



Prospect Heights School District 23

Board Memorandum

Information Item

Date: December 18, 2025

Subject: Curriculum and Instruction Update

Prepared by: Dr. Craig M. Curtis, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

This update is provided to keep the board informed of the progress on implementing the curriculum, professional development, and assessments used in the district.

Curriculum

Math Curriculum Materials:

Our teachers are off to a great start using the newly readopted curriculum materials (Ready Math and i-Ready). Implementation is well underway at all grade levels, with strong engagement across the curriculum. While a major advantage of the new curriculum is teacher familiarity with the materials, we have also been able to refocus on some of the key routines and strategies associated with Ready Math implementation. Because of teachers' high level of familiarity with materials, we were truly able to hit the ground running with the curriculum this year.

This year's Math Committee continues to focus on ensuring our teachers are supported throughout their readoption and implementation of the curriculum. So far, the committee has convened for one meeting, and we have one additional meeting scheduled in March. As a part of this process, our instructional coaches are collaborating with grade-level teams to take an inventory of our math supplies and manipulatives. Our teachers need to model math procedures with the use of materials and manipulatives for better student understanding. Over time, some of our materials have become misplaced or unevenly distributed across teams. So, it's our goal to ensure we account for all materials to ensure all of our students and teachers have what they need to feel supported and successful.

Library Media Center (LMC) Curriculum Materials:

The Library Media Center Team is implementing its newly reviewed curriculum. They worked hard this summer to put the finishing touches on their scope and sequence. This year, we have continued our committee, and it will meet twice to monitor the status of our implementation and ensure our staff members are supported throughout the process. Thus far, we have met once and will be meeting again in April. One major focus of this year's committee is to monitor the progress of our collaboration projects within each building. These opportunities provide engaging, cross-curricular experiences for students in all of our buildings.

Specials and Exploratory Curriculum Investigations:

This year, we are reviewing the district's specials and exploratory curricula. We have formed a committee to examine the alignment of standards and review curriculum across grade levels in all specials and exploratory subjects. The goal is to ensure all students are well-rounded, engaged in learning, and prepared for success in high school and beyond. The Specials and Exploratory Curriculum Committee has met three times so far this year.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Investigations:

This year, we have formed a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Committee comprised of a variety of educators dedicated to reviewing SEL standards and the effectiveness of the SEL curriculum across the district. Our goal is to adopt an SEL program that educates the whole child by providing the essential social and emotional foundation necessary for success in school, career, and life.

This year, the SEL Curriculum Committee will meet eight times. We have already reviewed the Illinois Learning Standards for SEL to ensure we are best meeting the needs of our students across all grade levels. Over the next few months, we will meet with curriculum vendors to see which curriculum best meets our district's needs.

Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) Curriculum Investigations:

With Full-Day Kindergarten on the way in 2027-28, we are convening a team of kindergarten teachers and a few additional support staff members to assist in recommendations for our Full-Day Kindergarten program. Thus far, the committee has met three times to discuss our joint philosophy, goals, and anticipated needs. The team also had the opportunity to visit a neighboring school district's full-day kindergarten program, which has been well established, to see what is working well for their district and meet with teachers to gain further insight. In addition to receiving input from our staff members, we assembled a group of current and recent parents of kindergarten students to listen to feedback about their kindergarten experiences. We couldn't be more excited about the prospect that full-day kindergarten offers, and we look forward to the 2027-28 school year to arrive.

Instruction & Professional Development

Our district plans and provides professional development opportunities each year that are focused on the goals of our strategic plan, which is to encourage a learning environment that emphasizes excellence and retains high-quality staff. We provide in-house professional development, and we also send teachers and staff to conferences outside of the district.

This year, our district theme is "PD Arcade". The goal of this theme is to reinvigorate staff members around professional development. By focusing on teamwork, competition, and incentives, we plan to spark a new level of excitement and motivation for professional learning. The year kicked off with all district staff members participating in activities as a team that assisted in choosing a team name. Since then, team members have been completing professional development activities to earn points, which award them individual and team prizes for top earners. We'll continue this endeavor at our January Institute Day as we participate in additional activities and competitions as teams.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion remain integral as we focus on our strategic plan. To make this goal successful, we need to engage and unite all members of our school community and beyond. Our teachers have been learning about trauma-informed practices, restorative practices, and empathetic approaches. These approaches to teaching and learning, lesson planning, coaching, and leadership are helping us form stronger connections. They will lead us to a more collaborative future for our students and the district.

We are also partnering with renowned author and award-winning educator, Tony Frontier, to discuss his book, *Teaching with Clarity* through a series of videos, consultation, and an in-person keynote. As we investigate standards based practices within the district, we are partnering with Tony to focus on essential learning, clarify expectations, and use assessment for deeper understanding rather than just coverage. Tony's philosophy aligns curriculum, instruction, and feedback with core standards, reducing clutter, and empowering teachers for reflective practice. In the end, he emphasizes strategic prioritization, teaching educators to "do less so students understand more". We have no doubt this partnership will have a positive impact on instruction and set us on course for improved achievement.

Sometimes, we are unable to provide professional development in-house. Below are some recent examples of professional development our staff attended outside of the district:

- Illinois ASCD's Early Childhood/Kindergarten Conference.
- ESSA Multilingual Illinois 2025 Conference
- Illinois Health and Physical Education Association Conference

- Illinois Digital Educator's Alliance Conference (IDEACon)
- Virtual i-Ready offerings
- NSSEO trainings & workshops
- Workshops provided by the Illinois Resource Center (IRC)

Committee Reports:

- **Professional Development (PD):** The District Professional Development Committee continues to meet throughout the school year to gather feedback on our professional development opportunities and Institute Days. [Click here to view a full copy of the District 23 Professional Development Plan.](#)
- **Specials/Exploratory:** This year, we are reviewing the district's specials and exploratory curricula. We have formed a committee to examine the alignment of standards and review curriculum across grade levels in all specials and exploratory subjects. The goal is to ensure all students are well-rounded, engaged in learning, and prepared for success in high school and beyond. The Specials and Exploratory Curriculum Committee has met three times so far this year.
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** This year, we formed a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Committee comprised of educators dedicated to reviewing SEL standards and the effectiveness of the SEL curriculum across the district. Our goal is to adopt an SEL program that educates the whole child by providing the essential social and emotional foundation necessary for success in school, career, and life.
This year, the SEL Curriculum Committee will meet eight times. We have already reviewed the Illinois Learning Standards for SEL to ensure we are best meeting the needs of our students across all grade levels. Over the next few months, we will meet with curriculum vendors to see which curriculum best meets our district's needs.
- **Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK):** With Full-Day Kindergarten on the way in 2027-28, we are convening a team of kindergarten teachers and a few additional support staff members to assist in recommendations for our Full-Day Kindergarten program. Thus far, the committee has met three times to discuss our joint philosophy, goals, and anticipated needs. The team also had the opportunity to visit a neighboring school district's full-day kindergarten program, which has been well established, to see what is working well for their district and meet with teachers to gain further insight. In addition to receiving input from our staff members, we assembled a group of current and recent parents of kindergarten students to provide feedback about their kindergarten experience. We couldn't be more excited about the prospect that full-day kindergarten offers, and can't wait for the 2027-28 school year to arrive.
- **Math:** Our teachers are off to a great start using the newly re-adopted curriculum materials (Ready Math and i-Ready). Implementation is well underway at all grade levels, and there is strong engagement across the curriculum. While a major advantage of the new curriculum is teacher familiarity with the materials, we have also been able to refocus on some of the key routines and strategies associated with Ready Math implementation. Because of teachers' high level of familiarity with materials, we were truly able to hit the ground running with the curriculum this year.
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misplaced or unevenly distributed across teams. So, it's our goal to ensure we account for all materials to ensure all of our students and teachers have what they need to feel supported and successful.

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- **Standards Based Practices:** This year, we are continuing to investigate standards based practices with a representative committee. The committee has focused efforts on common language, key terminology, and identifying priority standards. Three essential goals for our committee work include providing students with standards based feedback, consistency across grade levels and across the district, and clear communication of expectations.
- **Tech Connect:** The Tech Connect Committee oversees district technology needs, tracks the progress of our technology implementation, and prioritizes initiatives. This includes monitoring and recommending classroom/district equipment, purchases, applications, software, student data privacy, cybersecurity, and communication needs.
- **Multilingual (ML):** Our Multilingual Committee has met several times this year already. We are always discussing how we can improve the programs for Multilingual Learners. This year, we have focused our efforts on improving instruction, strengthening data conversations, and improving our community connections. As a part of our work, we continue to identify ways to increase equity in our communications, connection to resources, and family engagement events. Most recently, we hosted our Winter Bilingual Advisory Committee (BPAC) event, la fiesta de invierno, and have begun planning for future events such as BPAC Literacy Night (February) and D23 Heritage Night (April).
- **District Improvement Team:** The District Improvement Team (DIT) met several times over the last couple of months. This committee is comprised of the leadership team of teachers and administrators across the district who provide oversight for the assessment calendar, use of data, and program evaluation. This year, our focus has been on our District 23 Strategic Plan goals and indicators of progress. In addition, the group has continued to pursue goals set forth this summer at the Leadership Summit and built leadership capacity across District 23.

Assessment

As you heard in our November presentation, the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) results are in, as well as our Fall i-Ready benchmark data. Prospect Heights District 23's data was fantastic once again this year. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Betsy Ross, and MacArthur Middle Schools all received commendable designations. That means their performance was just outside the top 10 percent of schools, they had no underperforming student groups, and a graduation rate greater than 67 percent. Anne Sullivan received a targeted designation due to some shortcomings in the special education sub-category. However, it's important to note that, without the special education sub-category, our academic performance and growth scores would have earned us a commendable rating as well. Once again, our schools continue to excel!

The Winter administration of the i-Ready assessment is currently underway. This helps us properly place students within our core curriculum and gives us guidance on overall strengths and challenges in reading and math. The i-Ready Diagnostic will not affect a student's grade in English/Language Arts (ELA) or Math, but will

place them on a path that provides additional support and enrichment based on students' strengths and challenges.

We have also completed the Fall administration of the Social, Academic, Emotional Behavior Risk (SAEBR) Screener, which was administered in October. This research-based, universal screener is used to help identify students who may be at risk for social, academic, and emotional concerns. This screener informs our school support teams and ensures that students receive appropriate services through our district's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process.

For a full list of the assessments administered in the district, please refer to the [2025-2026 District 23 Assessment Schedule](#).