



Subject: Curriculum Update
Date: October 14, 2025

SUBJECT: Curriculum Update

Ms. Chris Arado, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, will present the District Goals Update.

BACKGROUND:

New Employee Orientation and After-School Sessions Update: As part of the new employee orientation process, staff will participate in four after-school sessions throughout the school year. The first two sessions—Teaching Isn't Solo Work: Welcome to Your PLC and Teaching with Language in Mind: Empowering MLLs to Thrive—have already been held, providing opportunities for collaboration, learning, and support.

The Teaching Isn't Solo Work session introduced new educators to District 45's Professional Learning Community (PLC) framework, emphasizing the importance of shared leadership, collaboration, and a results-oriented culture. Participants explored the three big ideas of a PLC—focus on learning, collaborative culture, and results orientation—and reflected on how collective responsibility leads to improved student outcomes. Teachers discussed what effective collaboration looks like, reviewed the four critical questions of a PLC ("What do we want students to learn? How will we know if they've learned it? How will we respond if they haven't learned it? How will we extend learning for those who have?"), and examined the Unit Cycle of Instruction to understand how data informs teaching and intervention.

The training also highlighted characteristics of high-performing teams and effective team leaders, including being student-focused, data-literate, and skilled in facilitating purposeful collaboration. Participants reflected on their strengths and set goals for personal growth in leadership and teamwork. The session concluded with a discussion on leading bravely, encouraging educators to embrace vulnerability, foster trust, and maintain focus on continuous improvement—even when the process feels challenging.

The Teaching with Language in Mind session, led by the Multilingual Department, focused on building teacher understanding of how to support English Learners and newcomers in District 45 classrooms. Participants reviewed the district's vision for multilingual education, discussed key terminology (such as MLL, TBE, and WIDA), and explored classroom strategies that promote language development and access to grade-level content. Educators practiced techniques including Total Physical Response (TPR), Picture and Word Sorts, and Sentence Prompts, which integrate movement, visuals, and structured speaking opportunities to make instruction more engaging and comprehensible for all students. The session also highlighted the use of WIDA

“Can Do” Descriptors to differentiate instruction based on students’ language proficiency levels and emphasized the importance of using sensory, graphic, and interactive supports—such as visuals, manipulatives, and peer collaboration—to strengthen both oracy and literacy.

Upcoming sessions will focus on Every Choice Counts: Supporting Student Behavior with Care and Consistency and From Burnout to Brilliance: AI Tools for New Teachers.

School Improvement Day: On September 2, 2025, District 45 staff participated in a full-day professional development event held at their home schools from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The day centered on two main areas: school-based improvement work and a districtwide virtual session focused on the technology landscape, guidelines, and guardrails for District 45. The districtwide tech session emphasized balanced, developmentally appropriate technology use, data privacy, and the integration of AI in education. Staff reviewed District 45-approved digital tools, explored District 45’s AI Guidelines, and received hands-on training with MagicSchool AI to support instructional planning and student engagement.

At the end of the day, staff were asked to complete an evaluation, and 193 staff did so. Given the large data set, ChatGPT was used to summarize the feedback. The Key Takeaways from the evaluations are as follows:

Technology Landscape, Guidelines, and Guardrails districtwide session

Evaluation Question: Share practical steps you can take based on the session.

Overall Summary

Participants left the session feeling:

- ★ Motivated and curious about integrating AI tools thoughtfully.
- ★ More aware of digital responsibility and student safety.
- ★ Better equipped to communicate with families and collaborate with staff.
- ★ Inspired to apply new strategies that support personalized and balanced learning experiences.

Evaluation Question: Share any highlights of if and how your mindset shifted as a result of the session.

Conclusion

The session successfully prompted reflection, critical thinking, and balanced attitudes about technology and AI.

Staff are leaving with:

- ★ A more informed, nuanced understanding of AI and educational technology.
- ★ Renewed commitment to student well-being, purposeful tech use, and teacher agency.
- ★ Confidence in the district’s thoughtful leadership and clear direction on digital learning tools.

School-based School Improvement Activities

Evaluation Question: Share practical steps you can take based on the building-based work.

Overall Summary

Staff shared a wide range of practical, actionable steps they plan to implement following the session. The most common themes focused on aligning instruction with SIP goals, collaboration and data use through PLCs, family and community engagement, student-centered instruction (SEL, Thrively, comprehension strategies), and refining classroom practices. Overall, staff expressed readiness to apply learning directly to the classroom, team, and schoolwide efforts.

Evaluation Question: Share any highlights of if and how your mindset shifted as a result of the building-based work.

Overall Summary

Many staff members described renewed focus, awareness, and motivation in several key areas:

- ★ Collaboration and teamwork through effective PLCs
- ★ Student-centered instruction and growth mindset
- ★ Balanced use of technology and data
- ★ Attention to student well-being, privacy, and the “whole child”
- ★ Intentionality in instruction, especially in math vocabulary, comprehension, and SEL

Questions regarding the entire day

Evaluation Question: What was the highlight of your day?

Conclusion

The highlights of the day reflect a positive, collaborative, and future-focused professional culture. Staff valued:

- ★ Time to collaborate and apply learning toward SIP goals
- ★ Meaningful, practical professional development aligned with their classroom needs
- ★ Exploration of new instructional tools and technology
- ★ Intentional focus on student strengths, hope, and ownership
- ★ Strong sense of connection and community across teams and buildings

Overall, the day’s success was rooted in collaboration, relevance, and engagement—staff left energized, informed, and ready to apply their learning.

Evaluation Question: What would have improved the day for you and why?

Quick Wins the District/Buildings Could Implement

- ★ Block schedule for “DO time”: 60–120 min hands-on segments (plan, build, test) after each learning chunk.
- ★ Active session design: cap direct-teach to ~10–15 min, then rotate to try-it/peer share; add movement/brain breaks every 45–60 min.
- ★ AI/Tech pathway: Beginner vs. Advanced tracks; sandbox time with coaches; recorded modules + building-level labs.
- ★ Protect plan time on short weeks; consider opting for a work-through-lunch to end earlier.
- ★ Logistics: publish agenda early, ensure room temp, add travel buffers, shift lunch later.

- ★ Choice & depth: fewer topics, deeper dives; add sessions on SEL, attendance strategies, Danielson, EL, behavior.
- ★ Community comforts: coffee/snack stations; tech back-ups for watch parties.

Executive Summary: Staff feedback from District 45's recent School Improvement Day was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting strong engagement, collaboration, and alignment with district goals. Educators valued time spent working in teams, exploring new instructional tools such as Magic School AI, Thrively, and the Comprehension Playbook, and focusing on student ownership, social-emotional learning, and data-driven instruction. The primary suggestions for improvement centered on allowing more time for planning and collaboration, incorporating more interactive and hands-on learning opportunities, and streamlining sessions with additional breaks or movement. Overall, staff expressed appreciation for the relevance and practicality of the professional learning and a shared commitment to applying new strategies that support purposeful, student-centered instruction across the district.