



**Subject:** Curriculum Update  
**Date:** September 2, 2025

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Ms. Chris Arado, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, will present the District Goals Update.

**BACKGROUND:**

**New Teacher Orientation:** During the week of August 4, Central Office departments collaborated to provide a comprehensive two-day orientation for new employees. The Technology Department ensured staff were equipped with the necessary devices and digital resources to fully engage in their roles within District 45. In addition, Chris Arado and Diana Brown presented an overview of the district's two social-emotional learning frameworks, Responsive Classroom and RULER. These approaches, which are embedded in the district's new strategic plan goal of supporting student health and well-being, emphasize the priority District 45 places on fostering a positive and supportive learning environment for both students and staff. New employees also participated in job-alike sessions, met with their assigned mentors, reviewed curricular materials and instructional programs, and were given dedicated time to address questions in preparation for the upcoming school year.

New staff will attend four after-school sessions over the course of the school year as part of the new employee orientation process. The sessions being offered are as follows:

1. Teaching Isn't Solo Work: Welcome to Your PLC
2. Teaching with Language in Mind: Empowering MLLs to Thrive
3. Every Choice Counts: Supporting Student Behavior with Care and Consistency
4. From Burnout to Brilliance: AI Tools for New Teachers

**Kindergarten Screening:** As in previous years, kindergarten students began the school year with half-day attendance during the first three days of school. Each morning, building leaders, kindergarten teachers, and additional staff members welcomed our youngest learners by leading engaging activities and establishing important classroom and school routines. This time also allowed students to meet other adults in the building, practice safe play on the playground, and become acquainted with their special area classes, including art, music, physical education, and library.

Afternoons were dedicated to one-on-one assessments using a variety of tools, including ARC's Reading Readiness Screener, providing teacher teams with valuable insights into each child's early learning needs. These data informed the development of classroom rosters. On August 18,

kindergarten students transitioned to full-day attendance with their homeroom teachers and classmates.

**Opening Day:** On August 11, 2025, all District 45 staff gathered at Jackson Middle School to begin a full day of professional development. The day started with a welcome from Dr. Brian Graber, followed by a keynote address from Cathleen Beachboard. Staff then participated in ParentSquare training, tailored to their role, before transitioning to department or building-based meetings. Specialized sessions were held for SPED and EL/TBE teachers, while non-certified staff attended a separate meeting. The afternoon included additional building-based work and concluded with staff meetings focused on safety, discipline, and teacher evaluation.

At the conclusion of the day, over 200 staff completed the evaluation. Given the large data set, ChatGPT was used to summarize the feedback. The Key Takeaways from the evaluations are as follows:

Evaluation Question: What was the highlight of your day?

**Overall Takeaway:**

- ★ The Keynote on Hope was the standout highlight across responses.
- ★ Reconnecting with colleagues and teams was equally meaningful.
- ★ Staff appreciated a balanced day: inspiration (keynote), collaboration (team time), and preparation (classroom/building setup).

Evaluation Question: What would have improved the day for you and why?

**Overall Takeaway:**

- ★ Staff appreciated the planning and relevance of the day.
- ★ Time for classroom prep, smoother ParentSquare rollout, and keynote pacing were the most consistent areas for improvement.
- ★ Inclusion and recognition of all roles (EC, TAs, bilingual staff) should be emphasized going forward.
- ★ Simple additions like breaks, coffee, and snacks would make the day feel lighter.

Evaluation Question: Share any highlights of practical steps you can take based on the keynote.

**Overall Takeaway:**

- ★ Staff are eager to measure hope systematically and embed strategies into classrooms and routines.
- ★ Relationship-building and grounding techniques were the most mentioned practical steps.
- ★ A clear request for time, tools, and collaboration to turn keynote strategies into sustainable practice.
- ★ Many see hope as a core mindset and cultural shift that applies to students, educators, and families alike.

Evaluation Question: Based on the keynote, what questions do you have, or what next steps are you looking for?

**Overall Takeaways:**

- ★ Staff are engaged and motivated but want more concrete strategies, resources, and collaboration.

- ★ There's strong curiosity about measurement—both the “how” and the connection to academic outcomes.
- ★ Next steps should include:
  - Sharing slides/resources widely.
  - Providing baseline tools (Hope Survey + quick daily strategies).
  - Creating collaboration opportunities to test and share what works.
  - District guidance on rollout and alignment with existing SEL/MTSS practices.

Evaluation Question: Share any highlights of if and how your mindset shifted as a result of the keynote.

**Overall:** The keynote shifted mindsets by reframing hope as a science-backed, teachable skill and relationships as the core of student success. Staff walked away feeling both validated and challenged to act with intentionality—bringing more hope into classrooms, daily practices, and their own professional mindsets.

**Executive Summary:** The keynote presentation reshaped staff perceptions by showing that hope is a measurable, teachable skill with direct impact on student success, not just an abstract concept. Educators left with a deeper understanding of the power of relationships, goal setting, and practical strategies to build resilience and optimism in students, while also feeling validated in the importance of the work they already do. Overall, the session was described as motivating and transformative, leaving staff with a renewed sense of purpose and a commitment to intentionally fostering hope in both students and themselves.

**September 2, 2025 School Improvement Day:** On September 2, 2025, District 45 staff will participate in a full-day professional development session at their home schools from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The day will focus on two key areas: building-based school improvement activities and a districtwide virtual session on the technology landscape, guidelines, and guardrails for District 45. Staff will alternate between these sessions according to their assignment (EC, elementary, or middle school), with time dedicated to both collaborative building work and district-level training.