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To: Brian Charron, Superintendent
Board of Education

From: Jessica Washausen
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Date: May 18, 2026

Subject: May Board Report

May 2026 Board Report

Science of Writing

On May 6, 2026, Jennifer Hall, Bill Pawalk, and I had the pleasure of attending the Illinois Science of Writing Summit. Hosted by Amplify, the conference featured Natalie Wexler, a renowned education journalist and author, and Dr. Pam Kastner, a prominent leader in literacy and the Science of Reading. Both are widely recognized as the experts in the integration of reading and writing instruction.

To build upon our current implementation of CKLA and further explore the research-based correlation between literacy and composition, I am offering a summer book study over *The Writing Revolution 2.0*, co-authored by Natalie Wexler. Throughout this book study, we will explore the 6 Principles of the Hochman Method, the fundamentals of sentence writing, the importance of planning before writing, how to best support students to outline a paragraph, the importance of revision and summarizing, and how to best support upper elementary students to create compositions.

By diving deeper into the “why” behind the science of reading and writing, we will better align our instructional practices with the rigorous structure of CKLA. This book study will support our educators with the pedagogical tools necessary to bring together reading and writing.

Benchmarking Aimsweb Data

As we wrap up the year, each building is finalizing universal benchmarking for all students in both Mathematics and English Language Arts. This comprehensive assessment is critical for capturing a clear snapshot of student growth while identifying specific instruction needs. This data will be used to make informed decisions throughout the summer in reference to instructional alignment, resource allocation, and placement decisions.

Summer/Fall Book Study Opportunities

Our educators are committed to professional growth, even during their time off. I am pleased to announce that Jennifer Hall and I applied for grants through the Illinois Reading League. We were awarded 15 books each for our Pre-K/EC book study and our 1st/2nd grade book study. We would like to extend our gratitude to Lyndi Davis for her instrumental support throughout the grant application process.

The following evidence-based book studies will be offered to staff to ensure instructional alignment across grade levels. These selections represent a diverse range of instructional priorities, from foundational language comprehension with our youngest learners to advanced mathematical reasoning and structured writing with our upper grades. By facilitating these studies, we empower our educators to implement teaching strategies that directly benefit student achievement.

- **Pre-K/Early Childhood**—*Strive for Five Conversations: A Framework that Gets Kids Talking to Accelerate Their Language Comprehension and Literacy* by Sonia Q. Cabell and Tricia A. Zucker; led by Jennifer Hall
- **Kindergarten**—*Purposeful Play* by Kristine Mraz, Alison Porcelli, and Cherly Tyler; led by Amanda Wittenkeller, ISBE KIDS Coach
- **1st and 2nd Grade**—*The Writing Revolution 2.0* by Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler; led by Jessica Washausen
- **3rd-8th Grade**—*Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics Grades K-12: 14 Teaching Practices for Enhancing Learning*; led by Melissa Ziegler