



Prospect Heights School District 23 Board Memorandum Information Item

Date: May 8, 2025

Subject: Programming & Services Update

From: Dr. Craig Curtis, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
Dr. Chrys Sroka, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
Mrs. Dominique Guza, Director of Student Services
Mr. Chris Alms, Director of Technology and Information Services

This update is provided to the Board of Education to highlight some of the program and service accomplishments in the departments of Student Services, Teaching and Learning, and Technology, as well as provide a brief glance into our work for the 2025-26 school year.

Student Services Department

- **Early Childhood (EC) Services:**
 - **Early Childhood Screenings** are conducted monthly at Eisenhower School and are used to determine the need for a special education evaluation or eligibility for our at-risk preschool program. This meets one of many Child Find obligations the district is required to have.
 - **Preschool for All** is a grant-funded preschool program for students who meet a variety of at-risk criteria that may impact their success in school. The district has a partnership with ECDEC (Early Childhood Developmental Enrichment Center), who provide support to manage the grant, provide assistance with grant compliance, and offers opportunities for family support and resources. We currently have **62 students** in our at-risk program.
 - **Early Childhood Special Education Services** are provided through multiple programs at Eisenhower. Students are identified through Early Childhood Screening or through Early Intervention. Students who qualify for services can receive those through our blended classrooms (at-risk and special education students in class together), our instructional classrooms (special education students only), and our walk-in services. We currently serve **32 special education students** through our Early Childhood Program.
 - We have been working on implementing the new Creative Curriculum Cloud and aligning our work across classrooms. We have also been preparing to implement Ready Rosie, the additional parent component to the curriculum, as well as determining the curriculum assessment needs for the program.
- **Resource Program:**
 - A majority of students are provided services through our Resource Program. These students spend the majority of their time in the general education classroom and receive support from a special education teacher or related service provider either in the classroom or pulled out into a small group. Related Services can include: Speech/Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Social Work/Counseling services, Nursing services, Hearing Itinerant services, Vision Itinerant services, etc. We currently have **107 students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)** being served through our Resource Program.
- **Structured Adapted Individualized Learning (SAIL) Program:**

- Our SAIL Program supports students with a variety of needs in a small, special education classroom that has a high level of adult support and often uses an alternate, life-skills-based curriculum. Currently, there are 5 SAIL Program classrooms in the district, one in each building, with two at Ross this year. The program serves **27 students**. Next year, we project having one class in each building with a total of 30 students in the program.
- **“STRIVE” Social-Emotional Learning Program:**
 - Our STRIVE Program is nearing the end of its second school year. We continue to support students in their home schools by having a responsive level of support with a consistent team approach. The students maintain their academic rigor while learning regulation strategies and how to access tools that can help them manage their emotions and behaviors.
 - We are working on expanding the program to MacArthur Middle School year next, more in a hybrid model due to lower numbers moving to MacArthur, and supporting students with similar needs but not as severe.
 - There are currently **5 students** in the STRIVE classroom at Sullivan and we anticipate 5-6 students to start the year in that classroom next year.
- **Special Education Coaching Services:**
 - The District 23 Special Education Specialists & Coaches focus on curriculum, assessment, behavior, engagement, and communication.
 - Our Adapted PE Coach has focused on building the Unified PE classes across the district.
 - Special Education Specialists and SAIL/Behavior Coach have focused on supporting the students in our STRIVE and SAIL Programs as well as providing professional development around Functional Behavior Assessment, Behavior Intervention Plans, and Verbal Behavior-MAPP Assessment. They continue to use strategies from Cognitive Coaching in order to model and support strategy implementation in the classroom.
- **Other Student Services Programs:**
 - **NSSEO Public Therapeutic Day School Placements**
 - As a member district of NSSEO (Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization), we access their therapeutic day school programs throughout the school year. We currently have **8 students** enrolled in their programs.
 - **Private Therapeutic Day School Placements**
 - When students require the support of a therapeutic day school, we typically look at the options we have through NSSEO. There are occasions when those options are still not the best match for students. We currently have **2 students** who are served in other therapeutic day schools outside of NSSEO.
 - **McKinney-Vento Services**
 - Students are made eligible for McKinney-Vento services when they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime abode. This may include students who are doubled-up, living in shelters, living in motels, runaways, lockouts, or migratory children. We support them by providing transportation to and from school from wherever they are seeking shelter, as well as free lunch, free breakfast, fee waivers, and other supports. We currently have **14 students** who qualify for this service.
 - **Section 504 Services**
 - Many students with disabilities who do not require specialized instruction through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) qualify for accommodations and consultative services through a Section 504 Plan. We currently have about **90 students** with Section 504 Plans in the district. The students qualifying for this program has steadily increased over the past several years.
 - **Homebound/Hospital Services**

- When students are medically unable to attend school, District 23 is obligated to provide educational services through Homebound Instruction or Hospital Instruction. This year, we have had many students access both of these options throughout the school year.
- **Work for 2025-2026**
 - As student needs change and new staff members join District 23, there are always opportunities for new learning in the Student Services Department. We will continue to focus on building our Early Childhood, SAIL, and STRIVE Programs which service some of our neediest students. We will also take a look at our service delivery models in our Resource Program to make sure we are meeting all student needs in an effective manner.
 - Our professional learning will focus on our continued implementation of the Key2Ed Facilitated IEP process and better involving our families in this experience.
 - We will dive deeper into the needs of our Educational Support Professionals (ESPs) developing a professional development plan, mentoring program, and handbook for current and future ESPs.

Teaching & Learning Department

- **Academic Services**
 - Collectively and collaboratively, our schools and families successfully implemented new schedules this year. Eisenhower, Ross, and Sullivan Schools added 30 minutes to their academic school day while also adjusting the start and end times of their day. MacArthur Middle School also changed its schedule by adjusting its start and end times. While it took time to adjust, the changes were successful in meeting our goals by adding time to the academic day. In addition, we have seen a decrease in tardy students at MacArthur due to the corresponding schedule changes.
 - One major addition to our services at Besty Ross and Anne Sullivan Schools this year was a new special area class called IDEAS, which stands for inquiry, discovery, exploration, and awareness. We had the pleasure of welcoming students from this class at a Board of Education meeting earlier in the school year. The class is led by the brilliant Mrs. Laurie Travis, and students couldn't be more engaged in all it has to offer.
 - An update to our Family and Consumer Science (FACS) Program at MacArthur this year included the addition of CPR certification. This course now offers students the opportunity to become familiar with life-saving techniques and to become CPR certified for babysitting or other purposes. A huge thanks to our FACS teacher, Sam Alvaro, for the creativity she brings to the team.
- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**
 - This process is designed to provide high-quality and rigorous instruction, interventions, and/or enrichment to all students. This process can help avoid a "wait to fail" model of support because students are continuously monitored and given support promptly to grow and improve their skills within the general education environment. Our MTSS Program supports students in their learning of both academic and social/emotional skills.
 - Over the past several years we have had a districtwide committee to support the growth of our MTSS process in the district. This year we focused on completing our building based behavior plans as well as understanding the MTSS process for social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Next year we will have a smaller group working on Tier 2 & 3 interventions for social, emotional, and behavioral needs.
- **Multilingual (ML) Services**
 - Here is a glimpse into our [multilingual numbers](#) for the school year.
 - The Spanish bilingual classes at Besty Ross School (2nd & 3rd grades) were able to successfully join forces this school year by sharing a classroom space. This need arose as we sought to be creative with spaces and remain within our class size guidelines within the district.

While obstacles arose with the arrangement, the flexibility of our students and staff ensured its success in the end.

- Our newcomer students had the benefit of new programming this year. Students were guided through language acquisition curricula titled "Ready, Set, Sail" and "Ready, Set, Go! Newcomers".
- On the horizon for next year, we are looking to begin monitoring the progress of our multilingual students across the district. Currently, we monitor their progress annually through the ACCESS Test, but have found a need to more regularly monitor their language proficiency growth. We plan to begin this process by monitoring our newcomer students and eventually progressing to all of our multilingual students.

- **Curriculum & Committee Work**

- The 2024-25 school year was the first year of our 6-year Science Curriculum adoption. Both Mystery Science (K-5) and STEMscopes (6-8) are reported by our teachers to be engaging for our students. The hands-on, interactive approach to learning continues to provide powerful daily learning opportunities.
- The year also saw the library media specialists and their colleagues investigate their LMC curriculum. The team reviewed standards with a focus on consolidating and collaborating to share the responsibility of the standards. It was a phenomenal way for our staff to see the various ways our standards come together in education.
- One of our biggest undertakings this year was the facilitation of our Grading and Assessment Committee. We are planning for the committee to be a 3-year committee that will lead to the rethinking of our grading practices. Thus far, we have already begun some deep discussions and know this will continue as we progress in the next 2 years of our work
- Another huge undertaking this year was the investigation of our math curriculum. While we decided early on to readopt Ready Math and i-Ready, we spent the year reviewing our practices and aligning our math practices. This included time spent across the district, within our committee, and also with our D214 feeder districts through the Metro Chicago Mathematics Initiative (MCMI) Partnership. Our focus for the year and into our readoption will be on student discussion and discourse. Of course, the year ahead will be Year 1 of our 6-year Ready Math readoption.
- In 2025-26, we will be establishing a committee to investigate our specials, exploratory, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula.

- **Instructional Coaching Services**

- One huge accomplishment for our coaching staff was taking on the responsibility of facilitating instructional rounds in their buildings this year. What began as an administrative growth opportunity transitioned to our building leaders, teachers, and is now led by staff altogether. The instructional coaches now plan visits within the buildings and even across buildings and facilitate reflective conversations afterward to ensure professional growth results. The practice is truly impactful!
- The biggest area of growth for our instructional coaches comes in the area of leadership. This year, our coaches took it upon themselves to seek out ways to better utilize their presentation and facilitation skills. Because of this, they were offered the opportunity to help plan and facilitate district-level committee meetings. They divided the responsibilities, and we plan regularly for committee meetings. Over time, they have become presentation specialists and have added a superior level of engagement and creativity to our district-level meetings.
- Another way our coaches have grown their leadership capacity is through networking. Our district has established several partnerships with other neighboring districts to provide our coaches opportunities to meet with like-positioned professionals. They are able to regularly meet with the other districts for planning and collaboration purposes, as well as observations. While we knew this already, we are hearing from other districts that our coaches LEAD the way!

- We are extremely excited to reinvigorate the professional development offerings throughout District 23 in 2025 and beyond. Next year, we are planning to GAMIFY PD within the district. For more information, please take a look at this [flyer](#) for a sneak peek!
- **Family & Community Partnerships**
 - All of our schools continued to provide a plethora of family engagement opportunities for families this year, which included literacy nights, music performances, musicals, and much more. New this year were some particularly exciting events at MacArthur Middle School that included a Career Fair and a Civics Night.
 - Once again, our D23 Heritage Night celebration grew dramatically this year. The previous year, the event grew from 8 stations to 23 countries with 6 activities in each country. This year, we continued with 23 countries and 6-8 activities in each country. However, there was added family engagement to support various stations. There was student participation through the Ross/Sullivan IDEAS class, which increased attendance by approximately 200%. Then, there was also the addition of a Zumba instructor to support the Latin American countries. The event received rave reviews from staff, students, and families.
 - This year's Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) continued on successfully as usual. The committee increased the number of events from past years from four to six. The group also decided to bring back the resource fair after a 4-year absence. For the event, we were able to partner with eight different organizations. Perhaps the most significant improvement was the regular inclusion of parents at our Multilingual Committee meetings, which was a direct result of the parents' outstanding participation at the 2023-24 End-of-Year BPAC Meeting.

Technology Updates

Through developing strong and mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships, we continue to have exciting and fun opportunities to improve processes and experiences for students, families, and staff in the District!

- **Registration Process Update**
 - We are in our second year of an updated Registration process. Thanks to the proactive work of Ms. Perez, our Data and Systems Manager, families now register through an option in their PowerSchool Parent Portal account; they no longer need a separate code and log-in credentials. This is not only safer and smoother, but it also reinforces the importance of the Parent Portal for our families.
- **Updated Report Card Templates and Mac Student Schedules**
 - We are also in our second year of an updated aesthetic for all report cards, featuring the school logo and colors. Also, we worked with the MacArthur team to create an improved look for their student schedules. Speaking of Mac student schedules, one of our projects this summer will be helping Mac with the maintenance of the PowerSchool scheduling tool they use for all student schedules. This work should help them save time and be more efficient!
- **Partnerships**
 - Last summer, part of the team visited the processing plant and warehouse of our recycling partner, Arcoa. We got to see the tools and machinery they have to safely process devices we give them, using the same process that their high-level partners (which include the FBI and NASA) use.
 - We have worked with Project Unicorn and their team to be rated on our interoperability level with our systems across departments.
 - We are part of a local cohort to earn the Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) seal, which is a distinction of meeting rigorous data-privacy standards. This will be a multi-year effort, and we seek to be among the leaders of data-privacy safety in our area.
 - We continue to partner with local groups, including a local group of tech directors, and this group together has hosted a tabletop safety training for our respective Administration teams

led by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). This group also led a meet-up on artificial intelligence, which included representatives from District 214.

- We continue to participate in the North Cook Collaborative, which is a group of school communication specialists. This group reviews best practices and trends for communicating with all stakeholders.

- **Device Updates**

- Per our replacement cycle, we updated all staff laptops this past year. In doing so, we used the opportunity to update and review important safety settings for all staff. This coming year, we are updating teacher and related-service staff iPads. We continue to recycle the iPads for 4th and 8th graders, and the work we and the buildings have done to manage safe iPad use has led to fewer broken iPads when it is time to recycle them, which helps increase the money we get back. (Much more importantly, there is significantly less disruption to student learning, as they have their working iPads in their hands longer.) Our students in K and 5, as always, will get new iPads, but new this year is that they will be getting the newest iPad available, the A16! This is different from what they got last year (the 9th-generation model) because there is more on-board storage, the screen is bigger, and there is no more home button.

- **Cybersecurity Professional Development**

- We continue to leverage partnerships to introduce lessons and build skills when it comes to our human firewall: our staff! We continue to leverage phishing campaigns and audits with our insurance collaborative, Cyberpools. We also work with the Learning Technology Center (LTC) of Illinois, doing two free phishing campaigns. Finally, we work with our partners at Empist, and we are updating our approach for 25-26 lessons by creating a formal curriculum and roadmap for building skills around awareness and best communication practices.

- **Projects for 25-26**

- We will be updating our communications platform this summer, moving from Constant Contact to Smore. By moving to Smore, we will leverage better, easier-to-use translation features for families, and the platform allows for easier collaboration among the principals. The translation and layout features are also responsive to feedback we received from our most recent parent and staff communication survey. We signed a multi-year contract, with each year costing less than Constant Contact would have if we were to have continued with them.
- We continue to plan for and perform scheduled, needed infrastructure and network upgrades, including important cabling work, upgrading our phone server, and modernizing our called-911 alert technology. We continue to partner with the Facilities department to review building security, looking at the next phase of needed security cameras and looking at guest/visitor management solutions.