize the bidding process. These projects are out to bid and garnered high interest based on the 51 companies who attended the pre-bid meeting held on February 1, 2021. The Bid Opening was held on Wednesday, February 17, 2021. The Board is scheduled to vote on these projects during this February 22, 2021 meeting. If the Board were to determine that the pursuit of the two necessary construction projects was not possible, the administration would revisit the 2021-2022 KEEP39 options presented during the December 7, 2020 meeting.

Student Growth through Differentiation & Personalization

The Board of Education was presented with an annual Fall Assessment Report¹ during the November 16, 2020 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/district to engage staff on the use of qualitative and quantitative data to inform instructional decisions:

¹ Fall Assessment Report: <https://bit.ly/3dp3c5E>

- The Department of Curriculum & Instruction met with building administrators to review school specific data and how to crosswalk growth data (eduCLIMBER) and the learning continuum report (NWEA MAP) with staff.
- The Department of Student Services met with building administrators to review the universal social and emotional screeners data - Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) and the Mindsets, Essential Skills and Habits (MESH).
- The student achievement and growth process includes a review of benchmark assessment data and dedicated time for teachers to discuss student data as well as intervention programming.
 - Building administrators provide several opportunities for student data reviews throughout the year: data reviews after fall, winter, spring benchmarking with staff, grade level/team-specific meetings, as well as during the intervention leadership team meetings.
 - Building administrators lead staff in applying the problem-solving steps/process to ensure that both qualitative and quantitative data are included when identifying students in need of additional support or enrichment.
 - Building administrators, with support from the Department of Curriculum & Instruction, provides staff training on how to best interpret assessment reports to identify trends or patterns in areas of focus or enrichment to assist in planning for reteaching or enrichment at the grade level, classroom level, and student level.
- Each elementary building has an Intervention Leadership Team (ILT) comprised of staff members. This team provides support grade level teams for student intervention. Teachers can contact members of the team to request support and to document student needs. The team provides intervention programming ideas, data tracking systems, and continued progress monitoring. Each grade level may meet with a member of the ILT during Friday collaboration meetings to review student data, discuss new student needs while following the problem solving process.
- Grades 5-8 administrators lead teams through the problem solving process and in intervention planning during team meetings. In efforts to engage students in understanding assessment data and setting personal goals, a 6th grade team of teachers are piloting a goal setting process. They are using reading and math MAP data and conferencing with students in setting growth goals. Fostering student agency and involvement in monitoring personal growth is the end goal.
- These systems of support are not only for academic areas. The process and data include social emotional well-being.
 - DESSA and/or MESH data is reviewed and discussed to identify school-wide strengths that are celebrated as well as relative areas of weakness that are used to build upon and improve. Teams continue to build a sense of belonging among and throughout the school community.
 - DESSA and/or MESH data is shared with teams/teachers. With support from building administrators, teams are asked to reflect on what the data indicates, to consider what questions are raised by the data, and to develop an SEL goal based on an identified area for growth.

District 39 will continue building the capacity of staff to address the needs of students and monitor student growth academically, socially, and emotionally.

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.

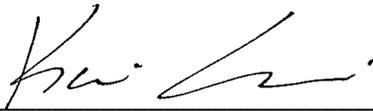
With the help of the Board of Education, District 39 has completed a significant, multi-year, district-wide facility improvement effort. The last ribbon cutting ceremony of the new Learning Commons took place at Highcrest Middle School on January 27, 2020. This means that all of our students pre-K through 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 staff and students were prepared to shift their attention to the Outdoor Classroom/Garden Project now that construction has been completed. However, due to restrictions posed by COVID19, some of the concrete benches were installed as well as the planting of initial shrubs. Due to a lack of volunteers and the ability to maintain space, all other planting was paused. Therefore, the final installation of benches/seating areas and planting is scheduled for Spring 2021. An Eagle Scout has chosen Highcrest Middle School to complete a project and will be building a reading nest for the outdoor classroom in the spring as well.

CONCLUSION

District 39 administrators and staff have worked diligently toward achieving the goals and/or outcomes of the 2020-2021 Strategic Plan. The Board will be presented a full Strategic Plan review in June.

Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,



Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D., Superintendent