

**DATE:** May 2025

**TITLE:** Academics and Administrative Services

**TYPE:** Information

**PRESENTER(S):** Katie Baskin, Executive Director of Academics and Administrative Services

**BACKGROUND:**

The Office of Teaching and Learning oversees curriculum, instruction, staff development, and Federal Title programs for the district.

The Human Resources Office is responsible for employee recruitment and orientation, contract negotiations for all bargaining units, employee relations, student and employee data practices, and staffing with building/program administrators.

**Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment**

- Principal Professional Development: During the month of April principals finished PLC+ book study, learning about discussing ways to enhance and implement PLCs at building sites next year. We also continued our work in evaluations as we looked at ways that culturally responsive education was used in our evaluation systems.
- Teacher Mentorship and Support
  - This month, year 1 teachers continued their learning about the SIOP model, specifically discussing Comprehensible Input, or ways that we can make learning understandable for our students. Year 2 teachers continued their learning about differentiated instruction. We reviewed the topics that we have discussed for the year and introduced the RAFT strategy. Year 1, 2, and 3 teachers will all gather in May to celebrate the successes of the year and provide feedback on their experiences. Planning has also begun to welcome our 2025-2026 new teachers.
  - Instructional Coach support will shift for the 25-26 school year with the transition of IJ to an elementary model, the integration of new math standards, and feedback regarding the necessity to have coaching integrated into buildings.
    - Each K-6 building will have an instructional coach. A primary focus will be on using the learning from OL&LA and moving it into practice in the classroom. At IJ, support will also be focused on creating an elementary classroom community and small group instruction.
    - A math coach will work with grades 5–12 teachers to strengthen math instruction and ensure vertical alignment.
    - Teacher mentorship coaches will support grades 7–12 educators with an emphasis on reflective instructional practices and intensive support for new teachers
- Strengths Development: The professional development plan for 25-26 for Strengths leadership and learning across the APS system focuses on leveraging individual and collective strengths to enhance leadership, collaboration, and communication across the district. All certified staff, paraprofessionals, and district staff will participate in foundational sessions on identifying and utilizing strengths in students and colleagues. PLC and department leaders will receive targeted training to help them lead effective teams by applying strengths-based strategies. Specific sessions for AHS and District Office staff will emphasize adaptability and communication within a strengths framework. New district staff will complete a strengths assessment and participate in

onboarding workshops to understand and articulate their personal strengths. Principals will engage in reflective leadership development aimed at improving school-wide efficacy, with follow-up support in areas like evaluation and MTSS team integration. These sessions are facilitated by Bethany von Steinbergs and are scheduled at various points from July through February.

### **Packer Profile for all learners**

- **Grow Your Own:** Colleen Owens and Monica Ocampo continue to work with our students interested in the educator pathway through the Grow Your Own Program. As part of their meetings and planning, they have worked with leaders across our district to offer summer classroom experiences where future teachers can volunteer as aides in summer school classrooms. While they volunteer their time, they can earn Austin Assurance Scholarship hours. Students get to learn about the field of education in a hands-on way while also working toward scholarships. The students will be traveling to Winona State University to visit the education village and learn about post-high school opportunities. We will host the future teaching signing event on May 5 where we will recognize our future teachers, and the students will honor an important educator in their lives.
- **Packer Profile: Seals of Biliteracy**
  - Minnesota's Bilingual Seals program recognizes high school students who demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English by meeting state-defined benchmarks in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students must also complete the required English Language Arts credits for graduation to qualify.
    - See [previous communication](#) on this program.
    - In addition to earning a seal noted on their diploma, eligible students may receive college credit for their language skills and are honored at the Senior Awards ceremony with a certificate and honor cords for commencement.
      - For the 2024–2025 school year, Austin Public Schools will recognize 39 students for their multilingualism:
        - Spanish: 6 Platinum Seals, 19 Gold Seals, 13 World Language Proficiency Certificates
        - Mandarin Chinese: 1 Gold Seal
    - Since the program's launch in 2021–2022, APS has awarded a total of 119 students
      - 45 World Language Proficiency Certificates
      - 56 Gold Seals
      - 18 Platinum Seals
      - Languages recognized include Spanish, French, Amharic, Mandarin Chinese, and American Sign Language.

### **District-wide multi-tiered systems of support for all learners**

- **MTSS Implementation:** Katie/Andrea/Sheila – Co-teaching, MTSS teams, Instructional Coaching
- **READ Act:** We are learning about the new grades 4-12 Screener recently approved by MDE. MDE is currently working with the vendor to solidify the contract. Many questions were shared at the last MDE update meeting. Considerations for determining which students must be screened remain a local decision. Teaching & Learning with Information Services are discussing possible ways to determine students who "do not demonstrate mastery" in Reading. All returning staff have completed OL&LA training that were enrolled for the Phase I during 2024-2025. We have one more year to complete the Phase I portion of the staff training. We are considering what the schedule should be as to not overwhelm new to the profession teachers. Our 7-12 EL staff will be enrolled during the 2025-2026 school year.
- **EL Program Review:** Classroom visits for the fourth quarter have been completed. We are anxiously awaiting our results from ACCESS testing. The elementary has purchased a new curriculum aligned with our Reading Benchmark Curriculum which will support our students that are beyond newcomer/level 1 status. Express! Will support the learning units in whole group reading, giving students an opportunity to gain more background knowledge and vocabulary on the unit's Essential Question. Staff will work to create their scope and sequence this summer using curriculum writing dollars.

- Math Program Review: We continue to work toward the math program review goals. The new math standards have been finalized, and this will help guide our future work. We are excited to be able to support the math teachers in our district 5-12 with a part-time math coach. We will also be adding advanced math opportunities next year for both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders at IJ Holton
- GT Program Review: Advanced math and reading opportunities will be added to the IJ programming next fall for both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Students were identified for programming through Star and CogAT testing. After spring benchmarking we will work alongside our Advanced Academic Teachers to review scores and student performance to identify other students. We are also putting together a year end communication for our advanced academic families to share the great work that happened this year.

#### **Excellence in Resource Management**

- Teaching and Learning: Work has been done to purchase teaching materials for our IJ staff as they transition to an elementary model. Staff should have the teaching materials in hand before they leave for the summer. Teachers have been doing great work to put together scope and sequence and pacing guides to support their colleagues in understanding the key learning that occurs in each of the content areas. This work will continue into next year. Quotes have been received for the health curriculums that have been reviewed, and we are working on final pricing to make decisions. Music, Art, and Phy.Ed. have or are working on curriculum material lists to be purchased during their curriculum cycle. They are thoughtfully making decisions on how best to support student learning in these content areas. The district will support these departments and those in year 2 of the curriculum cycle with summer curriculum writing to write or review scope and sequence, pacing guides, and unit plans.