

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Ed Condon

From: Tina Steketee, Roosevelt Middle School Principal

Date: 11/20/2025

RE: Optimizing Instructional Time and Content Delivery at RMS

Roosevelt Middle School is implementing key enhancements to its instructional schedule and curricular programs for the 2025–26 school year. These improvements are designed to maximize instructional time and elevate student learning experiences. This memo outlines major updates in Math, English Language Arts, World Language, and Digital Civics, highlighting both curriculum shifts and strategies to support effective classroom implementation.

Teachers are effectively maximizing instructional minutes and collaborating through structured daily planning blocks. Comprehensive professional development opportunities, routine implementation check-ins, and ongoing instructional coaching have been established to ensure robust adoption of new curriculum materials. These efforts are anchored in a commitment to curriculum alignment and high-fidelity instructional delivery.

Students are benefiting from greater consistency in daily routines, enhanced continuity across core subjects, and expanded opportunities for deeper learning and engagement. The redesigned schedule and curricular enhancements are intended to bolster academic growth and provide an enriched, supportive learning environment.

As the year progresses, the District will review instructional pacing, alignment with standards, and student proficiency growth, with special attention to transitional courses, including the launch of the daily World Language class. End-of-year reflections and data collection at the teacher and grade levels will inform future decisions, support transparent communication, and strengthen continuous improvement efforts.

CORE “Double” Classes - 77 minutes

Mathematics

The 2025-26 schedule shifts from 81-minute math classes every other day to daily math periods of 77 minutes. This provides greater continuity, daily practice, and learning momentum for all students.

[Link to RMS Math BOE Presentation](#) (09/25) “5-8th Grade Math: Daily Classes”

The new math curriculum resource, Amplify Desmos Math, is being fully implemented in grades 5-8. Amplify Desmos Math incorporates a structured, problem-based approach with lessons designed to invite multiple problem-solving strategies and student models, facilitating mathematical thinking that is visible to both teachers and peers. Teachers participate in ongoing coaching and implementation checks to ensure strong curriculum fidelity.

Teachers report using every instructional minute intentionally to optimize student learning.

Enhanced Features in Math Instruction:

- Standards Alignment: Every lesson is mapped to grade-level Common Core and Illinois Math Standards, ensuring vertically aligned instruction and consistent academic rigor.
- Variety of Approaches: Students tackle problems using different strategies and models, building conceptual understanding as they explain their thinking with diagrams, words, and symbols.
- Collaborative Engagement: Lesson formats and teacher facilitation tools actively engage students in regular collaboration, peer learning, and group problem-solving.
- Rich Discussions: The curriculum prompts and supports productive classroom conversations, with teachers selecting and displaying student work to elicit further discussion based on diverse approaches.
- Digital and Print Materials: Instruction utilizes both print and interactive digital resources, including manipulatives and personalized practice, for flexible access and engagement.
- Mathematical Practices: Lessons and activities foster mathematical practices such as reasoning, critiquing, modeling, and perseverance with challenging tasks aligned to Common Core practices.
- Visible Thinking: Students routinely build models, use diagrams, and leverage digital tools to make their mathematical reasoning visible, supporting formative assessment and feedback.

These approaches collectively maximize instructional time while supporting deep learning, critical thinking, and collaboration, aligning with RMS priorities for the school year.

English Language Arts (ELA)

Last year, grades 5 and 6 alternated between English Language Arts (ELA) and Language Arts (LA) classes each day. Grades 7 and 8 had daily ELA/Humanities for 81 minutes. For the 2025-26 school year, all grade levels have a daily combined ELA/Humanities class for 77 minutes.

The Great Minds curriculum is now fully implemented in all Core ELA classes. At the 5th grade, Arts & Letters, and in 6th-8th grades, Wit & Wisdom are the resources for our Core ELA classes. These curricula feature integrated modules built around rich texts that focus on reading, writing, speaking, and vocabulary, and are aligned with Illinois state standards and the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

Teachers use instructional time to deliver explicit lesson plans, knowledge-building activities, and writing practice, supported by curriculum resources, job-embedded coaching, and ongoing professional development that strengthen instructional delivery. In this model, the ELA Instructional Coach provides targeted support to both teachers and students to deepen overall literacy instruction. Using a collaborative coaching approach, the coach partners with teachers through co-planning, co-teaching, modeling lessons, and offering actionable feedback based on classroom observations, while also helping teachers analyze student data, adjust instruction to meet learner needs, and implement best practices aligned with the Great Minds curriculum. For students, the teacher and instructional coach together design enrichment and intervention through responsive small-group instruction, strategies to build background knowledge and vocabulary, and reinforcement of strong reading and writing habits across the ELA block.

Maintaining Student Attention in Longer CORE Classes

Teachers are supporting attention and engagement in the longer Math and ELA class periods by:

- Using task switching, which allows students to shift between different activities and modes of learning, helping maintain focus and reduce cognitive fatigue.
- Incorporating scaffolding strategies, such as breaking content into manageable steps and providing supports as needed, to sustain student motivation and build stamina for extended academic tasks.

- Building classroom routines that help students gradually increase their endurance for longer periods of academic work, so they can fully utilize instructional time without losing focus or disengaging.

“Single” Daily Classes - 37 minutes

World Language

Last year, Grades 5 and 6 participated in World Language instruction daily for 10 weeks, and grades 7 and 8 participated in World Language every other day for 81 minutes throughout the year. This year, ALL students participate in daily World Language for 37 minutes throughout the year, ensuring language exposure and retention.

The World Language department has entered a curriculum review cycle. This process involves evaluating curricular materials to ensure they meet RMS standards for student proficiency, engagement, and modern language pedagogy. 5th and 6th grade French and Spanish classes are implementing new core resources aligned with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency standards. 7th and 8th grade French and Spanish, and 5th-8th grade Italian, will implement the new resources next year. We are also collaborating with OPRF to include a proficiency assessment in World Language placement.

The extent of content coverage in the new daily World Language class over four years cannot be definitively determined at this time, as it will require additional data from future quarters and academic years. Currently, the instructional team is closely monitoring curriculum pacing, alignment with standards, and student proficiency development during this transitional first quarter. At the conclusion of the academic year, the district will conduct a comprehensive review and gather feedback and data from teachers and grade-level teams to more accurately assess content coverage and student outcomes. Moving forward, articulation plans will be developed to establish multi-year learning benchmarks, proficiency targets, and strategies for ongoing curriculum refinement, ensuring that questions regarding coverage are addressed transparently as the program continues to evolve.

Digital Civics

Digital Civics is a quarterly exploratory class that replaced World Language in grades 5 and 6. In grades 7 and 8, Digital Civics replaced Communications. STEM is now a quarterly rotation across all grade levels; previously, STEM class was only offered in grades 6 through 8.

Link to [Digital Civics BOE Presentation](#) (8/25) “Digital Civics: Exploratory Course”

- In 5th Grade, students will learn how to respect others’ opinions, handle disagreements responsibly, and seek help when needed. They will talk about ways to manage my emotions healthily and avoid negativity online. They will also practice good citizenship both in person and digitally, and understand how their actions shape my digital reputation.
- In 6th Grade, students will understand boundaries and can manage their emotions in healthy ways. They will learn ways to stay flexible, make responsible choices, and turn negative feelings into positive actions. They will also learn how to communicate respectfully, recognize unsafe or harmful online behavior, and know what to do if they feel unsafe in digital spaces.
- In 7th Grade, students will learn how to respectfully handle differing opinions, support others’ emotional needs, and speak up when necessary. They will talk about healthy online habits, protect their personal information, and know how to stay safe online.
- In 8th Grade, students will continue to learn how to communicate respectfully and respond thoughtfully to harmful content, understand media influences, adapt to change, and build healthy relationships while protecting their own well-being online. At the end of each quarter, students complete a final assessment where they reflect on and present what they have learned by answering an open-ended question.

Other Non-Academic Schedule Details:

Lunch and Recess

Enhanced 2025-26 schedule maintains both lunch and prioritizes **recess** time for all grades. Lunch and recess are 20 minutes each, changed from 25 minutes each last year.

Passing Periods

This year, passing periods are 3 minutes in length. Last year, passing periods between core blocks and daily doubles were 4 minutes, and passing periods between single classes (PE/Exploratory Classes) were 3 minutes. All passing periods were 3 minutes for many years when the 8-period schedule was in effect.

School Day

The School day is now 8:30am - 3:18pm, extended by 3 minutes compared to last year.

[Overview of 2025-26 Schedule](#)