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To: Benjamin 25 Board of Education
Dr. Patrick McGill, Superintendent
From: Dr. Fitzgerald
Date: October 19th, 2026
Topic: Teaching and Learning Report

BACKGROUND

I provide the Board of Education, Superintendent, and the community with a report at each regular Board of Education meeting, highlighting District Learning and Teaching activities and information.

SUMMARY

Benjamin SD 25 Institute Day 10-9-2026

We had a wonderful day of learning on Friday, October 9th. We started off in our combined strategic planning committees.

The Instructional Practices Committee took a look at the District's homework framework and guidelines as it applies to grades K-8. Both committees solidified a survey to be sent out to the staff at Evergreen and Benjamin inquiring about their current homework practices. In addition, each school committee engaged in discussions about the purpose of homework, homework barriers, grading, types of assignments, the communication sent home about homework and the connection between homework and overall student achievement.

The Student Engagement Committee spent time working at the building level. Evergreen/Benjamin, then reconvened for a combined group for the last 30 minutes. The Benjamin group focused on streamlining and organizing how extracurricular information gets provided to families and students; and worked on some possible improvements. They also discussed how existing data from the "know our students" and "trusted adult" surveys can be better used to increase student engagement. Finally, they workshopped some ways to get student input on what they'd like to get involved in, and how they perceive their own engagement. Evergreen worked on ways to explore making sure all students have a trusted adult at school, while coming up with ways that teachers can build relationships with students. They also discussed streamlining the communication aspect of clubs. They also want to focus on classroom engagement and student-centered learning and motivation. In the last 30 minutes the committees shared with each other and seemed to be very aligned, but it may look differently at the two schools.

The Student Support Committee had Shelly Skarzynski and Merri Beth Kudrna from the DuPage Regional Office of Education present on the Core Elements of MTSS and some Tier 1 "Non-Negotiables" and then committee members participated in an Audit of Tier 1 Core Non-Negotiables as well as a Brainstorming & Categorizing System Barriers/Prioritization Exercise. Finally, they began developing solutions for high-priority Items and outlined immediate vs. 90-day action steps for each top priority.

The Curriculum Committee had Deena Soffer Goldstein and Ron Barbercheck from the Learning Sciences Institute at the University of Illinois Chicago present about what we should be looking for when selecting a math curriculum resource. One of the highlights from the session was seeing our teachers divided into different groups and working on a scenario problem spotlighting the fact that each group arrived at the correct answer in a different way and that the discussions between the group members resulted in critical thinking and collaboration that is more likely to make the learning stick. The session ended with teachers being able to ask the presenters about their specific experiences with different curriculums that we are currently exploring.

After the curriculum meetings I presented to the district on developing a Portrait of an Educator. The session included defining what the portrait is, who the architects of the portrait are and and how we will use the portrait as a district. The teachers then participated in a table activity where they narrowed down a list of twenty great teacher competencies to seven. Since the meeting, I have recorded and sorted each group's top seven teacher competencies and compiled and ranked the competencies based on the number of times they made the top seven. Next steps will include defining what each competency looks like in our schools and classrooms before finalizing the portrait.

We ended the day with a great presentation from Dr. Salamone and our EL staff which focused on how to integrate multicultural activities into classroom learning along with different ways to support EL learners and families. This was truly a great day of learning.

RECOMMENDATION(S)
None at this time.