



Subject: Curriculum Update
Date: March 3, 2026

SUBJECT: Curriculum Update

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

BACKGROUND:

Assessment Updates: The winter and spring timeframes bring a spate of assessments in public education. The following is an overview of that testing:

- **NWEA MAP:** In January, K-8 students participated in the NWEA MAP Reading and Math assessments, including Spanish MAP assessments for our TBE and SLA students. MAP family reports were distributed at the beginning of February.
- **CogAT:** Fifth-grade students completed the CogAT in January, while second-grade students will take it in March.
- **ACCESS for ELLs:** Our K-8 multilingual learners participated in ACCESS for ELLs testing. Kindergarten testing is completed in a 1:1 setting, while grades 1-8 complete four assessments (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in a mix of online and paper/pencil formats. The testing window for ACCESS spans from mid-January through the start of March.
- **5Essentials survey:** Students in grades 4-8 participate in the 5Essentials survey during February and early March.
- **State Assessments:** As we move into March, we enter our spring state assessment window, which includes the administration of the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR), the Illinois Science Assessment (ISA), and the Dynamic Learning Maps-Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA), which is the required state assessment for students, in grades 3-8, with the most significant cognitive disabilities. These assessments provide important data to measure student growth, inform instruction, and ensure alignment with state accountability requirements.

Winter Teacher Institute: During our Winter Institute, staff engaged in a wide range of professional learning sessions aligned to district priorities in literacy, mathematics, multilingual supports, special education, technology integration, and whole-child practices. Offerings included multiple sessions on Working with MLLs, SLA supports, IEP Writing, DLM modules, and behavior strategies, as well as curriculum-focused learning such as The Writing Revolution, Building Thinking Classrooms in Math, and the Comprehension Playbook. Teachers also explored instructional technology and innovation through sessions on MagicSchool AI, Transforming Teaching with Formative, Freckle, Zearn, and Defined Learning, as well as differentiated learning opportunities using Thrively playlists and whole-child data. Special areas,

including PE, music, art, library services, and speech-language supports, were also represented. The day concluded with PLC collaboration and reflection, reinforcing our commitment to continuous improvement and shared professional growth.

Across evaluation summaries, participants consistently highlighted the value of having dedicated time to work, explore, and collaborate. Staff appreciated the opportunity to apply their learning directly to their own materials, such as drafting IEPs, completing DLM modules, setting up student platforms, and planning upcoming lessons, while also exploring tools such as MagicSchool AI, Thrively, Formative, Zearn, and Defined Learning. The interactive, hands-on structure of sessions, including modeling, group tasks, practicing student examples, and creating resources, was especially well received.

Staff also praised the quality and effectiveness of presenters, describing them as knowledgeable, engaging, energetic, organized, and clear in their explanations. Many noted that sessions provided practical, immediately applicable strategies and resources, from differentiation techniques and language supports for MLLs to writing instruction, AI integration, and content vs. language objective planning. Finally, participants valued the opportunity to collaborate and network with colleagues across schools, grade levels, and departments, reinforcing shared learning and strengthening professional connections across the district.

February Professional Development Days: On February 26, District 45 staff engaged in a half-day of professional learning at their home schools, focused on school improvement efforts. During this time, teams collaborated to monitor progress toward established goals, analyze current student data, and refine action steps to ensure continued alignment with their individual school improvement priorities.

On February 27, elementary classroom staff participated in D45's Countywide Institute Day at Jefferson, which featured a mix of required and choice sessions. Required sessions included Working with MLLs, aligned with ISBE compliance requirements, as well as targeted EL sessions such as SMART Strategy in EL Classrooms, Summit K12, and Cross-Linguistic Strategies for TBE teachers. Choice sessions provide continued professional learning connected to district initiatives, including The Writing Revolution, Building Thinking Classrooms, Comprehension Playbook, Thrively, Formative, and Defined Learning, ensuring staff can deepen instructional practices aligned with literacy, math, student engagement, and multilingual supports.

SPED staff attended SASSED offerings; Jefferson staff attended countywide sessions; elementary Art, Music, PE, and Library teachers attended discipline-specific professional learning; and Jackson staff received training in Thinking Maps.