



**DATE:** September 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: To support the implementation of our new K-5 literacy curriculum, Functional Phonics & Morphology, Teaching & Learning is having bi-weekly meetings with principals and instructional coaches at buildings to ensure a strong feedback loop, collaboration, and support as we work to improve student learning outcomes.
- Teacher Mentorship:
  - August 5, 6, and 7 we welcomed 42 new teachers and certified staff to the district. Some are new to the teaching profession, some come to Austin with years of experience in other districts, and we have many teachers who are returning to the district after time away. The 3 days were filled with an introduction to the community and district, time in buildings getting to know routines, working with curriculum, learning about their strengths, and learning about technology. We received very positive feedback about the welcome from the community, thank you to Kristen Olson from the Chamber of Commerce and the presentation by Corey Haugen and Kristi Beckman on our district data and demographics both sharing the numbers, but also bringing those numbers to life by sharing where our students come from around the world.
  - Teachers who are starting their 3<sup>rd</sup> year in the Austin School district had their first mentorship meeting of the year on August 25. At this meeting we talked about moments in their first week of the school year where they had success or made a connection. We went over the plan for the year which will include a focus on higher order thinking and thinking routines. We also took time to brainstorm topics that we could work through as a group at our upcoming meetings.
  - The K-6 instructional coaches continue to play a very important role in welcoming new staff to the building. They are an invaluable resource helping new teachers adjust to their new learning spaces and learning systems. This year we had a change in our coaching model at the 7-12 level where coaches are serving in a mentorship role with a focus on supporting teachers in their first 3 years here in Austin. Colleen Owens is the coach at Austin High School and Pete Walker is the coach at Ellis Middle School. They have both been stepping into their new role with curiosity, excitement, and experience that is serving the teachers well at these buildings. They have been visiting classrooms, answering questions, and providing tips and resources as they begin the year.

- The mentorship program continues to evolve and based on feedback from last spring; 3 changes were made to the program this year.
  - Meeting locations-We typically have met at the high school. This school year we will be meeting at building sites across the district. As teachers enter our system and over the first 3 years, they will have at least one meeting at each of our building sites. They will get to see the building and learn a little bit about the programming at each site.
  - Material Storage-We share a lot of information and resources during our meetings. It is typically shared through email, but we all know that it can take time to search for that one email. This year a Mentorship Team was created with a channel for Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3. Teachers will be able to access these folders to find things that we have discussed throughout the year.
  - Scenarios and Case Studies-Some of the best learning that can happen is done by practicing scenarios or discussing case studies. There are topics that we need to learn more about or practice. Teachers will be asked to share topics they would like to discuss, and we will work these topics into each of our meetings to both support our colleagues and learn. The year 3 teachers generated a list at their first meeting and submitted some great topics to get our year started.
- Strengths Development: The district will engage together this year in three sessions of Strengths development to focus on Strengths as an asset. On Sept. 22, staff will learn how to spot strengths in themselves, colleagues and students as this is imperative to lead with and draw out what is right about ourselves and others in our workplace.
- Human Resources Dept. Audit Implementation: HR implemented a structured onboarding process for new non-certified staff to ensure they feel welcomed, supported, and prepared for their roles. The onboarding included training on district procedures, technology resources, strengths, and safety protocols. Feedback from participants has been positive, and we anticipate this process will strengthen retention and their impact in the classroom.

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

- Grow Your Own: The GYO program is starting year 3. Colleen Owens continues to serve in the role as GYO coordinator working to coordinate the program and provide opportunities for students interested in learning more education and how to become teachers. She is also teaching 2 concurrent classes at AHS through Riverland that introduce students to education through course work. The first Future Club meeting for the year is scheduled for September 3 and there will be continued work to recruit interested students. One recruitment practice from last year that was highly effective was asking teachers to nominate students who they thought might be good teachers. Sometimes our students don't even consider the field of education, but for someone to tap them on the shoulder and say that they might be good at this can really mean a lot to a student. We have also posted for Future Teacher Club leader. The program is very active, and we are looking for a current teacher that wants to share their passion for teaching and help students navigate the education pathway. One major focus of our grant work this year will be to award our first scholarships.
- Packer Profile Implementation: Packer Profile seminar courses are kicking off year two! The 9<sup>th</sup> grade students have had a strong start and seem to be excited to explore their future and develop new skills! Our teachers have continued to work hard as a team to provide amazing lessons and support! We had our first Profile Grade Level Assembly with our 9<sup>th</sup> graders on Wednesday, August 27th. Students learned about SchoolLinks, resources available in the schools, and how this course can help them to explore their future and so much more!

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

- MTSS Implementation: The Teaching and Learning team is partnering with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) to review program audit reports in the areas of English Learners, Mathematics, MTSS, and Gifted and Talented. This review includes measuring progress on recommendations from the audits and planning next steps to ensure continued implementation that is aligned with district priorities. The goal of this work is to ensure efforts are aligned and integrated across the system to provide consistent, high-quality learning opportunities for all students.

- READ Act: Our 25-26 READ Act training cohort began their learning with kick-off meetings at AHS and Ellis this month. Teachers had dedicated time during back-to-school week to begin working through the online modules, and the first of three live training sessions will be held in October.
- EL Program Review: Our team is working through language screening for our multilingual kindergarten and new-to-district students. This is a busy time for the EL Department, and we have been having team meetings to keep connected as we identify and place students. Thank you to our counseling offices that work with us to place students in classes to meet each learner's needs.
- Math Program Review:
  - K-6 Grade Level leaders will have their first monthly meeting on September 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss the math program audit, implementation of the new math standards, and evidence-based instructional practices.
  - As we start the school year, we have added a part-time math coach that will be working with math teachers in grades 5-12 to work toward meeting the recommendations set forth in the program review. Tony Einertson, a math teacher at Austin High School will serve in this role. He will work alongside the math teams and provide mentorship to math teachers, especially new math teachers to the system. He has already met with Ellis and the AHS teams. One of the focuses will be to work on vocabulary alignment, using common vocabulary across the system. He will also work with teams as we go through the curriculum review process and alignment to new standards.
- GT Program Review:
  - IJ Holton has implemented the new advanced reading and math classes. We are excited to offer advanced academic opportunities to students and will look to evaluate the success of the program throughout the year.
  - Advanced Academic and Young Scholar teachers will regularly meet this year during PLC time on Wednesdays. This opportunity will allow the teachers to more closely align the work happening across the buildings at each grade level as well as identify curriculum and resource needs. The teachers have also identified that they would like to continue their own professional learning specifically around depth and complexity.
- Instructional Leadership Team: New to the linked team structure this year, the purpose of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) that includes leaders from technology, special education, teaching and learning, and informational services is to ensure a cohesive, equitable, and strategic approach to improving teaching and learning across the district. By bringing together leaders from these critical areas, the team can collaboratively:
  - **Align instructional practices** with district goals, standards, and initiatives.
  - **Integrate technology effectively** to enhance student engagement, personalize learning, and support 21st-century skills.
  - **Support diverse learners**, particularly students with disabilities, through inclusive practices and appropriate accommodations.
  - **Use data strategically** to inform instruction, monitor progress, and drive continuous improvement.
  - **Foster coherence** across departments, ensuring that professional development, curriculum decisions, and resource allocations are aligned and support high-quality instruction for all students.

Ultimately, this cross-functional team works to break down silos, create shared ownership of student outcomes, and ensure every student has access to a rigorous and supportive learning environment.

## Excellence in Resource Management

- Teaching and Learning:
  - This month, our students will engage in benchmark assessments. We are excited to begin targeted, personalized instruction based on student assessment data using two new tools, Freckle and Lalilo. Both platforms are part of our MTSS, which is focused on meeting the specific learning needs of each child.
  - It has been a busy summer completing the curriculum purchases for Art, Health, Phy.Ed. and Music.
    - The art departments purchased kilns for 2 sites, new cameras for photography, and a variety of cultural art works, books, and materials to support learning about art and doing art.
    - The Phy. Ed. department purchased items to replace standard items like balls, and frisbees, but also worked to update some of the learning opportunities and games that they will be able to provide students.

- The health departments at Ellis and the high school have been implementing a new health curriculum from Goodheart Wilcox, Comprehensive Health for Middle School and Comprehensive Health for High School. The Minnesota Department of Education is also currently in the process of writing new health standards. This will be the first time that the state will implement health standards for the state. Before this, school districts have developed their own outcomes based on some state guidelines and recommendations.
- The elementary music department have been able to update instruments at their elementary sites and will continue the Music Play online curriculum, at the middle level there was a focus on purchasing methods books to ensure that all music learners have access to the essential learning materials as they start as new instrumental musicians, and at both the middle and high school level they updated their music repertoires.
- This school year, the Career and Technical Education programs 5-12 will go through the curriculum review process.