

East Aurora School District 131 School Improvement Plan 2025-2026





EAST AURORA DISTRICT 131

School Name:		H.W. Cowherd Middle School		Principal Name:		Jacqueline Gibson	
Mission:		At H.W. Cowherd Middle School, we work together to ensure an inclusive community where everyone is safe, valued, supported, empowered, and learning.		Vision:		H.W. Cowherd Middle School is a joyful, thriving place where teachers, families, and community partners unite to celebrate diversity, personalize learning and nurture confident, compassionate learners ready to lead and succeed in a dynamic world.	
School Improvement Team	Name:	Jacqueline Gibson	Name:	Jesus Barraza	Name:	Rachel Jenkins	
	Role:	Administrator	Role:	Teacher (PE/Health)	Role:	Social Worker	
	Name:	Anastasia Heimberger	Name:	Rachel Gerhard	Name:	Jonathan Kuehl	
	Role:	Administrator	Role:	Instructional Coach (Mathematics)	Role:	Teacher (Encore - PLTW)	
	Name:	Derrick Smith	Name:	Kaitlyn Gonzalez	Name:	Andrea Lopez	
	Role:	Administrator	Role:	Teacher (Mathematics)	Role:	Teacher (Dual Language Social Studies)	
	Name:	Veronica Zamora	Name:	Carol Hekhuis	Name:	Jacquelyn Tupa	
	Role:	Administrator	Role:	Teacher (Instructional Mathematics & Science)	Role:	Teacher (English Language Arts)	

School Designation and Priorities	
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School Designation	Commendable	Report Card Year:	2024
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Report Card general findings and focus areas:

At CMS we have an 89.5% teacher retention rate - High teacher retention creates consistency for both students and staff, fostering a sense of belonging, academic continuity, and long-term student growth.

"Effective Leaders" and "Involved Families" have increased in rating from "very weak" (2023) to "weak" (2024) on the the 5Essentials survey

23.2% chronic absenteeism, which is the second highest in the past 5 years since 2021 (25.6%)

Steady increase in ELLs over the past 10 years (18% in 2015 to 52.8% in 2024)

Greater (16%) achievement in ELA with lower (44%) growth; Lower (6%) achievement in Math with greater (48%) growth

Instruction- Guiding Principle Educational Equity and Student Achievement

Numeracy Goal & Action Plan

Annual Student Numeracy SMART Goal

By the end of the 2025–2026 school year, H.W. Cowherd Middle School will increase the **percentage of students meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations in mathematics by 6% across all reported groups/demographics**, as measured by the **Spring 2026 Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR)**, compared to Spring 2025 results.

Specific: Focused on mathematics achievement

Measurable: A 6% increase using IAR data

Achievable: Based on current trends & targeted interventions

Relevant: Supports schoolwide academic performance goals

Time-Bound: To be achieved by Spring 2026

Schoolwide Current Reality by Subgroup:

	All Students	IEP	EL	Black	Hispanic	White	Two or More	Asian	Newcomer	Males	Females
Math MAP Baseline	26.59	9.49	20.51	17.02	28.18	18.75	10.00	66.67	33.33	29.25	23.72
Math Achievement (MAP)	17.77	5.70	11.89	12.77	18.93	6.25	10.00	0.00	20.00	20.28	15.05
Math Growth (MAP)	69.08	63.58	69.25	63.74	69.12	81.25	100.00	50.00	81.82	67.08	71.24
Math Proficiency (IAR) 2024	5.65	1.90	1.96	1.82	56.20	28.57	0.00	25.00	0.00	5.10	6.18
Math Growth (IAR) 2024	48.40	39.70	44.60	47.00	48.70	44.30				48.40	50.80
Math Proficiency (IAR) 2025											
Math Growth (IAR) 2025											
Math Grades Proficient or Higher											
iReady (K-8)	2.63	1.36	1.19	3.16	2.53	6.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.64	1.30

Priority Teaching Practices

For this section identify 1-2 Priority Teaching Practices that you will use to move from your current reality to your identified goal above. Please explain why this practice was selected and how you believe it will impact this specific goal.

IF we build capacity for support and guidance of teachers in using strong questioning and discussion strategies in every classroom **THEN** teachers will be able to lead more interactive and student-centered lessons, better understand how their students are learning, and be able to adjust their teaching to meet individual needs—while school leaders stay closely involved by giving meaningful feedback and support **AND** students will take more ownership of their learning, stay more engaged, and build the thinking and communication skills they need to explain ideas, solve problems together, and succeed on key assessments.

Action Planning

Action Steps & subtasks (insert more rows as needed, related to monitoring data/ PD- in sequential order)	Dates to be Implemented	Artifacts to show this action is in progress?	How frequently does the SIP team monitor?	Who is responsible to implement and monitor?	Cost & Funding Source	Was the action step completed?
EL Action: Utilize green & blue for cross-linguistic connections	August 2025			Grade Level teams, particularly "Team Orange" (EL)		In Progress
CWD Action: Utilize models and instructional practices of co-teaching	August 2025	Live Binder Password: Cowherd MS		Grade Level teams, including Resource & Instructional teachers		In Progress

3.2.72: Student Engagement Strategies that Promote Student-Generated Questions and Student-to-Student Interactions

Provide professional development for teachers on questioning and discussion techniques that produce thoughtful dialogue and on methods for increasing the use of academic language.	August 13, 2025	School Leadership Summer Summit presentation		Instructional Coaches	N/A	In Progress
	August 2025	Faculty meetings (Institute Day, Faculty, Building PLC)		Instructional Coaches	N/A	In Progress
Use supports, such as student discussion prompts, to have teachers engage in teaching students questioning techniques.	August 2025	Cowherd's RESOURCE docs		SLT	N/A	In Progress
Math talk strategies	September 2025					In Progress
EL Action: Talking (Sentence) Stems to help promote English-language use and development for increased confidence to participate	August 2025			Grade Level teams, particulary "Team Orange" (EL)	N/A	In Progress
Develop strategies, as well as clear rules and norms, to help students engage in collaborative learning, offer and receive feedback from peers and teachers, engage in questioning and examining claims, and provide encouragement and recognition of effort and progress.	September 2025	Team & PLC meetings		Team & PLC Leaders	N/A	In Progress
Teachers share strategies and successes of questioning & discusion implementation Turn & Talk: Small Wins	September 2025	Faculty meetings (Faculty, Building PLC)		Admin	N/A	In Progress
3.2.74: Posing High-Level Questions That Elicit Creative Responses and Problem Solving						
Provide training for teachers, coaches, and administrators on questioning strategies to address critical thinking skills and depth of knowledge.	August 13, 2025	School Leadership Summer Summit presentation		Instructional Coaches	N/A	In Progress
Provide training for teachers on how students can ask and respond to questions that help them demonstrate learning (e.g., integrate knowledge, analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions) for the purpose of monitoring student progress and adjusting instruction.	August 2025	Faculty meetings (Institute Day, Faculty, Building PLC)		Instructional Coaches	N/A	In Progress
	August 2025	PLC meetings		Admin Math PLC leaders and teams iReady consultant (Stephanie Roberts)	N/A	In Progress
Support teachers in designing questions and responses to students in a manner that results in thought-provoking dialogue.	August 2025	Cowherd's RESOURCE docs		SLT	N/A	In Progress

Instruction- Guiding Principle Educational Equity and Student Achievement

Literacy Goal & Action Plan

Annual Student Literacy SMART Goal

By the end of the 2025–2026 school year, H.W. Cowherd Middle School will increase the **percentage of students meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations in reading by 6% across all reported groups/demographics**, as measured by the **Spring 2026 Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR)**, compared to Spring 2025 results.

Specific: Focused on literacy/reading achievement

Measurable: a 6% increase using IAR data

Achievable: Based on current trends & targeted interventions

Relevant: supports schoolwide academic performance goals

Time-Bound: to be achieved by Spring 2026

Schoolwide Current Reality by Subgroup:

	All Students	IEP	EL	Black	Hispanic	White	Two or More	Asian	Newcomer	Males	Females
Literacy MAP Baseline	35.05	13.29	20.28	37.23	35.69	12.50	10.00	0.00	0.00	32.31	38.01
Literacy Achievement (MAP)	21.81	8.23	9.56	23.40	22.40	0.00	10.00	0.00	0.00	20.28	23.47
Literacy Growth (MAP)	60.74	45.70	56.49	75.56	59.04	62.50	50.00	0.00	66.67	62.01	59.37
Spanish Literacy Achievement (MAP)	29.00				31.00					26.00	33.00
Spanish Literacy Growth (MAP)	50.50				51.50					43.00	55.50
Literacy Proficiency (IAR) 2024	15.32	3.80	3.92	7.27	16.05	28.57	11.11	75.00	0.00	10.44	20.14
Literacy Growth (IAR) 2024	44.10	38.60	41.20	43.50	44.00	47.60				40.50	47.60
Literacy Proficiency (IAR) 2025											
Literacy Growth (IAR) 2025											
Literacy Grades Proficient or Higher											
ACCESS 2024											
ACCESS 2025	0.71	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.84	0.54

Priority Teaching Practices

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IF we build capacity for support and guidance of teachers in using strong questioning and discussion strategies in every classroom **THEN** teachers will be able to lead more interactive and student-centered lessons, better understand how their students are learning, and be able to adjust their teaching to meet individual needs—while school leaders stay closely involved by giving meaningful feedback and support **AND** students will take more ownership of their learning, stay more engaged, and build the thinking and communication skills they need to explain ideas, solve problems together, and succeed on key assessments.

Action Planning

Action Steps & subtasks (insert more rows as needed, related to monitoring data/ PD- in sequential order)	Dates to be Implemented	Artifacts to show this action is in progress?	How frequently does the SIP team monitor?	Who is responsible to implement and monitor?	Cost & Funding Source	Was the action step completed?
<u>ELL Action:</u> Utilize green & blue for cross-linguistic connections	August 2025			Grade Level teams, particularly "Team Orange" (EL)		In Progress
<u>CWD Action:</u> Utilize models and instructional practices of co-teaching	August 2025	Live Binder Password: Cowherd MS		Grade Level teams, including Resource & Instructional teachers		In Progress

3.2.72: Student Engagement Strategies that Promote Student-Generated Questions and Student-to-Student Interactions

Provide professional development for teachers on questioning and discussion techniques that produce thoughtful dialogue and on methods for increasing the use of academic language.	August 13, 2025	School Leadership Summer Summit presentation		Instructional Coaches	N/A	In Progress
	August 2025	Faculty meetings (Institute Day, Faculty, Building PLC)		Instructional Coaches	N/A	In Progress
Use supports, such as student discussion prompts, to have teachers engage in teaching students questioning techniques.	August 2025	Cowherd's RESOURCE docs		SLT	N/A	In Progress
EL Action: Talking (Sentence) Stems to help promote English-language use and development for increased confidence to participate	August 2025			Grade Level teams, particularly "Team Orange" (EL)	N/A	In Progress
Develop strategies, as well as clear rules and norms, to help students engage in collaborative learning, offer and receive feedback from peers and teachers, engage in questioning and examining claims, and provide encouragement and recognition of effort and progress.	September 2025	Team & PLC meetings		Team & PLC Leaders	N/A	In Progress
Teachers share strategies and successes of questioning & discussion implementation Turn & Talk: Small Wins	September 2025	Faculty meetings (Faculty, Building PLC)		Admin	N/A	In Progress

3.2.74: Posing High-Level Questions That Elicit Creative Responses and Problem Solving

Provide training for teachers, coaches, and administrators on questioning strategies to address critical thinking skills and depth of knowledge.	August 13, 2025	School Leadership Summer Summit presentation		Instructional Coaches	N/A	In Progress
Provide training for teachers on how students can ask and respond to questions that help them demonstrate learning (e. g., integrate knowledge, analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions) for the purpose of monitoring student progress and adjusting instruction.	August 2025	Faculty meetings (Institute Day, Faculty, Building PLC)		Instructional Coaches	N/A	In Progress
Support teachers in designing questions and responses to students in a manner that results in thought-provoking dialogue.	August 2025	Cowherd's RESOURCE docs		SLT	N/A	In Progress

Culture- Guiding Principle Educational Equity, Collaborative Leadership, and Student Achievement

Culture for Belonging & Action Plan

Annual Culture for Belonging SMART Goal

By June 2026, H.W. Cowherd Middle School will increase student attendance to ensure that **at least 95% of all students are present on an average school day**, as part of a broader effort to foster a school culture of belonging, as measured by the **average daily attendance** for the school year.

Specific: Focused on average daily attendance

Measurable: 95% based on ADA

Achievable: Based on current trends & targeted interventions

Relevant: Supports schoolwide academic performance and behavior goals

Time-Bound: To be achieved by June 2026

Schoolwide Current Reality by Subgroup:

	All Students	IEP	EL	Black	Hispanic	White	Two or More	Asian	Newcomer	Males	Females
ADA	91.94										
Chronic Absenteeism											
Referrals	37.3									62.87	37.13
OSS Incidents	9.05			33.73	63.83	1.2	0	1.2		61.45	38.55
ISI Incidents	14.62			27.86	68.57	.71	2,14	.71		65.55	34.45

5Essentials Snapshot:

Survey Year	Overall Improvement Rating:	Ambitious Instruction:	Collaborative Teachers:	Effective Leaders:	Supportive Environment:	Involved Families:
2025	Partially Organized	Neutral	Neutral	Weak	Weak	Neutral

Priority Teaching Practices

For this section identify 1-2 Priority Teaching Practices that you will use to move from your current reality to your identified goal above. Please explain why this practice was selected and how you believe it will impact this specific goal.

IF we build capacity to strengthen consistent and proactive approaches to managing student behavior that focus on building positive relationships and clear expectations, **THEN** teachers will be able to maintain safe, respectful, and predictable learning environments where instruction is rarely disrupted and time is used effectively. **AND** students will feel supported, understand boundaries, and take greater responsibility for their actions—leading to improved engagement, stronger peer relationships, and increased time spent on learning.

IF we intentionally foster a culture of belonging by building strong relationships, affirming identities, and engaging families as partners in learning, **THEN** students, staff, and families will feel more connected to the school community, **AND** school attendance will improve, reflecting a shared commitment to being present, engaged, and valued members of the school community.

Action Planning

Action Steps & subtasks (insert more rows as needed, related to monitoring data/ PD- in sequential order)	Dates to be Implemented	Artifacts to show this action is in progress?	How frequently does the SIP team monitor?	Who is responsible to implement and monitor?	Cost & Funding Source	Was the action step completed?
ELL Action: Incorporate multilingual announcements and build a sense of responsibility and belonging with tasks	August 2025			Front Office	N/A	In Progress
CWD Action: Create inclusive programming and accessible environments that promote a sense of belonging for students with disabilities through SAIG, consultation with BCBA and the utilization of ISI in lieu of OSS (with Behavior Academy as intervention)	August 2025			Admin Grade Level Counselors Social Workers	N/A	In Progress
Train staff on disability awareness, trauma-informed practices, and strategies to support attendance for students with disabilities.	September 2025		As needed, at least Quarterly		N/A	In Progress

4.1.40: Prioritizing the Enforcement of Policies to Ensure a Safe Learning Environment							
Create staff, parent, and student versions of the discipline policy and expectations and distribute them to all community members.		August 2025	2025-2026 Cowherd Middle School Student Handbook			N/A	In Progress
	Call students who are chronically absent prior to the school year based on SY 2024-25 data and continued throughout year	August 2025	Team Meetings		Grade Level Teams	N/A	In Progress
	<u>ELL Action:</u> Multilingual parent communication (Spanish, in particular)	August 2025	Student PLP phone log		Multilingual staff	N/A	In Progress
	Communicate ABCs (Attendance, Behavior, Course Progress) with all staff	September 2025	2025-26 Cougar Catch Up	Monthly	Admin - sent out pre-Faculty meeting	N/A	In Progress
	Phone calls to student families when absent or tardy	August 2025	Student PLP phone log		Front Office (Attendance Clerk) Admin	N/A	In Progress
	Communicate importance of attendance with students & families	August 2025	Home Communication Impact of Attendance Reminders for attendance (breaks, dr. appts)		Grade Level Teams Front Office (Attendance Clerk) Admin	N/A	In Progress
	Communicate with student families regarding individual student progress and course progress	September 2025	Team Newsletter with upcoming dates Postcards	Monthly & as needed	Grade Level Teams	Postcards - Building Funds	In Progress
4.1.61, 4.1.62, 4.1.63: Safety of Classrooms, Hallways, Bathrooms, and School Grounds							
Provide clear and consistent expectations for student behavior, including expectations of student actions in the classroom, hallways, and common areas (and) consistently uphold these expectations for all students		August 2025	CMS Town Hall / Jubilee assemblies	As needed, at least Quarterly	Grade Level teams Admin	N/A	In Progress
	Implement Behavior Academies (8 areas: Hands-Off, Check In/Check Out, Civility, Organizational Skills, Social Skills, Upstander, Motivation, Emotional Regulation)	August 2025	ABI & Behavior Academy Student List	As needed, at least Quarterly	ABI Teacher Grade Level Counselors Social Workers Admin	Solution Tree: Behavior Academies	In Progress
4.1.70: Adult Relationships to Students							
Assess student/adult relationships and intervene to ensure that every child has a meaningful relationship with at least one adult in the building.		September 2025	Satchel Pulse	September 22 - October 6 January 20 - February 2 April 20 - May 4	Grade Level Teams	District Subscription	In Progress
	Grade Level teams to utilize team time to collaborate on student SEL and well being	August 2025	Team Meetings		Grade Level Teams	N/A	In Progress
	Conduct student neighborhood visits (Hometown, Fox Pointe)	October 2025			Admin		In Progress
Ensure the sustainability of positive behavioral strategies via schoolwide integration and community buy-in.		August 2025 - May 2026	CMS SEL Homeroom Agenda/Activities 2025-2026		Social Workers, Homeroom Teachers	N/A	In Progress
4.2.21, 4.3.40: Community Forums for Listening to Parent and Family Concerns & Perception of Classroom Visitors							
Organize informal monthly gatherings ("Parent Coffees") where families can meet with school leaders, teachers, and support staff to discuss school updates, share feedback, and build community relationships.		September 2025 - May 2026	Coffee with the Principal 2025-2026		Admin Parent Liason		In Progress
	Gather meaningful input from families via a survey regarding their needs to inform gathering topics, communication preferences, and barriers to engagement, in order to inform inclusive school practices that support attendance and belonging.	August/September 2025			Admin Parent Liason		In Progress

Create inclusive, responsive school events by actively involving parents as volunteers and decision-makers, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and community partnership.	September 2025 - May 2026			Admin Front Office Parent Liason		In Progress
Strengthen communication and trust between families and teaching teams by offering opportunities for parents to meet with grade-level staff during designated team times to hear about curriculum, expectations, and ways to support student success.	September 2025 - May 2026			Grade Level Team Leaders Parent Liason		In Progress
4.2.20: Quality of Communication Systems for Staff						
Foster a culture of trust, collaboration, and psychological safety by ensuring that communication with staff is timely, transparent, inclusive, and responsive	August 2025 - May 2026	Cougar Catch-Up weekly staff newsletter		Admin	District Subscription (Smore)	In Progress
Promote open-door policies and encourage questions, concerns, and celebrations to be shared freely, including staff surveys, electronic ongoing staff FAQ form, and time at faculty meetings to do so	August 2025 - May 2026	2025-2026 Faculty Meetings Staff Surveys 2025-26 School Year Questions		Admin	N/A	In Progress
Support staff in developing their own social-emotional competencies, strengthen adult relationships, and model the behaviors and mindset that promote a supportive, inclusive school culture.	August 2025 - October 2025			Admin	Second Step Adult SEL program - Free 60 day trial	In Progress

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Assessment	Reporting Format
Literacy/Math MAP Baseline	Percentage Meeting/Exceeding Reading Norms
Literacy/Math Achievement (MAP)	Percentage of students scoring at or above the 41st percentile (average)
Literacy/Math Growth (MAP)	Percentage of students meeting or exceeding their projected growth targets (Fall to Winter)
Spanish Literacy Achievement (MAP)	Percentage of students scoring at or above the 41st percentile (average)
Spanish Literacy Growth (MAP)	Percentage of students meeting or exceeding their projected growth targets (Fall to Winter)
Literacy/Math Proficiency (IAR/ACT) 2024	Percentage of students scoring at "meets" or "exceeds standards" on IAR or ACT
Literacy/Math Growth (IAR/ACT) 2024	Percentage of students who improved at least one performance level from Spring 23 to Spring 24
Literacy/Math Proficiency (IAR/ACT) 2025	Percentage of students scoring at "meets" or "exceeds standards" on IAR or ACT
Literacy/Math Growth (IAR/ACT) 2025	Percentage of students who improved at least one performance level from Spring 24 to Spring 25
Literacy/Math Grades Proficient or Higher	Percentage of students earning a grade of "Proficient" or higher in their ELA or math course grades
iReady (K-8)	Percentage of students scoring on or above grade level on iReady Math
ACCESS 2024	Percentage of EL scoring 4.8 or higher (proficient) 2024
ACCESS 2025	Percentage of EL scoring 4.8 or higher (proficient) 2025
DRDP (PK)	Percentage of students scoring at or above the benchmark
Additional Measures	Reporting Format
ADA	Average daily attendance (ADA) percentages
Chronic Absenteeism	Percentage of students chronically absent
Behavior Referrals	Percentage of students with one or more behavior referrals
Out of School Suspension	Percentage of students with one or more Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) incidents
In-School Intervention	Percentage of students receiving In-School Intervention (ISI)
Graduation Rate	ACGR = (Number of Graduates ÷ (Number of Graduates + Number of Non-Graduates)) × 100
FoT	Number of students who earned at least 5 credits and failed no more than 0.5 credits in core subjects) ÷ (Total number of first-time 9th-grade students) × 100

Abbreviations	
MAP	Measures Of Academic Progress (NWEA Assessment)
IAR	Illinois Assessment of Readiness
ACT	American College Test
ACCESS	ACCESS for ELLs or Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners
DRDP	Desired Results Developmental Profile
ADA	Average Daily Attendance
OSS	Out of School Suspension
ISI	In School Intervention
FoT	Freshmen on Track