



Please find below a summary of the past month's professional development, curriculum updates, Portrait of a Morton Graduate recaps, and personnel updates for each of the departments.

### **CTE Department – Colleen Del Monaco, Director**

#### **College Ready:**

CTE programs continue to strengthen postsecondary connections and expand opportunities for students to earn college credit, explore college programs, and experience learning beyond the high school classroom.

- **Dual Credit and Degree Completion**  
Alexandra Alamos (Student ID 461000) is not only on track to graduate from Morton East High School but has also earned enough college credit to graduate from Morton College with an Associate in Liberal Arts, demonstrating the powerful impact of aligned coursework and postsecondary partnerships.
- **Postsecondary Exposure and Career Pathway Exploration**  
Graphic Arts students participated in a field trip to Harper College, where they explored Harper's graphic arts program, learned about additional postsecondary options including Columbia College and Illinois State University, and engaged with industry professionals. During the visit, students also applied their design skills by creating and producing custom T-shirts, blending college exposure with hands-on learning.
- **Competitive Academic Achievement**  
Two Technology Support Internship (TSI) students placed in the top 10 in Illinois for the 2026 Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) U.S. National Championship:
  - 3rd Place: Nadia Martinez – Microsoft PowerPoint (Microsoft 365 Apps)
  - 9th Place: Xavier Mendoza – Microsoft PowerPoint (Microsoft 365 Apps)Additionally, two TSI students earned top-10 placements in Illinois during the 2025 MOS competitions:
  - 8th Place: Alexander Govea
  - 10th Place: Gabriel AndabloThese accomplishments reflect strong academic preparation, technical proficiency, and readiness for both college coursework and competitive postsecondary opportunities.

#### **Career Ready:**

CTE students continue to engage in authentic learning experiences that mirror industry expectations, develop technical skills, and connect directly with employers, industry professionals, and workforce pathways.

- **Industry and Military Career Awareness**  
Representatives from the Army National Guard visited Graphic Arts and Welding classes to speak with students about future career opportunities. The visit included a special guest speaker, Allesandro Rodriguez (Class of 2025 graduate and current National Guard member), who shared firsthand experiences and pathways available to students after graduation.
- **Industry-Recognized Credentials**  
Several TSI students successfully passed Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) industry-recognized certification exams, further strengthening their employability and validating their technical skill sets.
- **Career Technical Skill Development**  
Construction students completed their first furniture build after finishing a comprehensive safety unit. Students applied proper safety procedures, collaborated effectively, and produced quality work—demonstrating readiness for construction-related career pathways.
- **Career Technical Student Organization (CTSO) Success**  
Students from both Morton West and Morton East Culinary programs competed in the FCCLA STAR Culinary Arts and Baking & Pastry Invitational at the College of DuPage.



Participation in CTSOs provides students with competitive, industry-aligned experiences that reinforce technical and professional skills.

### Life Ready:

CTE coursework emphasizes not only technical proficiency, but also the professional and interpersonal skills students need to succeed in any post-secondary pathway.

- **Team-Based Learning and Professional Skills**

Culinary Arts students in Levels 2, 3, and 4 completed Team-Based Challenges prior to the end of the semester. Working in small groups, students planned, adapted, and executed culinary tasks under real-world conditions. These experiences required students to:

- Divide responsibilities
- Manage time effectively
- Communicate clearly with peers
- Adapt when plans changed
- Hold one another accountable

Through these challenges, students strengthened leadership, resilience, teamwork, and problem-solving skills—habits essential for success in the culinary and hospitality industries and beyond.

### Student and Staff Accolades:





FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



## Career & Work Based Learning:

### Professional Development

- Institute Day – January 5, 2026  
Teachers across the district participated in professional development focused on skills-based instruction, assessment practices, and strategies to better support English Learners (ELs). This learning supports consistency in instructional expectations and equitable access to rigorous coursework.
- Curriculum Day – January 13, 2026  
Business teachers from across the district collaborated on curriculum development for a newly approved AP Business & Personal Finance course. This curriculum-writing day ensured alignment to College Board expectations and established a strong foundation for the course prior to student enrollment.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)  
Teachers have continued ongoing work within their PLCs, using collaboration time to refine curriculum, align assessments, and share instructional strategies.





### Programmatic Updates

- **Work-Based Learning Internship Course**
  - The Work-Based Learning Coordinators at each campus began meeting with the 15 students enrolled in the Work-Based Learning Internship course for the 2026–2027 school year to support placement readiness.
  - Students have completed the internship application process as part of placement preparation.
- **Job Shadow Experiences**
  - Thirteen Human Body Systems Honors students began an 8-week job shadow experience at MacNeal Hospital, providing extended exposure to healthcare careers and professional environments.

Expanding and strengthening partnerships remains a key focus to support authentic career exploration and work-based learning opportunities for students.

- **Healthcare Partnerships**
  - Assisted with the first **MacNeal Hospital/Loyola Medicine career exploration trip** on January 14, 2026.
  - Met with Loyola Medicine representatives (including Eric Bjornstad) on January 27, 2026, to review early job shadowing experiences within the healthcare industry. Feedback from partners has been overwhelmingly positive.
- **Additional Partnership Outreach**

An initial attempt was made to establish a partnership with the **Amazon warehouse in Cicero** to explore potential career exploration and work-based learning opportunities.

### College & Career Center highlights:

#### West College & Career Highlights:

- Held Morton College Spring Dual Enrollment Registration
  - January 8, 15, 22, and 29
- Help FAFSA Workshop for students and families
  - January 29

#### East College & Career Center Highlights:

##### January Recap:

- Since the beginning of the school year through 1/30/26, the CC Center has had 2,970 student visits
- Held three additional Morton College dual enrollment registration dates (1/6, 1/13, 1/20)
- Hosted a financial aid application workshop for seniors/families on the evening of 1/14
- Organized and distributed the MEHS Local Scholarship Application information
- Hosted former Morton graduates from Univ. of Illinois @ Urbana-Champaign for a series of UIUC STEM careers presentations for MEHS students interested in learning more about STEM careers (1/16)
- Continued to host financial aid assistance office hours every Tuesday and Thursday
- Took 40 students to UIC for an admissions presentation and campus tour (1/28)

##### Upcoming February Highlights:

- CC Center/lead counselor and Morton College mid-year meeting (2/6)
- Morton College application workshops (2/10, 2/17, 2/24)





**FROM THE OFFICE OF**  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

- Financial aid workshop for seniors and parents/guardians (2/9, 2/28)
- Continue to plan for our College Week taking place 3/9 through 3/13



**SPED Department – Carol Best, Executive Director**

**College Ready:**

Special education students participated in a range of college-readiness activities to strengthen postsecondary planning. Resource classes visited the College and Career Center to learn about the school's four-year planning model, which guides students from exploring interests in 9th grade through taking action on postsecondary goals in 12th grade. Instruction in LDI English focused on college pathways, scholarships, and analyzing application essays. Students in LDI Math 3 applied statistical concepts through a real-world performance trend project, while Biology classes connected academic learning to future careers by applying their study of mitosis to a simulated cancer diagnosis activity. Inclusion students completed community service hours aligned to house expectations, and staff continued providing curriculum modifications to ensure equitable access to assessments.

**Career Ready:**

Career readiness initiatives expanded through hands-on exploration, vocational experiences, and community partnerships. Students participated in a cosmetology and barbering presentation that introduced a licensure pathway available during high school. ED Resource students conducted career exploration projects, researching job requirements and identifying strengths to guide future decisions. The Vocational Work Program grew with two new employment training sites—Chick-fil-A and Palace Regency—broadening supported work opportunities. Students also assisted at the YMCA Community Market, practicing teamwork and professionalism. Engagement with community resources increased, with more students obtaining public library cards. Students continued strengthening problem-solving skills in LDI Math 2 and freshman ED students began their postsecondary research projects outlining potential college, vocational, or military pathways.

**Life Ready:**

Life-skills instruction focused on independence, social development, and community engagement. MTC students participated in holiday-themed stations and a staff-hosted breakfast, fostering collaboration, communication, and social interaction. Community-based instruction included trips to the Museum of Science and Industry and bowling, allowing students to practice budgeting, safety, navigation, and social skills in authentic settings. ASI collaborated with the Student Athlete Leadership Team to plan inclusive Valentine's Day activities and students helped design a Mustang Pride T-shirt. Related services staff partnered with teachers to provide targeted academic, domestic, and community-based supports. Special Olympics basketball teams earned second place at regionals, with all teams securing victories during Pack the Place. FSI students collaborated with the Art Club on a creative community art project.



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

**PHOTOS:**







FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs





FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

**Student of the Month, Aidan Ross, an incredible example of growth, determination, and progress worth celebrating.**





FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

ASI Students in the community:







## **English Learners and Modern Languages- Melody Becker**

### **College**

- All EL 1-4 students have completed ACCESS practice lessons for various domains (listening, reading, writing, speaking).
- ACCESS testing has been a huge success. We've already tested hundreds of students. This process has been streamlined to promote an efficient, organized, and low-pressure testing environment, thanks to our Biliteracy Coordinators and the proctors.
- EL 2 students are learning about education needed for the job/career they are interested in. Students are using Schoolinks and Achieve 3000.
- EL 3 is currently working on a research essay and skill share project.
- EL 4 have started reading *Bodega Dreams* and are annotating using ARTE de Leer. Students are analyzing character development throughout the story, taking notes, and working in groups. Their notes will help them prepare for writing a literary analysis essay.
- AP Spanish Lang moved from writing to speaking. They are working on the conversation to prepare for their exam.
- AP Spanish Lit finished Unit 4 and they did a debate in class about San Manuel Bueno Martir
- AP Spanish Lit continues to analyze the readings and take practice tests and FRQs independently.
- SLA V students are focusing on social problems and the genre of social realism. To introduce the unit, they looked for a song in Spanish, they analyzed it, identified the problem, gave a summary, and gave their opinion of the song and the type of social problem that song is talking about. They added their findings on a Canva and then they did a formal presentation.
- SLA IV began their second semester by introducing the rules of accentuating. For that, we had to start by reviewing how to divide a word into syllables when the word has one, two, three, or four consonants between syllables, or if a word has two vowels together, looking if they are diphthongs or hiatus. Students recorded themselves explaining what a diphthong and a hiatus was, how they are formed, and explained how the word "biología" is divided into syllables and if it has a hiatus, diphthong, neither or both, and why.
- SLA IV After that they learned how to find the stressed syllable in different words, which for a Spanish speaker is difficult since we don't have to pay attention to where the stress is to pronounce the word correctly since we already speak Spanish. Once they practiced finding the stressed syllable, they started learning the names of the words depending on the stressed syllable: *agudas*, *llanas/graves*, *esdrújulas*, and *sobresdrújulas*. Students learned when each word should be accented. Some teachers did the PACE model to learn the difference between the hiatus and the diphthongs, letting students come up with the differences before checking if they were correct or not. The PACE model was also used in the rules of accentuation. After learning what a *palabra aguda* is, students were given groups of *aguda* words where they had to separate them into groups to figure out the rules of accentuation. They had to explain when they have an accent mark and when they don't. Then they did a carousel where they looked at the different groups to see the similarities and differences and after going over their findings, they saw if they were right or not.
- Spanish III created a Padlet where they practiced the future tense with extraordinary things that our alumnus or famous people have done in their lives.
- Chinese I are completing a reading project: Read & Draw
- Chinese II students are playing a game with dice to know the characters as well as reciting a rhyme about Chinese measure words.



- AP Spanish Language students are working on the conversation component of the AP exam. They are also working on Tema 3 Beauty and Aesthetics.
- Spanish 1 students are reading Pobre Ana and having student discourse regarding different themes in the novel.
- Spanish IV students are working on the rules of accentuation. Students are currently reviewing all types of words and adding accent where it belongs.

### Career

- EL 2 students have identified their skills, interests, and started practicing answering interview style questions during a Dialogue Dash. Students are researching future careers that align to their strengths and abilities. They are learning about salary and even examining future growth and possible AI in the future.
- Spanish Honors Society students are giving presentations to the current students about the club and how current Spanish students can apply to become a member.
- Chinese I students completed a Family Project in which they introduced their families using Chinese sentences. Students demonstrated their learning through a variety of formats, including PowerPoint presentations, Canva designs, posters, and short video presentations. The project focused on using basic sentence structures to describe family members, ages, occupations, and interests, and allowed students to creatively apply vocabulary while building confidence in speaking and presenting in Chinese.

### Life

- EL students dealt with a great tragedy this month losing one of our EL students. Students and teachers learned how to manage such a difficult situation, using resources at our disposal, and trying to move forward in face of a great and sudden loss. Our building admin, counseling department, EL director, and Biliteracy Coordinator were a great support during this time.
- EL 3 students set three goals and created vision boards at the beginning of the month.
- SHH (Spanish Honor Society) students are giving presentations to the current students about the club and how current Spanish students can apply to become a member.
- Students in Spanish classes learned how some Spanish speaking countries celebrate three kings' day. The Spanish department had a carrousel, where each Spanish class had a different activity, in which it showed the students different activities from Spanish speaking countries. They completed three activities and once they returned to their class, they cut a *rosca*, bread shaped in an oval and had *agua fresca*. Many students had never had the bread, so it was a great learning experience for them. This cultural experience is part of their honor's portfolio.
- SLA IV students created in a hexagon six different goals in six different categories: physical, emotional, academic, Spiritual, Intellectual, and environment or social. Afterward, they were placed into three groups where they presented their goals to the group and had to see who they connected with. Afterward, they worked together to attach all the hexagons, so they were all connected to each other. At the end, all SLA IV classes from the same classroom were attached to show how everyone is connected. Students also wrote a letter to themselves to be opened



in the future explaining what goals they chose, why they chose them, and what steps they need to take in order to achieve them.

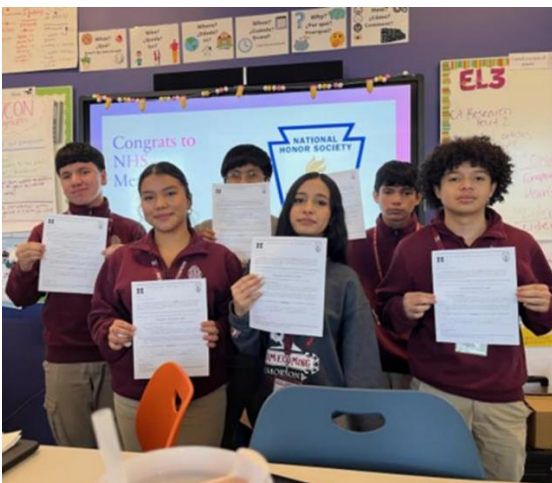
- French I is working on a written and spoken project: *Ma famille/Mon arbre généalogique*
- French II and III have described the main character after watching a French film. This will go on their Honors Padlet for a cultural experience.
- Spanish I and III created Bingo cards with the saying “*eso estaba o no estaba en mi tarjeta de Bingo para el año*”.
- Spanish II recently completed travel brochures of their own community where they had to provide information for 5 different places as well as write a short description explaining why they recommend the place.
- Chinese III students did a presentation on direction and location words.
- French 1 is creating and presenting a Family Tree of their choosing. They will put it in the Earned Honors Portfolio under Presentational Speaking

### Professional Development –

- The biliteracy and instructional coaches hosted a lunch and learn ACCESS Prep PD opportunity for teachers and also shared the following resource with staff: [ACCESS Tips & Tricks | Smore Newsletters](#)

### Student and Staff Accolades –

- This article, [Bilingual Education Surges in Illinois article.docx](#), recently came out. Click the link to see how Morton has been outperforming the data points noted in the article. The teamwork shown by teachers, students, coaches, and administrators to communicate the value of being bilingual and how supporting students’ bilingualism helps them to achieve more success in other areas.
- Chinese I reading and drawing project: [CH1 Student Work.pdf](#)
- Chinese III – [Example of presentation](#)
- French I – [Example of Ma Famille](#)

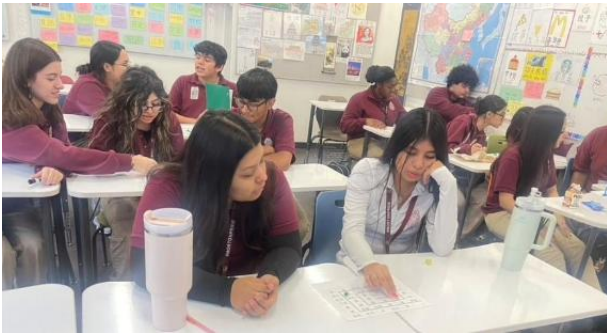


EL 3 Vision Board





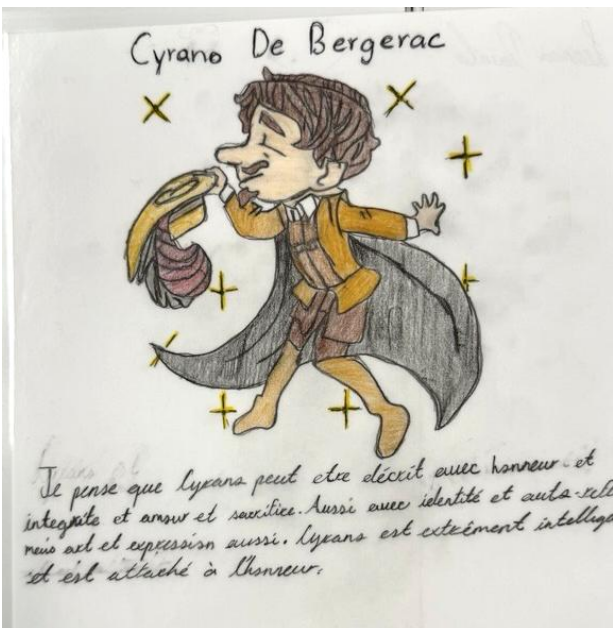
Many EL students in EL 2 –4 were invited to National Honor Society; teachers have been supporting students with their essays after school



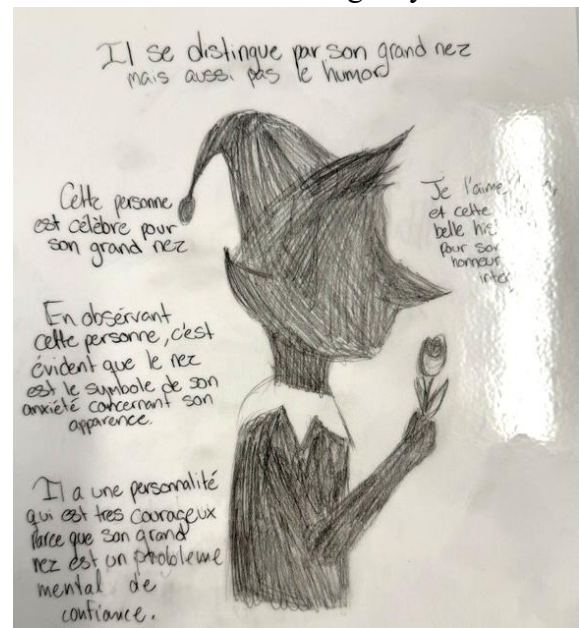
Chinese II Dice Game



Chinese II Reciting Rhymes



French II



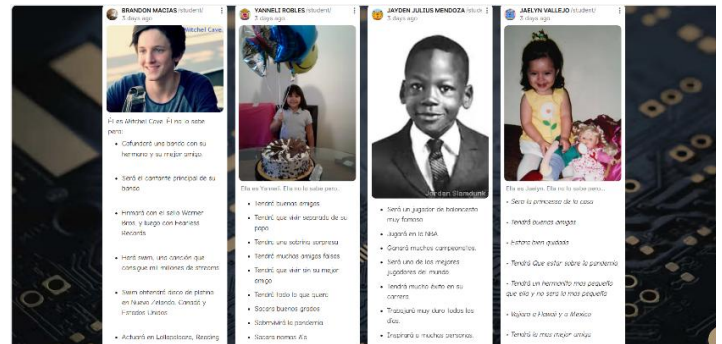
French III



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
 Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



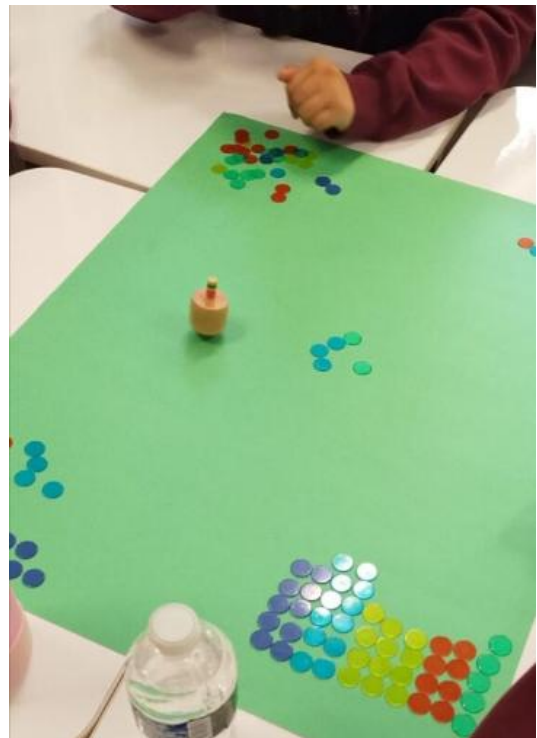
Spanish I and III Bingo Card



Spanish III [Link](#)



Celebration of the three king's day student rotation



Pirinola





Loteria



Group drawing with only one marker: They first did a puzzle, then had to write the names of the members of the group, and finally, draw three things on their paper



SLA IV Hexagon 2026 goal activity

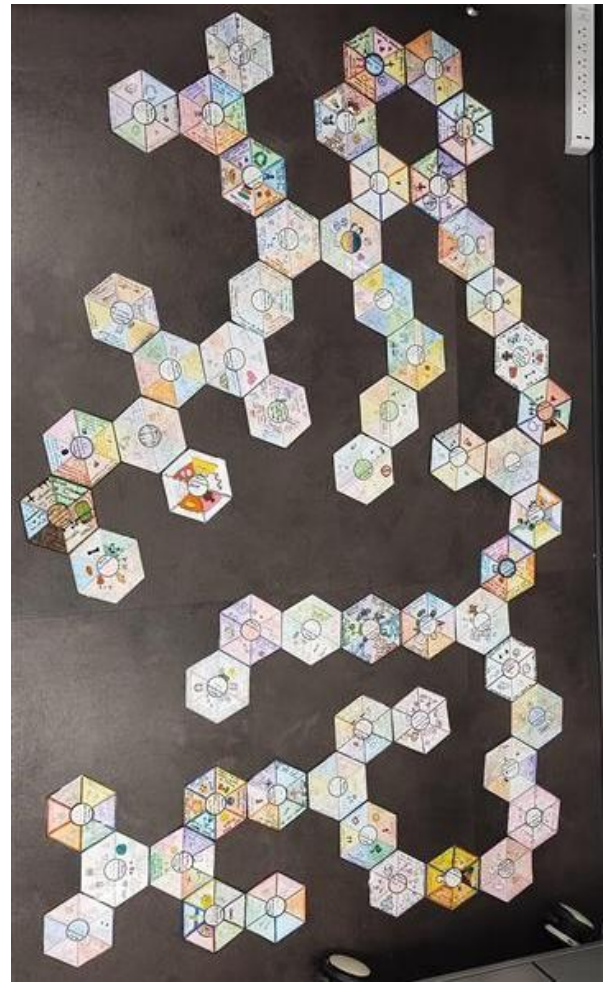


Group connections students made of their goals they created. Students were able to connect all of the class's hexagons with each other and the ones from the previous class.

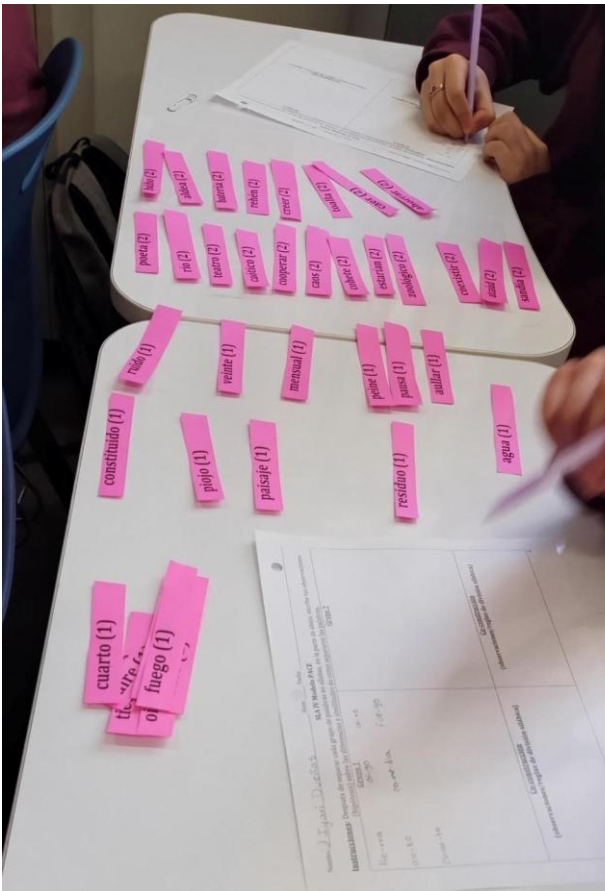




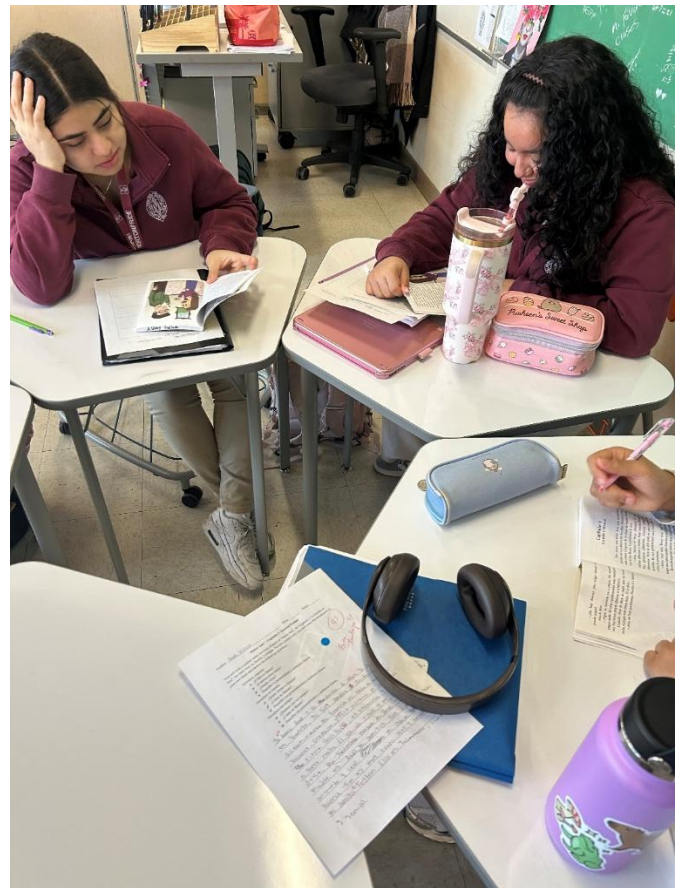
7<sup>th</sup> hour -Post it connect it to the previous classes



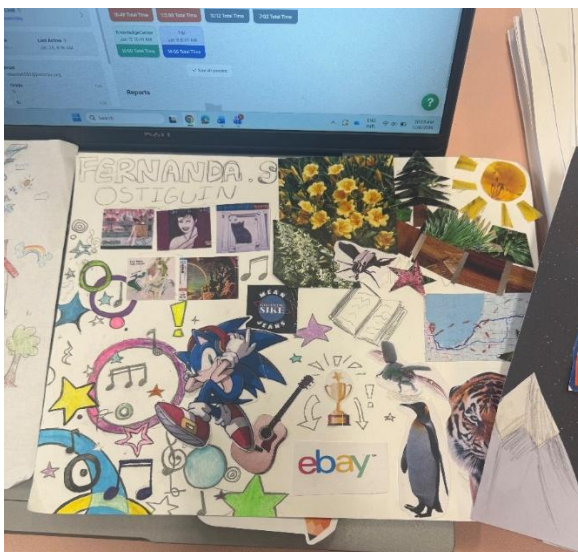
Some had to be connected a different way to fit on the back board



SLA IV PACE model with the hiatus and diphthongs



Spanish 1 students reading Pobre Ana.



Spanish students working on the future tense creating collages.



Chinese students working on their family presentation





FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

## **Science Department— Eric Bjornstad, Director**

### **Curriculum Updates –**

- Curriculum & Instruction Steering Committee will meet next month on Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>.
- The A.I. Advisory will meet next month on Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **College Ready –**

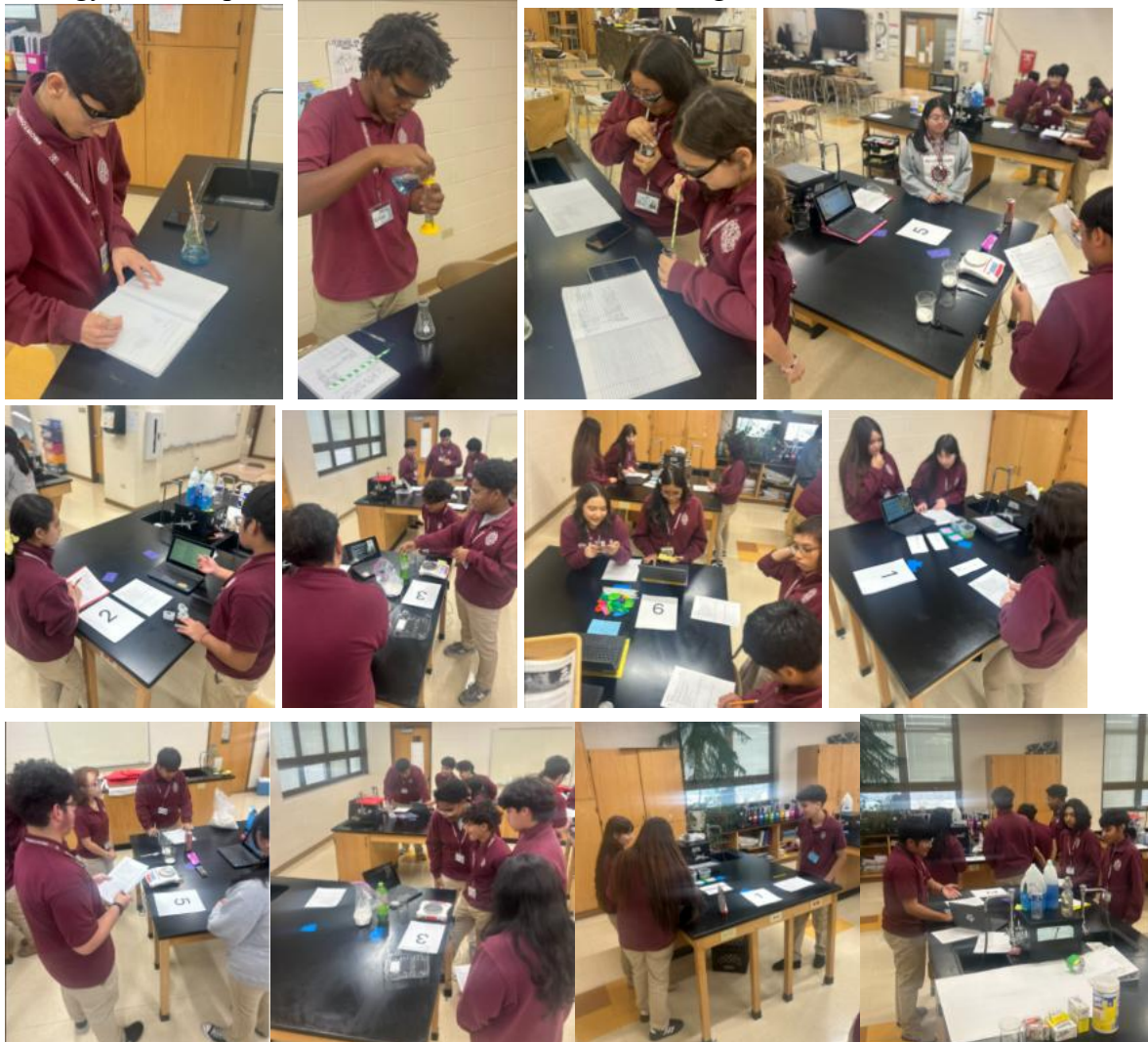
- ACT Specific lessons were given in January. Additional ACT lessons are being utilized as bellringers in Chemistry through April.

### **Career Ready –**

- Medical Health Sciences students at Morton West began their job shadowing of MacNeil Hospital employees, sponsored by Loyola Health. The students are really enjoying the experience so far.

### **Life Ready –**

Biology students plan, carry out and present their investigations at FC.





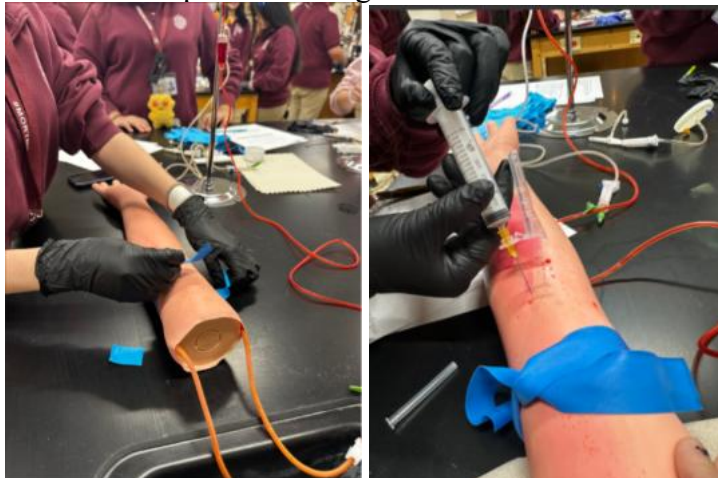
FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



STEM Physics students collect data to calculate their own speeds at FC.



PBS students practice taking vitals in their "office visits".



Types of Reactions lab in Chemistry in Chemistry at East:

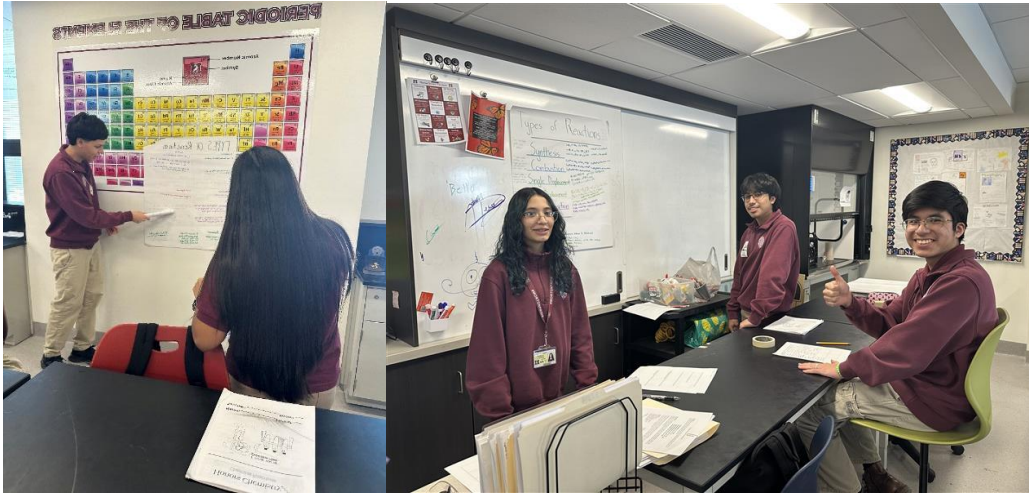


Types of reactions gallery walk at East Campus





FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Mineral Lab in Earth Science at East Campus



Iguana Dissections in Zoology at West



The Reptile Guy brought his friends to show Zoology and ASI/FSI students at West



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs







## **English Department – Megan Delaney, Director**

### **Professional Development**

All English teachers engaged in professional learning focused on skills-based learning progressions, Teachers also received training on evidence-based grading, collaborating around common rubrics, success criteria, and student work samples to promote fair and consistent grading practices tied directly to standards. Professional development further emphasized proficiency assessment, with teams examining existing assessments through a standards lens and refining tasks and rubrics so that levels of mastery are clearly defined and communicated to students.

### **Curriculum Updates**

English III and Senior elective teachers worked to clearly articulate priority reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills and strengthen vertical alignment from English I through Senior electives and AP courses across all campuses.

At Morton West, AP Language and Composition students began the semester with advanced argumentative analysis and writing, using “Am I the Jerk?” etiquette and social-conflict scenarios to analyze claims, evidence, and multiple perspectives in preparation for their first Writing Common Assessment in mid-February. AP Literature at West continued its literary analysis work, with one teacher piloting the Classroom Companion platform for a Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* assessment to gather data on close reading and literary argument skills. English III at West maintained a strong ACT focus, with students practicing frequently in Chalk Talk and junior enrollment in the voluntary ACT Prep Bootcamp, run by the Instructional Literacy Committee. Attendance was so high that an additional section was added. West English III teachers also highlighted a Research and Synthesis unit pairing *The Catcher in the Rye* with a mini-unit on the Beatles and John Lennon’s murder; students examined how literature can be misinterpreted, then researched high-profile criminal or serial killer cases and presented their findings as both Writing and Speaking & Listening Common Assessments. Senior elective journalism students at West began a long-form journalism unit anchored in Barbara Demick’s *Nothing to Envy*, analyzing investigative techniques and narrative structure in reporting on life under the North Korean regime. Additional West English III sections incorporated *Breathing Underwater* by Alex Flinn to balance research-intensive work with sustained reading, leading students to request more reading time and prompting teachers to build in daily SSR.

At East, English II teams continued a rhetorical analysis unit with intensive scaffolding, repeated practice using SPACECAT and rhetorical appeals, and ongoing use of C.E.R. in smaller assessments to support the transition to full argumentative essays. AP Seminar PLTs at West and East, continued to refine their use of Scribe, using its tools more extensively each semester to monitor student progress on research tasks and better support inquiry, synthesis, and citation skills. Counselors visited AP Seminar classes to support sophomore course selection, which provided a timely opportunity to promote AP Language and AP Research and strengthen the AP Capstone pipeline.

At the Freshman Center, solid common exams are being developed to strengthen vertical alignment, intentionally connecting Freshman Honors with AP Seminar and Core English I with Core English II. Teachers have created lessons that specifically target students’ understanding of the ACT English test and strategies to maximize their scores, as well as Common Assessments that more closely align with ACT standards. As a result of this focused curriculum work, 90% of freshmen (880 out of 976 students) earned 0.5 English credit toward graduation in Semester 1. Overall, FC English is executing the year-long plan: implementing the new curriculum while streamlining existing Common Assessments to be more effective



and efficient and steadily moving toward four assessments per skill to support a more comprehensive, “whole picture of proficiency” approach to grading.

### **Student and Staff Accolades**

Teachers and students across campuses celebrated several notable successes this month. At Morton West, teachers highlighted how students became more confident and efficient presenters over the course of the semester, especially in projects that required persuasive speaking and collaborative problem-solving. West teachers also reported that juniors’ enthusiasm for independent reading has increased, with many students asking for additional reading time and embracing daily SSR as a meaningful routine.

At Morton East and the Freshman Center, teachers commended students for their resilience and focus during ACCESS testing and remote learning, noting strong participation and engagement even on the e-Learning day. Senior elective teachers praised students’ creativity and critical thinking in projects such as mini court cases and real-world argument tasks. Across campuses, staff emphasized their appreciation for students’ willingness to take academic risks, engage in rich classroom discussion, and adapt to new expectations tied to skills-based learning and proficiency-focused grading.



East English II students practicing rhetorical analysis by highlighting and annotating a speech from a movie. They are using a color key and notes to help guide practice.



East English III students are using SPACE-CAT to understand the logistics of rhetorical analysis.





FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



East- Mr. Ruvalcaba's students are practicing peer editing strategies.



## **Math Department - Megan Holub, Director**

### **Curriculum Updates**

We have currently 3 courses being worked on- Quantitative Literacy, Integrated Math III Core and Integrated Math III Honors. All are focusing on chunking assessments into smaller, more frequent checks to better measure student understanding, while embedding ACT-style questions across all grade levels to increase exposure and deepen practice. Integrated Math III Core teams have been aligning their curriculum to the 90–10, skills-based grading model, and beginning next semester, Quantitative Literacy will engage in curriculum writing to transition fully to this model.

AP Statistics will continue refining its skills-based course to ensure consistency and clarity in grading.

Furthermore, Math–Science STEM collaboration will be taking place on February 26. Quantitative Literacy is also participating in a MyMathLab demo and reviewing the Pearson Quantitative Literacy resources. Across all courses, PLTs will review assessment frequency and adjust assessments as needed to ensure each skill is assessed at least three times per semester, supporting consistent grading practices and career- and life-ready skills.

**\*Life Readiness:** Clear, consistent assessment practices help students better understand expectations, monitor their progress, and take ownership of their learning—skills essential for success beyond high school.

### **ACT Data and plans:**

See the Math Department ACT Plan beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>: [ACT Math Practice Proposal Final.docx](#)

See the Math Department PreACT and ACT Proficiency Data slides (created by Zach Snyder, data team): [JSM PreACT & ACT Math Proficiency Data SY 25-26.pptx](#)

The slides above present a significant amount of PreACT data. One key takeaway is the high percentage of students who are approaching proficiency. As shown in the graph below, more than 52% of students fall into this category. This represents a meaningful opportunity for growth. By intentionally targeting these students through both in-class and out-of-class ACT support strategies, we are well positioned to move the needle on overall ACT performance.

Morton will be giving the practice ACT test on March 5. The Math Department is working on aligning all the questions to ACT skills, subskills and content standards. This way, we can look at data to create plans for the next 2 weeks prior to the real ACT test.

**\*College Readiness:** ACT preparation continues to be a key component of our district's postsecondary readiness efforts. By providing structured practice, strategic instruction, and access to high-quality resources, we are reinforcing the problem-solving, reasoning, and data analysis skills students need for success in college-level math and many career pathways.



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

**West coaches with ACT Prep:** Instructional Readiness Committee is also beginning to plan an after school ACT Prep program that will run January to March. More information to come.



**ACT PREP BOOTCAMP**

Boost your confidence and your score with our ACT Prep Program! You'll master test-taking strategies, review key content in every subject, and practice with real ACT-style questions.

Get ready to walk into the ACT knowing you can crush it!

- ✓ Runs from Jan 13<sup>th</sup> to March 26<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ Tuesdays or Thursdays
- ✓ Afterschool 3-4pm
- ✓ Open to all Juniors
- ✓ Send questions to Heidi Keske on Team's chat

Register here:



LIMITED SPACES AVAILABLE!



**ENTRENAMIENTO INTENSIVO DE PREPARACIÓN PARA EL ACT**

¡Aumenta tu confianza y tu puntuación con nuestro programa de preparación para el ACT! Dominarás las estrategias para realizar el examen, repasarás el contenido clave de cada materia y practicarás con preguntas reales al estilo del ACT.

¡Prepárate para entrar al ACT sabiendo que puedes arrasar!

- ✓ Se extiende desde el 13 de enero hasta el 26 de marzo.
- ✓ Martes o jueves
- ✓ Después de escuela 3-4pm
- ✓ Abierto a todos los juniors
- ✓ Envía tus preguntas a Heidi Keske en el chat de Teams.

Regístrate aquí:



¡PLAZAS LIMITADAS!

After school ACT Prep Bootcamp is full! Sessions start next week 😊

**\*College Readiness:** ACT preparation is a key component of our students' postsecondary success plan. By offering structured support and access to practice resources, we help students strengthen the skills colleges value most—problem solving, reasoning, and data analysis.

### Great things we've done:

**Integrated Math II Core:** Sophomore students investigating square roots using Legos.



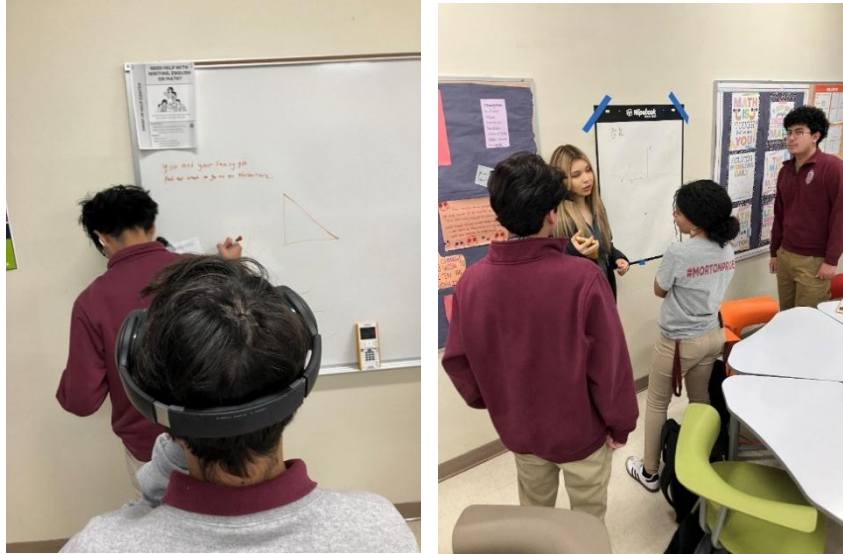
**Building Thinking Classrooms:** Students working collaboratively at vertical non-permanent surfaces.



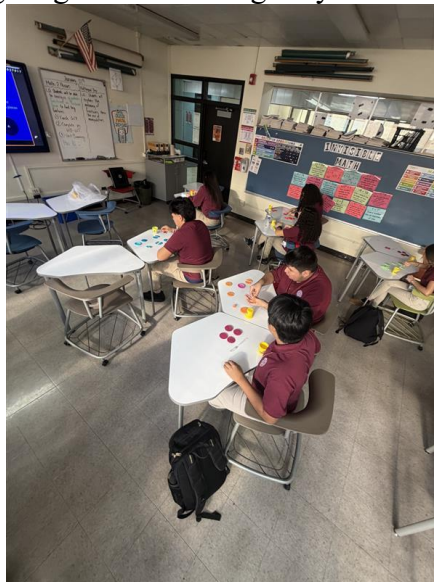




**Building Thinking Classrooms:** Students were practicing solving word problems using the Pythagorean Theorem.



**Multilingual Prep:** students investigating fractions using Play-Doh.





FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

**ACT Bootcamp at West:** The first day of ACT Prep Bootcamp was packed!



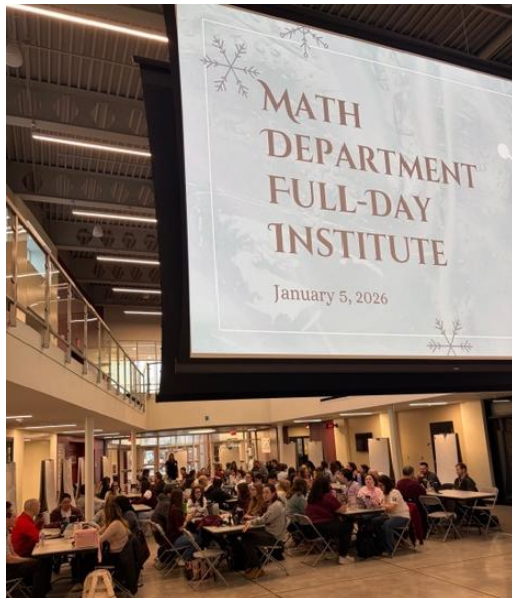
**\*Career Readiness:** Collaborative problem solving, productive struggle, and mathematical discourse mirror real-world workplace skills and expectations.

### **Professional Development:**

**January 5<sup>th</sup> Institute Day:** Major shout out to Mayra Arroyo for connecting the Math Department with a Building Thinking Classroom expert who traveled from AZ to present BTC strategies to the teachers and have them experience it as real students. Photos below:



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs







FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



The Math Department will be sending a large number of teachers to the West Suburban Math Conference at Glenbard North High School on February 27. We are excited and grateful that D201 has again designated this date as an institute day, allowing us to expand our professional learning through participation in an external conference. Additionally, several of our teachers will be presenting at the conference, which highlights the strong work happening within our department.



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



## West Suburban Math Conference Registration Form 2026

Your registration for the 2025 West Suburban Math Conference is confirmed. Please send payment to Scott Miller, Math Department Chair, Naperville Central High School, 440 W. Aurora Avenue, Naperville, IL 60540-6298. Payable to Naperville Central High School

### **Carnegie Learning Math PD (BTC Strategies):**

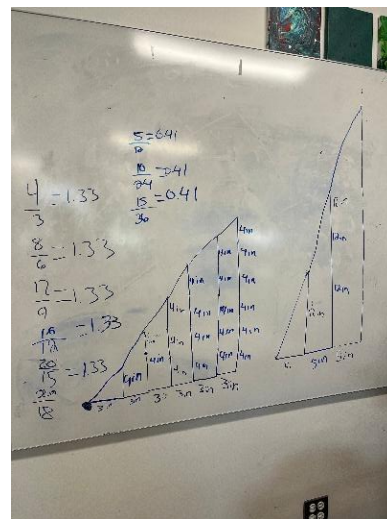
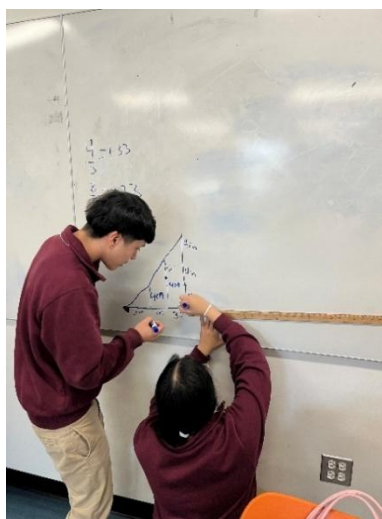
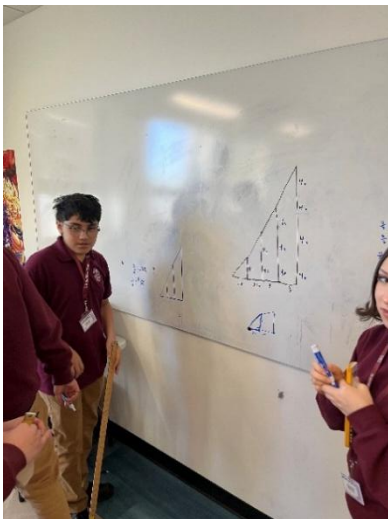
This PD was offered to all Math Teachers and it focused on using Carnegie Learning's **BTC (Bridging Thinking Classrooms)** strategies to strengthen student sense-making and discourse in math classrooms. Teachers will explore practical routines that help students connect prior knowledge to new concepts, articulate their thinking, and engage more deeply with mathematical reasoning. The goal is to support productive struggle while making student thinking visible and actionable for instruction. See some photos below:



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



**Following the Full Day Institute Day:** After our professional development to implement Building Thinking Classrooms, which are classrooms where students work in groups of 3, standing and doing math problems at the markerboards. See the photos below from the month of January in Mr. Elkins classrooms as his students are doing math problems “Building Thinking Classrooms” style:







### Mathletes:

- **Morton West Mathletes:**

West held the 4<sup>th</sup> IML math contest. Even though we did not have the same turnout as last time, our overall school score increased. We'll take it!

Here are our top results:

Kamil Fallad	2
Marvin Quiroz	2
Natalie Guerrero	2
Miguel Flores	1

- **Morton East Mathletes:**

WSML Meet #3 Results

On Tuesday, January 13th, 2026, the Morton East and Freshman Center Mathletes hosted and competed against Leyden, Morton West, and Willowbrook in the third meet of the West Suburban Math League. This competition was team events only competition. Our team total was 142 points.

In the competitions, **Morton earned 1st place in 3 events Morton got 2nd place overall!!**

We had 1st place finishes in: Fr/So 2-person, Jr/Sr Relay, and Calculator team.

We had 2nd place finishes in: Fr/So Relay, Fr/So 8-person, and Jr/Sr 8-person

Congratulations to all of the Mathletes and their coaches: Rachel Hosek, Barb Kane, Kevin Volk, and Matt Horvath!



On Wednesday, January 28th, 2026, the Morton East and Freshman Center Mathletes competed against 20 schools at the Lemont Invitational Math Competition.

The highlight of the night was our calculator team winning 1st place!!!

Evelyn Miranda, Pedro Alvarez, Santiago Zarco, Oswaldo Barron-Alvarado



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

Algebra 2 team placed 4th, Top Scorers: Pedro Alvarez, Bryan Gaborit-Moran, Juan Castillo, Alexandro Gonzales, Selena Arellano, Sebastian Vega, Juan Urgiles

Geometry team placed 5th, Top Scorers: Gabriel Andablo, Evelyn Miranda, Dorian Vega, Valeria Haro, Ariadna Villegas Mendez

Congratulations to all of the Mathletes and their coaches: Rachel Hosek, Barb Kane, Kevin Volk, and Matt Horvath!

Calculator Team:



Algebra 2 Team Individual





FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

Geometry Team



All the Mathletes:



### **Middle School Math Competition**

The Math Department is planning to host a Middle School Math Competition on **Tuesday, March 10th**, inviting students from all Morton middle schools. This event, which we also successfully hosted last year, provides an engaging opportunity for middle school students to participate in mathematical problem-solving and collaboration. Hosting this competition supports the continued growth of our Mathlete programs at both East and West while encouraging students to build early connections to our high school math community.





## **Social Science and Fine Arts- Kevin Vesper, Director**

### **Curriculum Updates - College Ready**

- On January 15, the AP African American Studies and Animation Studio curriculum teams held their second meeting to continue developing curriculum for these new courses, which will launch in the 2026–27 school year. During the session, teams identified essential skills, established performance criteria, and developed rubrics to assess those skills. They also began drafting common assessments and will use a backward-design approach to complete the remaining curriculum. One additional curriculum day this semester is scheduled to finalize materials in preparation for next year's launch.
- On January 27, the Social Science Biliteracy Team held their final curriculum meeting, during which they developed common instructional resources shown through student data to support English Learners in developing essential course skills. The team also organized shared resources across World History, U.S. History, and Civics & Economics to strengthen vertical alignment around common essential skills and ensure more coherent skill development for students across grade levels.
- In AP Government & Politics, teachers implemented additional formative assessments, including targeted quizzes focused on analyzing political cartoons, graphs, and comparison charts. These instructional adjustments led to improved student performance on summative MC test analysis questions, with students showing notably stronger results on comparison chart items compared to last semester. Strengthening these analytical reading skills also supports students' development of critical reading strategies aligned with ACT preparation.
- Student participation in the Chicago History Fair continues to grow, with additional students signing up this year. As we mark our 20th year of participation, we are excited to have several classes participating in the event. The local competition will take place on February 11 at Morton East High School, highlighting strong student engagement in historical research and inquiry.

### **Road Map Update**

- In January, our department participated in two Road Map Reality Check meetings with other departments and school leaders across all campuses. These conversations focused on reviewing progress toward our Road Map goals and identifying shared focus areas across departments that can strengthen student outcomes districtwide. Based on these discussions, we would like to highlight two areas our department will continue to emphasize this semester:

#### **Supporting Literacy Skills for ACT Success**

Beginning this February, our junior Social Science classes will implement weekly ACT-style reading prompts and questions. U.S. History teachers (core, biliteracy, and AP) have already been informed and are using PLT time to discuss the best ways to roll this out in their classrooms. Long term, our goal is to intentionally embed ACT-style reading skills into our curriculum across grade levels through ongoing curriculum days and PLT work.

#### **Increasing SEL Check-Ins in Fine Arts**

Fine Arts classes will continue implementing weekly SEL check-ins, with an initial focus on self-awareness. PLTs began this work last semester and will refine their approach this spring with the goal of developing a consistent, flexible system that supports meaningful PLT discussions. Over time, the broader goal is to embed SEL more intentionally into the curriculum across all courses.

### **Professional Development**



- During the January 5 Teacher Institute, the Social Science and Fine Arts Department focused on strengthening our skills-based instructional model aligned to our 90/10 framework. Teachers examined the importance of students both *developing* and *demonstrating* essential skills in the classroom. Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) reviewed their common assessment pacing to determine which skills were being under-assessed and where greater emphasis was needed. The department also learned and practiced using a common formula for writing clear student learning outcomes.

## Formula for Writing Learning Outcomes

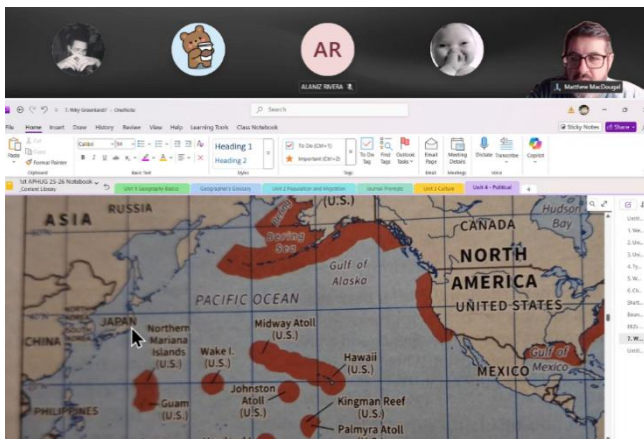
$$\text{Skill} + \text{Content} + \text{Process} = \text{Learning Outcome}$$

- Skill**
  - The gradebook skill the students will be learning.
- Content**
  - The content the students will be learning.
- Process**
  - How students will develop or demonstrate the skill.

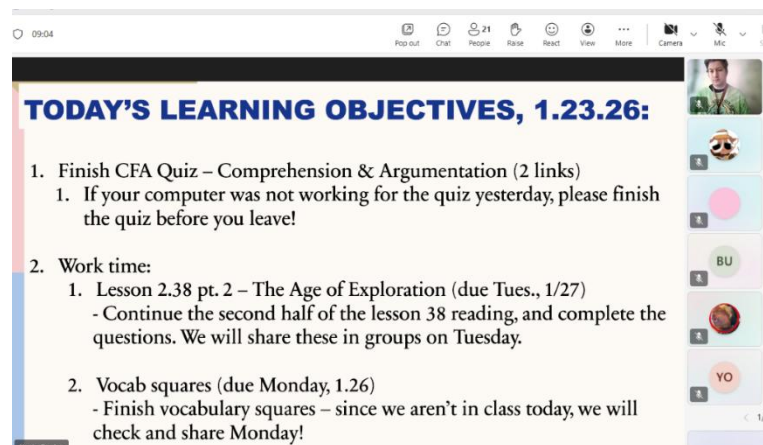
This formula is used by all teachers to write clear and consistent learning outcomes. Regardless of the classroom, students will see a learning outcome that clearly identifies the skill they are developing and how they will use content to practice that skill. This consistency helps students understand the skills they are learning in every class at Morton.

### E-Learning Day

On January 23, the district held its first e-learning day due to inclement weather, and the day was a success. Thanks to teachers' preparation and clear communication of expectations, students were able to engage meaningfully and continue their learning remotely.



Mr. MacDougal's AP Human Geography class analyzing the complexities of international trade routes.

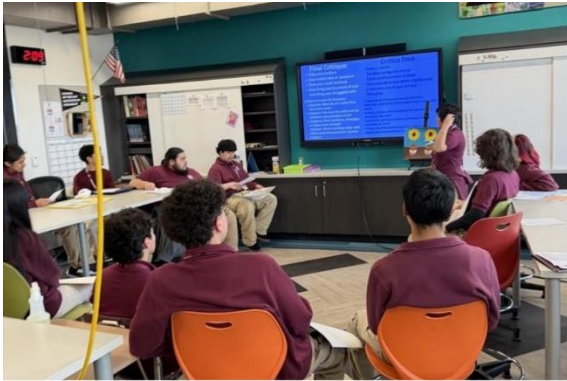


Mr. Paulus reviews the day's learning objectives with his students.

### Department Highlights:



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Students actively engaged in peer feedback using class skill rubrics. The image on the left shows students participating as a whole group with the rubric displayed on the video board, while the image on the right highlights small-group collaboration using paper rubrics to guide constructive feedback and reflection.



Morton East Class of 2020 graduate, Ruth Garcia returned for Career week to talk to Painting, Art Studio, and AP Drawing students about networking, self-promotion, mural work, and collaboration.





Morton West students had their Party Declaration Day. They will not develop their argumentation skill during their committee hearings.



Morton East students analyzing different budgeting scenarios in a carousel activity.



The performance classes went to see the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, performed at the Freshman Center and went to see the musical, Grease, at West. You know the music is a vibe when kids get up and dance.



FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**Dr. Josh McMahon**  
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Mr. Moriarty and his wonderful video students pose for a photo after recording the musical Grease at Morton West.



Part of the Morton East Social Science team take a quick break from parent-conferences to take a picture on the Morton East rooftop.





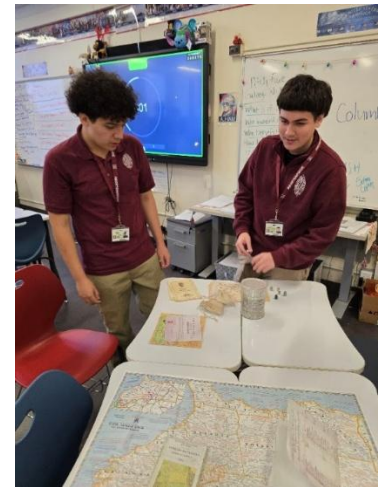
Student Mariana Ramirez with her featured artwork at the N.I.U. Art Exhibition.



Music students at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.



AP Visual Arts students at an N.I.U. Art Exhibition session.



Students in Ms. Anselmini's class are actively engaged in a Civil War classroom history trunk museum, where they examine replica primary sources from the era and collaborate with peers to analyze, discuss, and draw conclusions. Through close observation, inquiry, and evidence-based reasoning, students apply all three course skills to deepen their understanding of the Civil War while making meaningful connections to the past.





## **Physical Education / Health / Driver Education – Matt Koucereck, Director**

### **College Ready**

Billy Jacklin's Personal Fitness III class has received final approval, and rosters have been shared with Morton College for Dual Credit. Next steps will be meeting with Morton College's new liaison on Friday, February 20<sup>th</sup>. This will help assist everyone in the process prior to the Summit at Morton College on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Tracey Bornheim (West), Chris Tompkins (West), Malika Manouzi (East), Billy Jacklin (East), and Josh Scaletta (East) have been invited to present course materials and hopefully sign more agreements with Morton College at the Summit. Currently, looking at basic criteria for approved instructors so that we can move forward with seeking more instructors that could be approved by Morton College for Dual Credit.

### **Career Ready**

West Campus – Beth Sullivan will be bringing MacNeal Hospital guest speakers, Suzanne Mayerhofer (Physical Therapist) and Kimberly Lieberman (Occupational Therapist). Beth had an enjoyable experience working with these two professionals from MacNeal. We will be bringing them back on Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> during Beth's 6<sup>th</sup> hour Advance Health class. Maggie McIntyre is the Manager from Rehabilitation services at MacNeal and communicated that Suzanne and Kimberly loved working with our students at Morton and would love to come back. This is a great opportunity for Morton to connect with the community and our programs. Also, this allows our Morton students to see potential in job opportunities for their future and in our own neighborhoods.

### **Life Ready**

The Driver Education Team at West and East campus have been working hard before school, after school, during prep hours, and on Saturday's trying to get our students Life ready on our roads in our Behind-The-Wheel classroom. The Behind-The-Wheel team of Mike Caruso (East), Lynette Polchan (East), Dave Waldron (East), Miguel Romero (East), Samantha Gutheim (East), (James Blake (East/West), Chris Tompkins (West), Scott Gourley (West), Julie Calcagno (West), George Thill West), and Erika Mastalarz (West). This is a great group of instructors that have been exuding flexibility. Also, Yolanda Pineda (Driver Education Secretary) has been doing a fine job in transition in her new position to help support our instructors, students, and our Morton families supporting the Driver Education program.

**\*Specific Reports from each campus\***



### **Freshmen Center**

We have our second group of students entering Physical Education this semester. Students in PE took part in their pre-assessment for Fitnessgram Testing. Students have begun preparing for the post-assessment in May by engaging in each area of the test during daily warm-ups for class.

Students will all engage in a daily fitness activity this semester. This will help facilitate movement and engagement and also transfer over to those end-of-year fitness scores.

Health classes have started Unit 1, Wellness and Body Systems. All students have pre-tested and are now learning how all body systems can be affected by someone's well-being.

The FSI and ASI students have begun dressing for PE to prepare them for their sophomore year. To help the transition from the FC campus to East, these students are now engaging in mini-fitness activities using light dumbbells, bands, low step-boxes, and cardio machines.

We currently welcome Steven Morales, a long-term sub, into our Health department. Steven has been actively involved in the classroom with students as he introduces them to our Health curriculum.

### **West Campus**

We have just started our first units for the semester. Units include floor hockey, volleyball, badminton, and team handball. Our officiating students are officiating at nearby schools, and some will be officiating the SPED "Pack the Place". PLTs met and discussed what the 90/10 grading will look like for PE. Discussion was centrally focused on skills.

### **East Campus**

During the month of January, the East PE Department has begun looking at our 1<sup>st</sup> semester data and working towards goals for improving our ABC rate. We are currently meeting as a department to discuss early interventions and other ideas PLTs have for completing makeups. We are currently in our 1<sup>st</sup> unit of the semester. We have leadership training in Drivers Education now. We also have our 1<sup>st</sup> semester lifesaving students certified and working weekly with in services opportunities to prepare for recertification of past years guards. Looking ahead, we are looking forward to fitness testing, outdoor units, and the Fitness Challenge later this semester.



## **Multi-Tiered System of Supports Department – Gloria Ramirez-Solis, Director**

### **College Ready**

Career-ready initiatives this month emphasized intentional planning, career exploration, and alignment of coursework to students' long-term goals. At West Campus, staff continued development of the Trades Guide, with work nearing completion to support students exploring career pathways. At East Campus, sophomores and juniors met individually with counselors to request courses for the upcoming school year aligned to their college and career goals. In addition, East hosted a STEM career presentation in the College & Career Center with representatives from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, providing students with exposure to postsecondary STEM opportunities and career pathways.

At the Freshman Center, counseling teams supported career-ready planning through 10th-grade registration meetings that included transcript reviews, discussions of coursework and postsecondary career plans, and referrals to Night School and additional student supports such as Tapestry and Youth Crossroads.

Counselors also facilitated Unity programming in collaboration with English and Math teachers and conducted outreach to incoming students through Unity presentations and cafeteria visits. During these activities, counselors and elective teachers shared information on class offerings, bell schedules, electives, and future transition supports to help students make informed academic and career-planning decisions.



East student Jocelyn, recognized for earning acceptance to 12 or more colleges.

### **Career Ready**

College-readiness supports continued across campuses. At West Campus, college application workshops were offered every Tuesday and Thursday, with additional financial aid support provided through weekly visits from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. Dual enrollment opportunities were reinforced through weekly Morton College visits, and local scholarship information was finalized and prepared for student distribution.

At East Campus, students participated in a field trip to the University of Illinois Chicago on January 28, where 40 students toured the campus and met with admissions representatives. The College & Career Center hosted an additional Financial Aid Night for families, while Morton College facilitated four dual enrollment workshops in partnership with the College & Career Center. Senior Acceptance Celebration activities continued, highlighting student postsecondary achievements and acceptances.





## **Life Ready**

Life-Ready supports remained a strong focus across campuses. At West Campus, Erika's Lighthouse and Health class presentations were delivered to all freshmen, emphasizing understanding depression and developing help-seeking skills. Students also participated in ongoing groups addressing life-readiness needs such as identity development, post-hospitalization transitions, understanding 504 plans, and newcomer supports. MTSS teams maintained a strong focus on attendance concerns and targeted interventions to improve student engagement.

At East Campus, student support staff provided dedicated spaces during supervisory periods to offer additional Life-Ready support. East staff also participated in professional learning focused on strengthening supports for Latine and newcomer students, reinforcing inclusive and responsive practices.

At the Freshman Center, the Morton Makers art-based life-readiness group promoted kindness and positive school culture by creating and sharing affirmations and words of encouragement on paper hearts. The Freshman Center stress-management group participated in a painting activity in the library, using art as a strategy to build self-regulation and manage stress. Additionally, Panorama data was leveraged to identify attendance trends and create targeted attendance groups, with staff utilizing Panorama playbooks to guide intervention planning and implementation.

At MAS, counseling staff partnered with social workers to facilitate a schoolwide workshop with Selah Freedom, engaging both students and staff in life-readiness learning focused on personal safety and awareness. Students participated in a session addressing online recruitment tactics used by predators and learned practical strategies to recognize risks, discuss concerns, and protect themselves online. Staff participated in a complementary training focused on identifying indicators of sexual exploitation and trafficking and understanding appropriate steps for response and support. This work strengthened staff capacity while empowering students with critical life-readiness skills related to safety and self-advocacy.

## **Curriculum Review and Updates**

Curricular planning and implementation continued throughout January. At West Campus, planning was underway for the implementation of Signs of Suicide and Black History Month activities, while course selection remained in progress for students in grades 9 - 11. At East Campus, sophomores and juniors met individually with counselors to finalize course requests aligned to their four-year plans and college and career goals. Across campuses, end-of-semester check-ins and data reviews informed ongoing refinement of MTSS practices and student supports.