



Prospect Heights School District 23

Board Memorandum

Information Item

Date: September 18, 2025

Subject: Curriculum & Instruction Update

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

This informational item is being provided as an update to the professional development plan memo from last month.

Assessment

Each year, the district prepares an assessment schedule that is designed to measure student growth related to district standards aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards. This information guides instruction and supports each student's academic and personal development. Here's a link to the [District 23 Assessment Schedule](#).

Committee Work & Curriculum Investigations:

The collaborative work of committees is essential to meeting the goals of our Strategic Plan. Each year, these working groups are evaluated for alignment with the Strategic Plan, need, and purpose. This year, several committees have been established, including:

- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Committee:** The SEL Curriculum Committee will revisit the Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards, update curriculum maps, and select the instructional materials to be implemented in the 2026-27 school year. The goal is to ensure all students are well-rounded and prepared for success in high school and beyond.
- **Specials/Exploratory Curriculum Committee:** The Specials/Exploratory Curriculum Committee will revisit standards, discuss curricular needs, update curriculum maps, and select the instructional materials to be implemented for the 2026-27 school year. Areas for investigation include applied tech, art, career pathways, digital literacy, family and consumer science (F.A.C.S.), I.D.E.A.S., music, physical education, Robotics, Spanish, and S.T.E.A.M. programming.

Professional Development

Professional development in District 23 is designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that certified staff members and program assistants participate in substantial professional development to remain current in their profession. This cycle of improvement helps us prepare students to be well-rounded and emotionally and academically prepared for success. [Click here](#) to see a comprehensive view of the District 23 Professional Development Plan.

Coaching Partnerships: For the fourth consecutive year, coaches within District 23 continue to participate in the Coaching Connections Partnership with instructional coaches from nearby districts. The group began as a partnership between Prospect Heights School District 23 and Mount Prospect School District 57 that provided coaches like-roled partners to help them grow as educators. Over time, the partnership has grown to include River Trails School District 26. In addition, the coaches within District 23 regularly take advantage of opportunities to partner with other coaches around the region as well. Over the past two years, they have partnered with coaches from Big Hollow, Lake Forest, Libertyville, and NSSEO, among others. This initiative is aligned to our Strategic Plan in the area of supporting and enhancing teacher leadership skills and capacity.

D214 Math Partnership: Once again this year, we will continue our partnership with District 214 and its sender school districts for a regional math collaboration project. It includes leaders and math teachers from District 214's six high schools and 12 sending school districts. This initiative aligns with our professional development theme in the area of supporting student learning through the implementation of robust curricula and staff support. Here's a [summary of this year's partnership](#). This year's focus is on algebra, and the purpose of the partnership is:

- To create/curate shared expectations and key assessments for Algebra 1 courses, whether taught at the middle or high school level.
- To establish assessment expectations that incorporate the multiple competencies of mathematics, which are:
 - Conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive disposition.
 - Continue to build this group's capacity to collaborate on shared problems of practice via professional learning and job-embedded Lesson Study (short cycle) with the high school educators.
 - Build the capacity of department chairs and instructional leads to continue to support the learning and problem-solving of the educators at each school.

Gamified PD: A new district goal that became part of our Strategic Plan this year is providing a variety of professional development and coaching opportunities to support adult learning and growth by designing and implementing “Gamified PD”. This newly engaging version of professional development within the district is intended to accomplish the following:

- Increase motivation and engagement around professional learning, which will ultimately lead to intrinsic motivation.
- Improve knowledge retention by forcing learners to apply new knowledge to solve a challenge or complete a task. This hands-on application makes information stick more effectively.
- Increase customization and personalization by allowing staff members to choose tasks that are most relevant to their roles and skill levels. This self-paced, individualized approach ensures that the learning is directly applicable and not a one-size-fits-all experience.
- Foster a growth mindset by creating a safe space for employees to experiment with new skills and make mistakes without fear. This encourages a growth mindset, where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning rather than failures.

Here’s a sneak peek at our [introductory video](#) to create a buzz around Gamified PD.

Teaching with Clarity by Tony Frontier: We are excited to be partnering with Tony Frontier, author of Teaching with Clarity, to assist with our Standards-Based Practices initiative. Tony focuses on removing barriers from the teaching and learning process in order to provide clarity to students, families, and teachers. The end result is increased motivation for students, stronger and more actionable feedback to students, and increased consistency across grade levels, buildings, and organizations as a whole. Through a series of videos, a keynote at October’s Institute Day, and consultation with district administrators, we plan to partner in this endeavor to transform practices within the district.

In summary, we work very hard to provide opportunities for staff to engage in meaningful and relevant topics that can positively impact the teaching and learning occurring in District 23.

Should you have any questions regarding professional development in our district, please contact Dr. Craig Curtis.