



Please find below a summary of the past month's professional development, curriculum updates, Portrait of a Morton Graduate recaps, and personnel updates for each of the departments.

CTE Department – Colleen Del Monaco, Director

September 2025

College Ready:

- West Welding classes had Lincoln Tech out to speak with their students about continued education in the field of Welding (see photos below)
- West AP Computer Science students acted as human robots by writing commands and following them with a partner. This activity will help them better understand the robot style questions that will appear on the AP exam in the spring (see photos below)

Career Ready:

- East Firefighting students learn about ladder safety and take time to explore the Morton Fire Engine (photos below)
- West Welding and Engineering students had a great experience attending FabTech, where students were able to meet with people in the industry who host the safety videos that are reviewed in class. Students can make those connections to the safety training they receive to the actual in-person members of the industry. Students also met metal artist Rae Ripple who gave the students their own meet and greet – highlighting women in the industry. Students also were able to leave with many giveaways such as tools, PPE and metal art (see photos below)
- West Public Safety and Firefighting students learned how to make fire hydrant hook ups and got to feel what it is like to operate a real fire hose (see photos below)
- West Early Childhood Education students took a field trip to the Berwyn Library to see their ECE space and meet with the librarians on how they work with young children in the library. The librarians also happened to be West graduates.

Life Ready:

- West Intro to Teaching students performed in class, demonstrating SEL concepts at an age-appropriate level for children (see photos below)

Student and Staff Accolades:



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Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



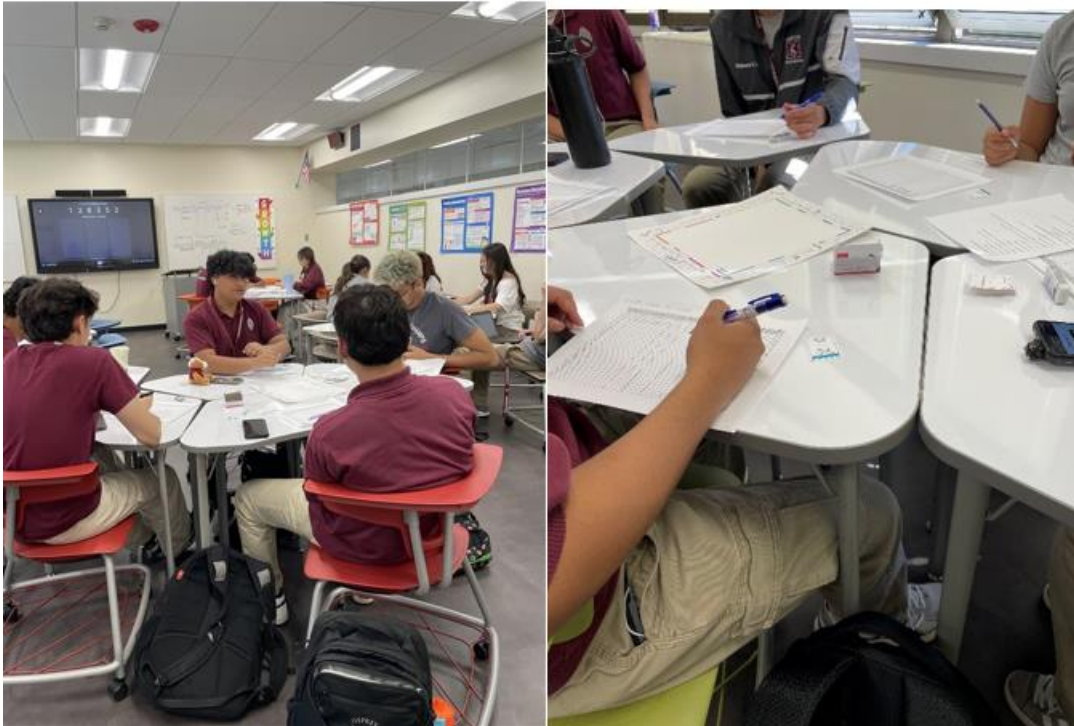


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Career & Work Based Learning:

Professional Development:

- On September 18th, CTE teachers with an ELS participated in their first monthly Profession Developments. The topic was Diverse Learners.
- Curriculum Days on September 2nd for AP Computer Science and September 3rd for Accounting.
- CTE Director and West Career and Work Based Learning Coordinator attended the 2025 CTE Best Practices conference in St. Louis, MO on September 24-26.

Programmatic Updates:

- 8 week job shadow at MacNeal Hospital has been organized for 14 students in Human and Body Systems



College & Career Center highlights:

West College & Career Highlights:

- College Visits at Morton:

Marquette University - Tuesday, September 9th from 11:00 - 12:00 PM (4th)

Eastern Illinois University - Thursday, September 11th from 12:00 - 1:00 PM (5th)

Loyola University Chicago - Thursday, September 11th from 1:00 - 2:00 PM (6th)

Saint Xavier University - Tuesday, September 23rd from 11:00 - 12:00 PM (4th)

- Upcoming College Field Trips:

Arrupe College of Loyola University - Friday, September 19th

- Military Visits at Morton:

Marines - Tuesday's during lunches starting September 2nd

Army - Monday's during lunches starting September 8th

- College Workshops:

Tuesday's and Thursday's during lunches starting September 16th

- FSA ID Workshops:

Monday, September 8th from 5:00 - 7:00 PM

Monday, September 22nd from 5:00 - 7:00PM

East College & Career Center Highlights:

September Recap:

- Since the beginning of the school year through 9/30/25, the CC Center has had 1092 student visits.
- Held our final Morton College dual enrollment registration date on September 2.
- ISAC started office hours during all supervision periods on September 9 and will continue to host these office hours every Tuesday and Thursday for the remainder of the school year to assist students and families with completing financial aid applications.
- Hosted a financial aid presentation in collaboration with ISAC the evening of September 17 for MEHS students and families.
 - Students and parents who will be completing the FAFSA stayed after for assistance with creating their studentaid.gov accounts
- Hosted six different college rep. visit meetings at MEHS.
- Field trip to Loyola University with 40 students on 9/29/25.
- Numerous college application and financial aid presentations to students through the CC Center.



Upcoming October Highlights:

- Field trip to Dominican University with 40 students on October 8.
- Portrait of a Morton Graduate resource fair at P/T conferences (5:00pm-7:00pm) with numerous college, career, and community organizations in attendance.
- Financial aid assistance: ISAC representatives will be in the College and Career Center every Tuesday and Thursday during all supervision periods throughout the month of October.
- Financial aid workshops for seniors and parents/guardians on the evenings of October 8 and October 20 from 5:30pm-7:30pm.
- Morton College Application Kickoff Workshops on October 7, October 14, and October 21.
- Twelve college rep. meetings currently scheduled for this month.
- Several college application workshops scheduled throughout the month.

Partnership Updates:

- Career and Work-Based Learning Coordinator from West attended the FabTech conference with 40 students from the welding and engineering programs. Students walked away with tools and metal art. I was able to connect with possible industry partners from Mitsubishi, Universal Robots, and FANUC.
- Attended the Apprenticeship Information Center meeting on September 18th and made connections with local unions and work-force apprenticeship programs.



SPED Department – Carol Best, Executive Director

College

Academic Engagement: Students in LDI World History participated in an INSPECT team activity at the Freshman Center to promote collaboration and critical thinking.

College Readiness: Counselors visited Edge classes to discuss credits, interest surveys, and postsecondary planning.

Instructional Improvement:

ASI students continued Unique Learning System lessons on *Fat Bear Week* and the *Almabtrieb Festival*.

PLTs aligned ULS instruction to SMART Goals and benchmark data.

FSI staff reviewed instructional non-negotiables to strengthen consistency and student understanding.

Inclusion teachers implemented targeted interventions using STAR assessments.

Applied Learning: In Earth Science, teachers used tactile models and globes to support diverse learning styles while studying tectonic plates.

Program Upgrade: The **PAES Lab at Morton East** is fully operational, with students engaging in hands-on job tasks to build real-world problem-solving skills.

Career

Work-Based Learning:

The FSI Employability class launched a recycling program, giving students practical experience with responsibility and teamwork.

Two MTC students secured **competitive employment** with Morton Food Services — congratulations to them and our Food Service partners!

Skill Development:

Students practiced vocational skills through adaptive cooking lessons, crafts, applied math, and science projects.

ED students explored employment opportunities by completing applications, building résumés, and practicing interview skills.



Community Involvement: Thirty-seven students competed in **Special Olympics** events; planning is underway for **Pack the Place** on January 22nd.

Life

Social Connections: The **Best Buddies** program launched, promoting inclusion and friendship among ASI students and peers.

Functional Skills:

FSI Office Skills students deliver materials across the building, practicing communication and independence.

Students will use apples from a field trip to make pies—a cross-curricular life-skills project.

Recognition: Inclusion students earned **Mustang of the Month** honors for academic success, attendance, and effective use of resource periods.

Cultural Enrichment:

Related classes visited the **Morton Arboretum** (funded by a grant) to explore nature and learn about J.S. Morton.

English classes toured **Pilsen's National Museum of Mexican Art** for the *Día de los Muertos* exhibit, deepening cultural awareness and reflection.

Independent Living: Students participate twice a month in cooking lessons—planning menus, shopping for ingredients, and preparing meals from start to finish.



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PHOTOS:





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BECAUSE LIFE IS BETTER WITH FRIENDS

Best Buddies is dedicated to building meaningful friendships between students who may not have otherwise had the chance to connect. By pairing individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities with peers, the club helps break down barriers to inclusion and fosters shared experiences and mutual support

1ST SEMESTER DATES:

**OCT. 2, OCT. 16, OCT. 30,
NOV. 13, DEC. 4, & DEC. 18
3PM-4PM**

QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT:

cmestousis@jasmorton.org (ENGLISH)
rreyes@jasmorton.org (SPANISH)

**SIGN YOUR
CHILD UP HERE!**





English Learners and Modern Languages- Melody Becker

Curriculum Updates-

College

- Students worked on using reading skills to improve testing, such as annotation, previewing, process of elimination, signal words, using context clues, etc. Students took the PreACT this month and EL 2 – 4 students will begin taking STAMP/AAPPL language proficiency testing.
- Students are continuing to work with their rubrics to help them understand skills and expectations. EL 4 students did a gallery walk and used their graphic organizers and rubrics to grade peers' paragraphs with their writing rubric. They are also using their speaking/listening rubric to grade themselves and reflect on their growth during our fishbowl discussions.
- Students completed a reflection activity reviewing their ACCESS scores from previous years in order to plan what they need to focus on improving to raise their scores for this year.
- Students have been interacting with skills such as SPACE CAT and ethos, pathos and logos to enhance their analytical skills.
- Students are writing summaries from their review of non-fiction current events and are focusing on supporting details to assist them in locating evidence for support.
- Students are engaging in supplemental novel studies, where they analyze the lives of the characters/individuals within the chapters to prepare them for future academic pursuits.
- Students have checked out independent reading books from the library to promote student choice and enhance reading skills
- AP Spanish Lang completed their first practice essay with the students. They had one-on-one conferences with students that received a zero for not using all of the three sources, not answering the question correctly, or for other reasons. They will be doing their FA3 essay on Monday, October 6th which will be their last practice with the essay before taking the CA in a few weeks.
- AP Spanish Lit completed their first FRQ as a class so students can see what is expected of them to write. They will be completing one on their own soon. Students finished reading "Lazarillo de Tormes" and created mini plays of their own
- SLA V students are beginning to go over different types of writing, such as a letter and e-mail, to get ready for the STAMP test later in the semester. They went over the transitions words that they can use in their writing.
- SLA IV students created foldables with the different sections of a sentence that were talked about in class. They had to add examples and original and complete sentences. They also created a "sentence train" with examples of each section of a sentence.

Career

- Students have been working on leading a discussion, asking elaborating and clarifying questions, in a respectful manner.
- Students have been meeting with counselors to take surveys that connect to future careers. Their personal interests and beliefs are being highlighted to reflect opportunities that will help them to thrive after high school.
- Students have had a wide variety of speaking opportunities, including family interviews and class and group discussions about current events. This will help them to prepare for future job opportunities in an effort to improve their confidence as well as excelling in the ACCESS test; this also allows newcomer students to enhance their English-speaking skills.



- Students in Chinese and Modern Language have been identified as volunteers to represent Modern Language at the FC Elective Fair
- Teachers make initial phone calls home through BARR monitoring when students have 2 or more absences.
- All ML classes are working on the Honor's credit portfolio starting this semester.
- ML classes are preparing their students to take the Seal of biliteracy test, whether AAPPL or STAMP by the end of the semester.
- Students were informed of the club's fair and Spanish students were informed of SHH and if they wanted to be able to join, they needed to be part of two extra-curricular activities.

Life

- Students have been analyzing current events and using their compare/contrast skills. This is integral in preparing them to engage with real-world issues and helps them to recognize how others live throughout the country and world.
- Students have been working collaboratively to achieve common goals throughout various assignments. Their consistent interaction with each other is aiding them in their speaking skills. These collaborative experiences are providing them with opportunities to share their ideas with others and consider alternate points of view.
- Teachers are utilizing a variety of Tier 1 strategies to support students in increasing academic perseverance and personal actualization skills. Examples include:
- Inclusion of a student generated grow and growth on feedback forms attached to the rubric.
- Dividing tasks up to the 1st or 2nd half of the class to highlight transitions between topics or tasks within in the class. Example: 4a read and annotate Chapter 8. 4b Written short response.
- Including in-class resources that students can use independently or as directed to increase growth mindset and boost confidence.
- French 1 is on a summative where they have the opportunity to apply all the French they have learned so far.
- French 2 is also working on Honors Padlet and paralelly on a recording of "being a quide at my school"
- French 3 has been working on Project 1 of the Honors Padlet: Advise me how to be a good friend, a celebration of friendship
- Chinese 2 is working on inviting friends to home. They upload a video about reciting a Chinese rhyme to Honor's Portfolio.
- Chinese 3 – worked on a weather forecast and comparison project.
- AP Chinese is working on Chinese traditional festival. They will celebrate Mid-autumn Festival on Friday Oct, 3rd.
- Spanish 1 – investigated three myths from a Spanish speaking country.
- Spanish 2 - They recently completed skits on cognados falsos. Some posted it on their TikTok accounts.
- Both SLA IV and V are working on or worked on student presentations. SLA IV completed the Spanish speaking countries project and SLA V wrote and presented their own poem based on Pablo Neruda's "Autorretrato." All students presented their projects to the teacher and their classmates, practicing their speaking and listening skills.
- In SLA IV, Ms. Melero Juárez continues to do her "Viernes de vivir a colores", watching psychologist Tuti Furlan's YouTube videos and talking about different ways our emotions and



thinking affects our body and the decisions we make and how to start changing our mindset to regulate our emotions and see all the good things that surround us. Before watching the video, students practice speaking by answering questions about the topic of the video. Then, as they are listening to the video, they answer questions about it. Finally, they share their answers, and the teacher usually gives examples as to how it is related not only to school, but also outside of school.

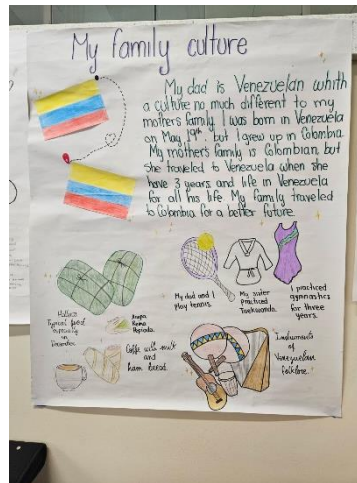
Professional Development

- STAR assessment data review and training has been a recent focus within the department. Teachers are being instructed on how to effectively integrate STAR results into daily classes, to determine how to support student learning needs and skill support.
- 40 teachers participated in the first of the Literacy Incubator professional development series on September 10th.
- EL 1 and EL 1 Reading teachers participated in a curriculum day on September 4th.
- EL 2 and EL 2 Reading teachers participated in a curriculum day on September 9th.

Student and Staff Accolades



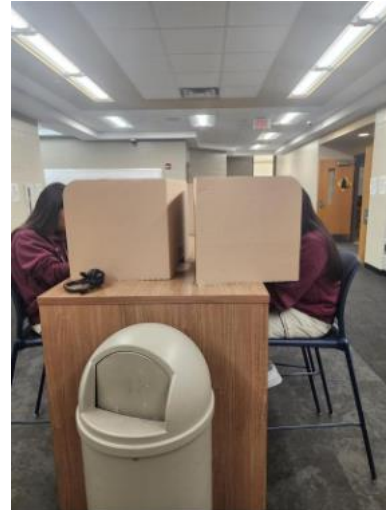
EL 4 Sorting Activity: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos



EL 3: Family Culture Connection



EL 1: Learning Aides (Speaking, Reading and Writing Support)



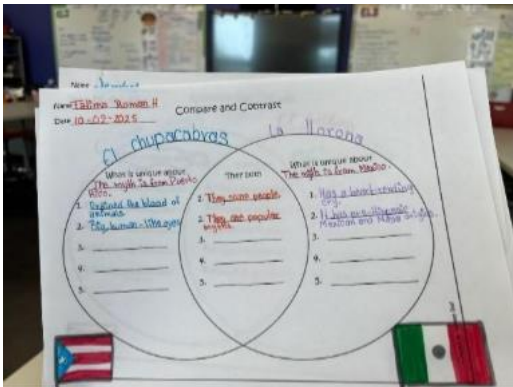
El 3 and 4 students engaged in a speaking exercise. Content support in Gold 2 is supporting both listening and speaking in the English classroom and in History and Edge. Teachers collaborated with content support to develop and include scaffolded supports for these assignments and to embed using Speaker progress in Power Point and TEAMS to include expressive WIDA standards and authentic practice for ACCESS testing.



Teachers are working with Biliteracy Coaches to improve lessons and supports for EL students in content classrooms. Coaches are also working with the EL dept to set up book giveaway at Parent-Teacher Conferences.



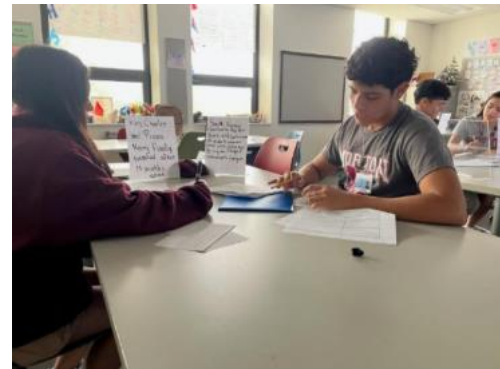
Show & Tell 1-3: Students practiced sentence structure and completed three shows and tell. They shared an important animal or symbol and something that represents them. In their sentences they used size, shape, sound, texture, and color to describe their animal or symbol. They verbally shared them with their classmates.



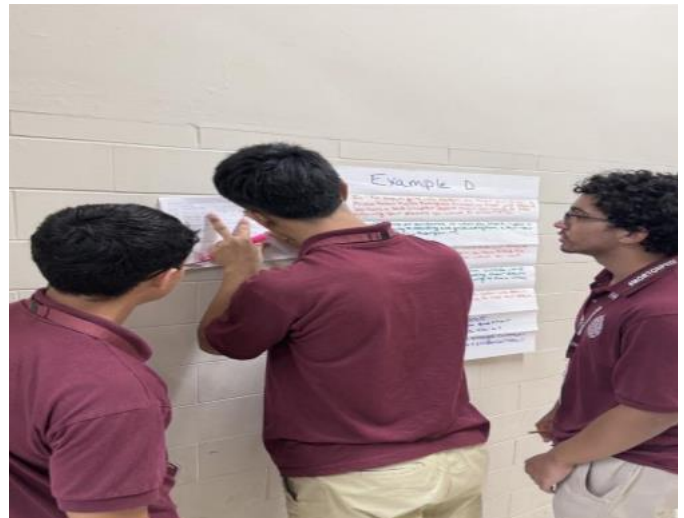
As an introduction to Mythology, Culture, and Monsters, students shared a video of a myth or/and legend from their countries and shared them in Teams. Students read a short article “**Hunting El Chupacabras**” from Scholastics. After reading, they compared Chupacabras with a myth or legend from their country.



EL 4: Students have been working on their collaboration skills – speaking, writing, and listening. They have done fishbowl discussions learning how to state their position and opinions respectfully, giving feedback to their classmates based on what they hear, and being responsible for carrying out the discussions on their own through elaborating and clarifying questions.



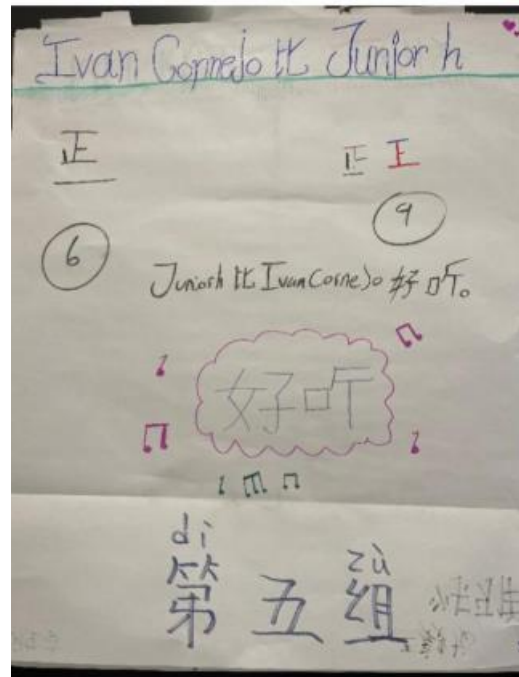
EL3: News Article- Students read news articles from a different country or continent. They summarized their articles and verbally shared them with their classmates. They wrote a CEL/CON paragraph comparing their article’s point of view with a connection with something happening in their home country or America.



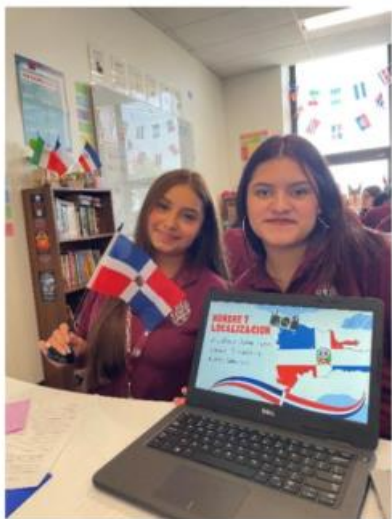
Students have also been working on self-reflection, accountability, and learning to understand rubrics to understand the skill they are learning and what the expectations are so that they may reflect and plan their next steps for what they need to learn/improve



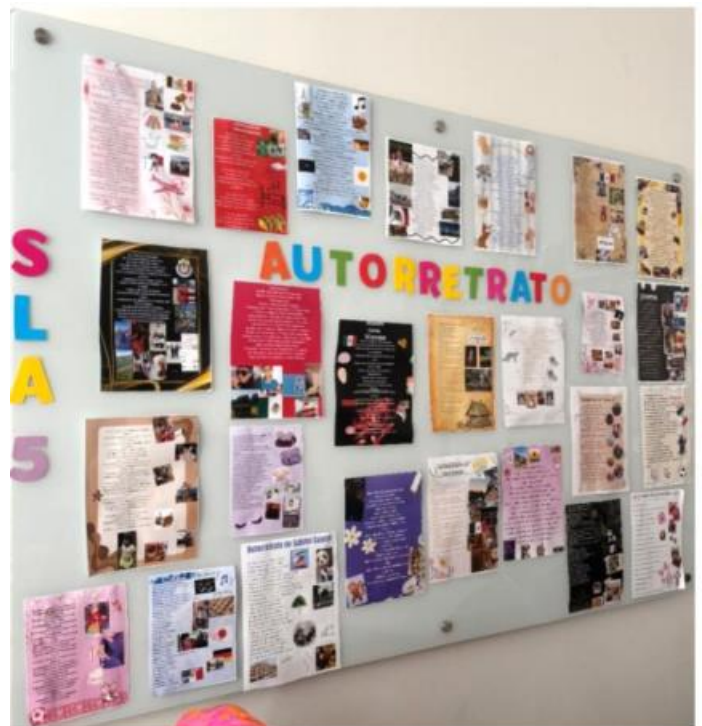
French 3: How to be good friends



Chinese 3: Survey of Favorite Artists



SLA IV: Presentations of Country Projects



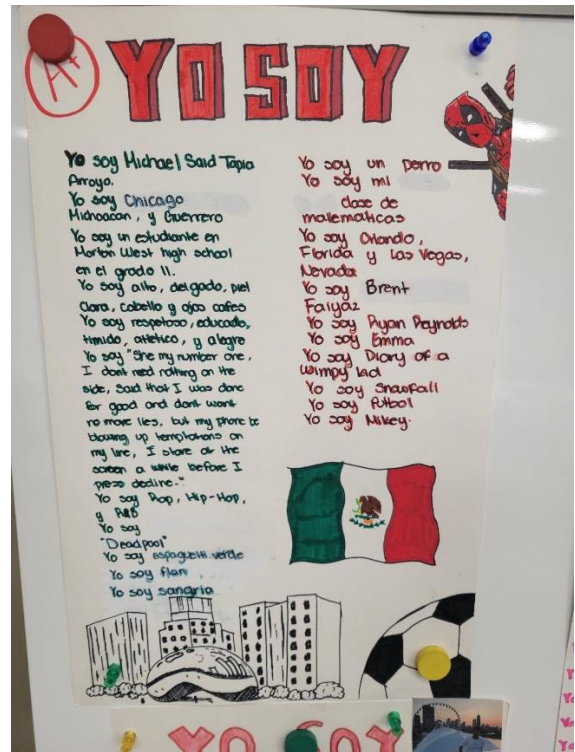
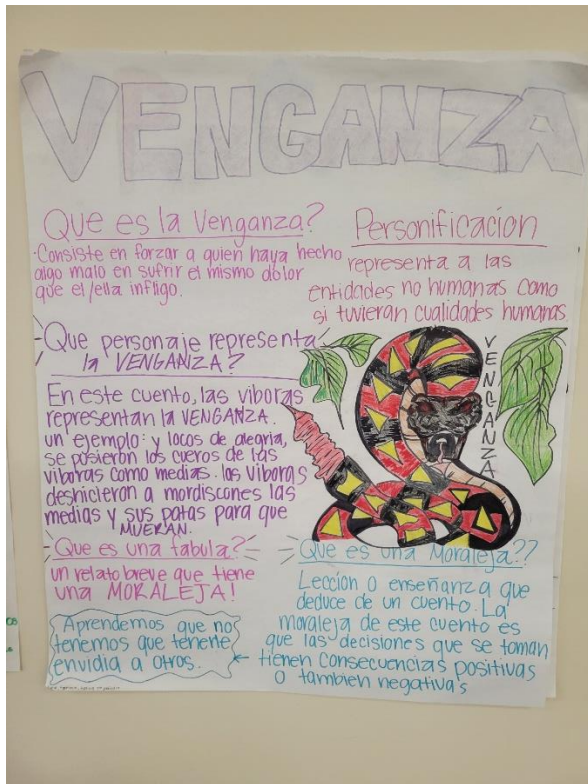
SLA V: Autoretratos



AP Spanish Literature: Presentation of Mini Plays



Chinese Classes learn about and celebrate the Fall Moon Festival





Science Department— Eric Bjornstad, Director

Curriculum Updates –

- AP Physics 1 and AP Environmental Science worked on converting their curriculum to skill-based on September 29th. The day was productive and they're all on a good path.
- AP Physics C and Medical Interventions will be meeting next month to work on converting those courses to skill-based instruction and 90/10 weighting next school year.

College Ready –

- Representatives delivered virtual PD to staff on Oct. 1st. The goal of the PD is to help leverage Gizmos to help students excel on the ACT. There were two groups, differentiated by readiness.
- Night Under the Stars Event at West on October 7th

Career Ready –

- Pharmacy Tech Students are all doing well and passing their course at Oakton College.
- Hannah Gallardo is assisting in starting a Health Career Shadowing Partnership with MacNeil Hospital. 12 Students from Kelly Janousek's HBS class will attending this semester.
- Scott Katzberger will be representing Zookeepers at Morton West Future Fest

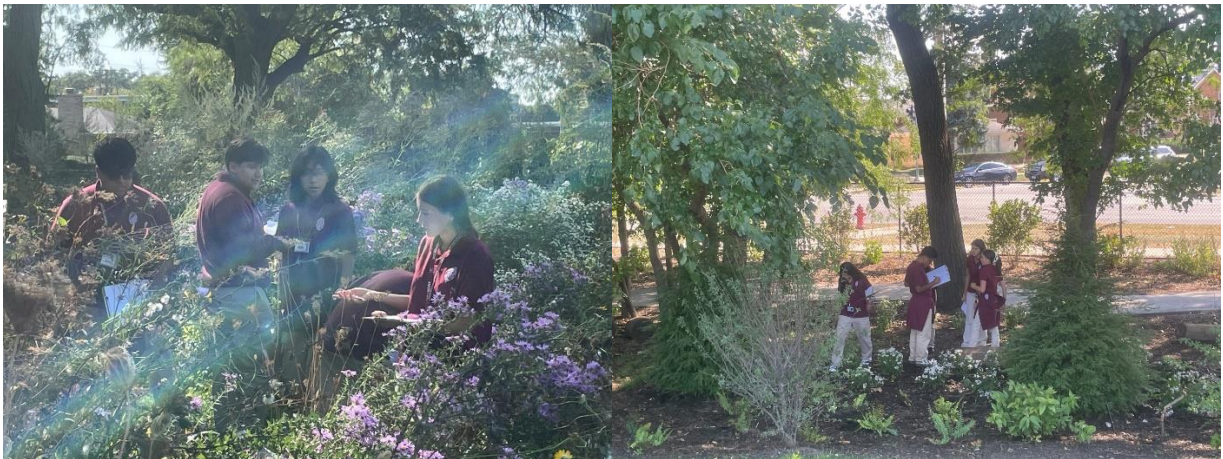
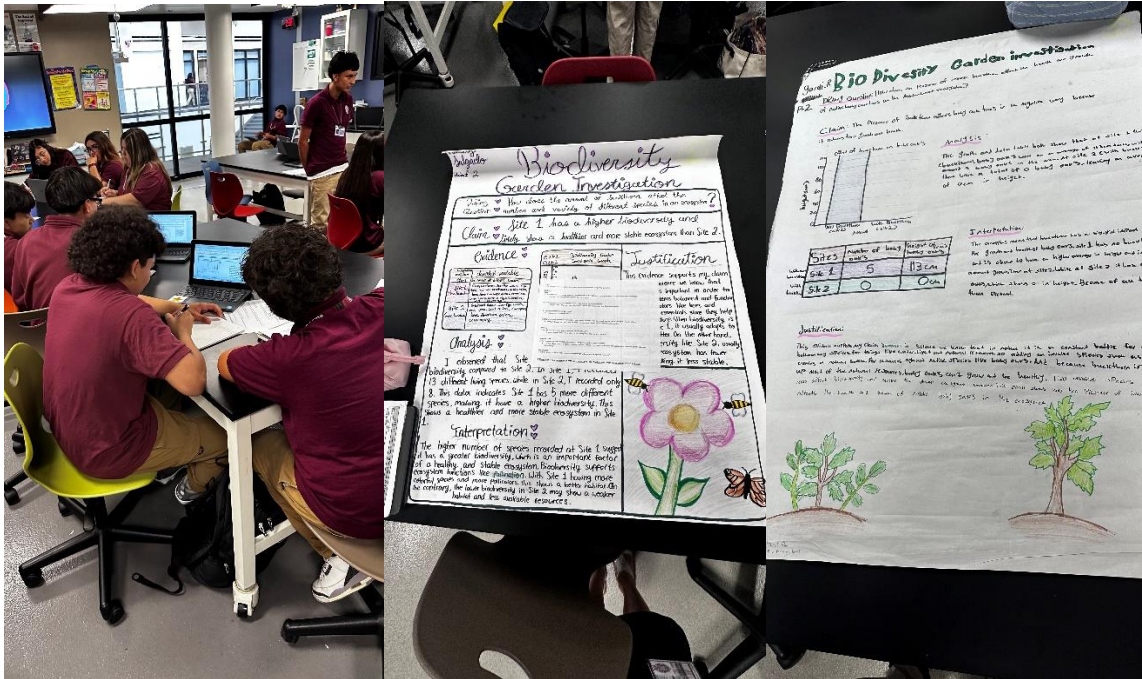
Life Ready -

Biology Classes at the Freshmen Academy worked on their Garden Investigations

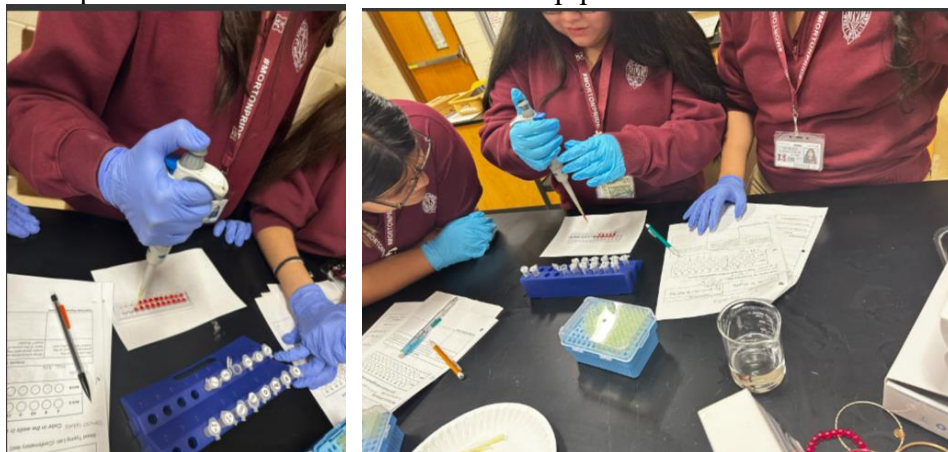




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Principle of Biomedical students use micropipettes for the DNA blood lab.



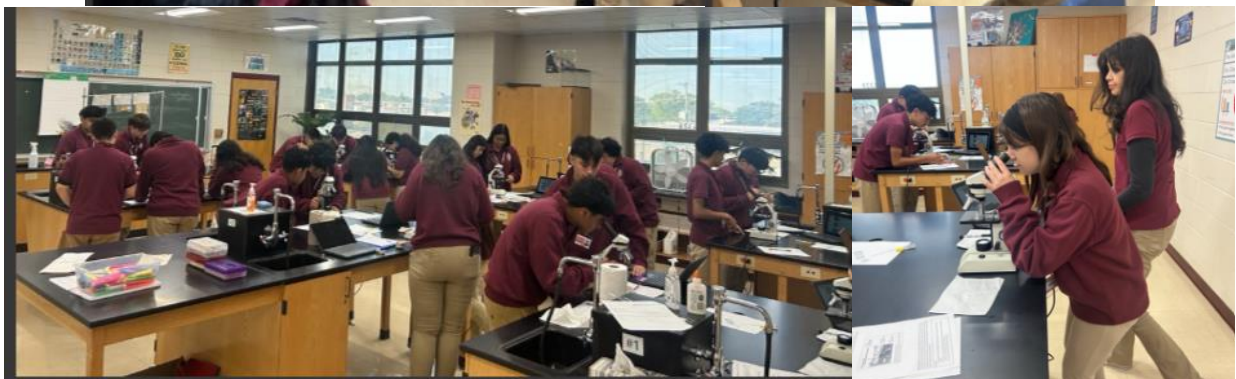
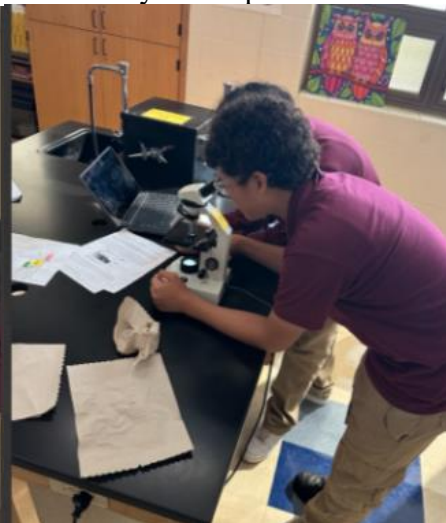
Students investigate homeostasis, one of the characteristics of life.



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Students use microscopes to study the biodiversity of the ponds.





STEM students build Solar Ovens.



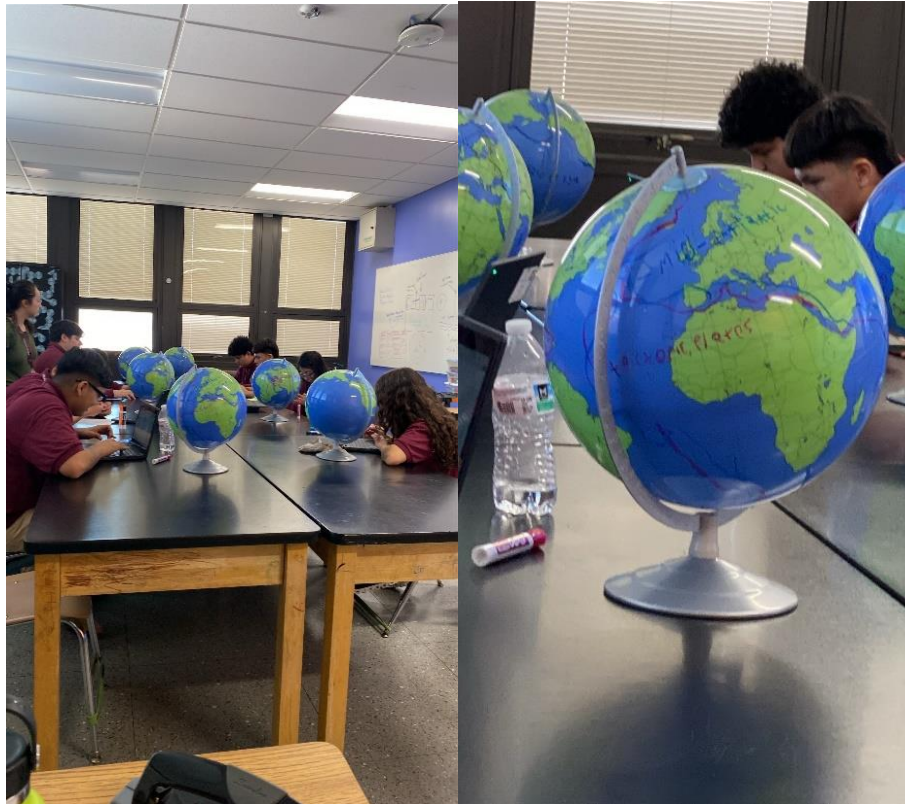
Ms. Dominguez is promoting the geologic timeline by getting into character.



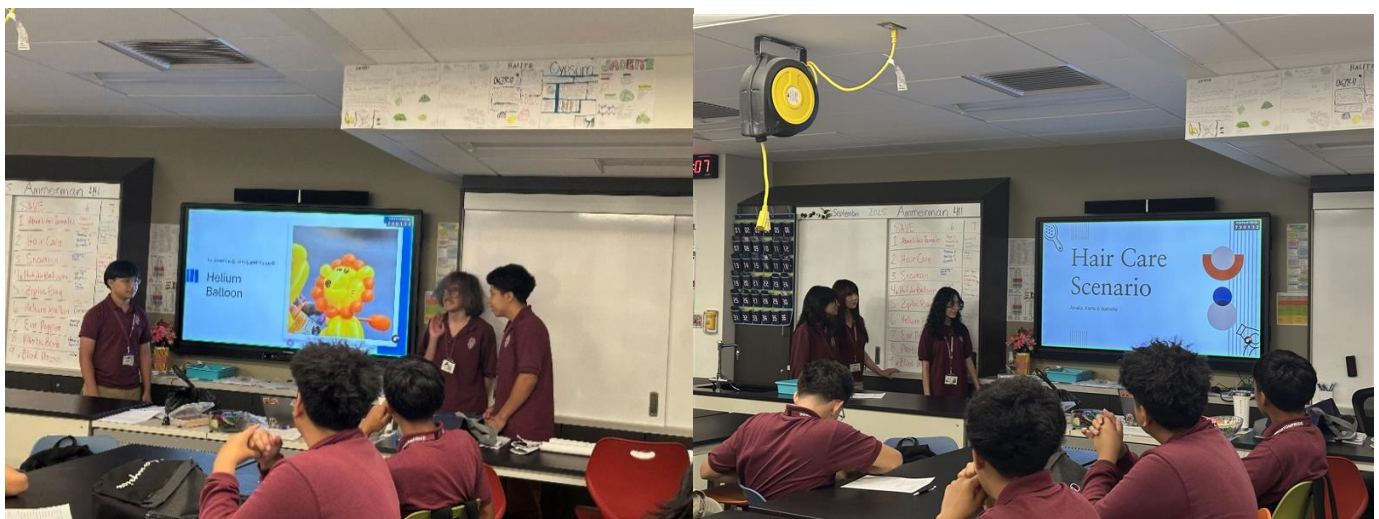
Having the kids create a scenario with Superman and Lex Luther in Mrs. Kennedy's Classroom



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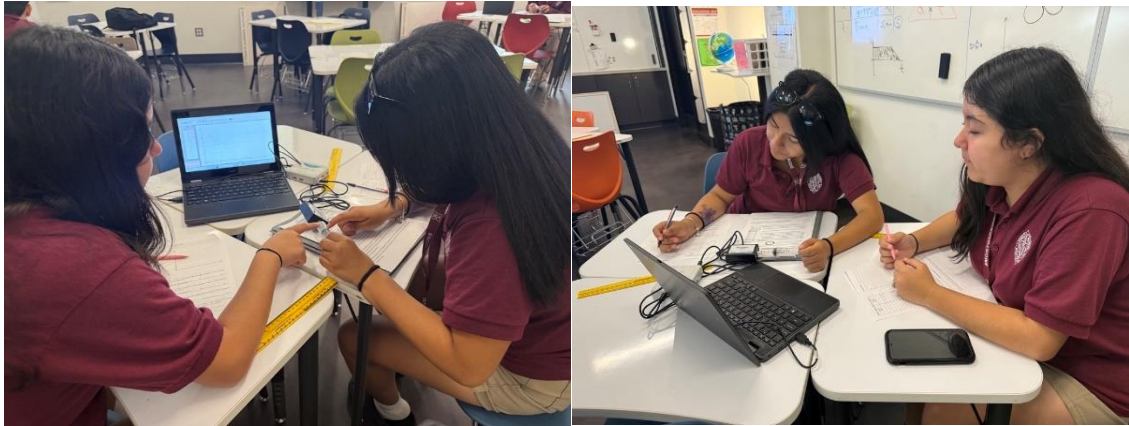


Students giving gas law presentations (Ammerman)

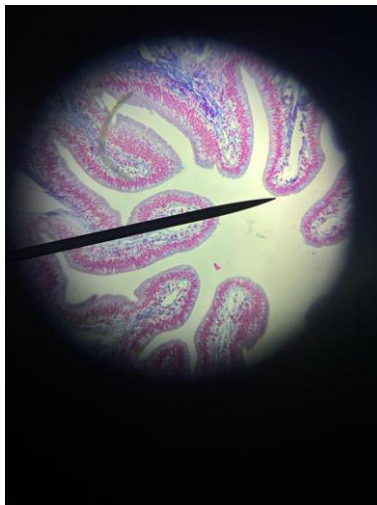




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Studying Diseases in Ms. Vanderlee's HBS Classroom





Moon Phases Activity in Mr. Depke's Class





English Department – Megan Delaney, Director

Professional Development

Teachers are actively working on Student Learning Objectives and evaluation materials while collaborating through a shared folder of rubrics and instructional resources. ACT prep continues as AP Lang teachers utilize ChalkTalk and ACT website materials to strengthen student readiness. Looking ahead, a literacy cohort, including 11 English teachers, will attend a professional development session featuring high-frequency literacy strategies, where our teachers will explore and share strategies across all subject areas.

Curriculum Updates

In English 1, curriculum is currently being written with a strong emphasis on skill-based assessments paired with scaffolds and strategies designed to be accessible for all learners. This forward-thinking approach ensures that students at every level receive meaningful support while building a foundation of transferable skills. In English 2, the research unit is nearing completion, with students exploring career paths through resources like Schoolinks and demonstrating growth in citation and annotation skills with their bibliographies. AP Seminar students are preparing for their Mock Performance Task 1, currently focusing on whether cell phones should be banned in high schools. English 3 students are cultivating argumentation skills by analyzing evidence and claims in published arguments, as well as creating presentations that incorporate claims, counterclaims, and rebuttals. AP Language courses are implementing a redesigned structure, beginning with a Common Assessment on key AP standards. AP Literature classes are balancing college and creativity, with students drafting college essays, workshoping with teachers, and creatively reimagining texts through projects such as an *Oedipus Rex* talk show and original flash fiction. Seal of Biliteracy testing is also occurring across AP Lit and senior electives, with more testing scheduled later this month.

Student and Staff Accolades

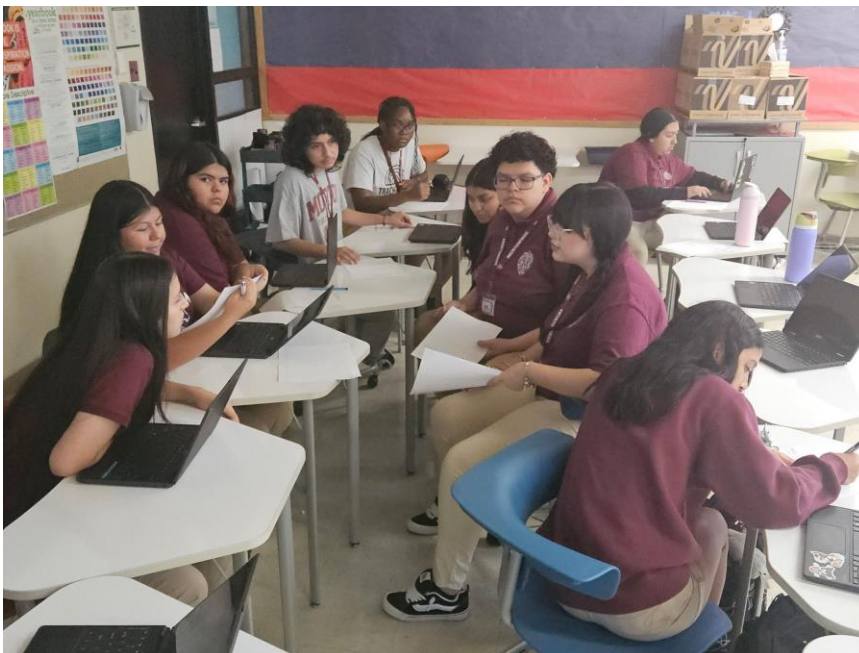
AP Seminar has received strong support from Morton East student teacher, Emilia Giron, who has become an active presence in Mr. Brown's classroom twice a week. After a period of observing and getting to know the students, she recently led her first lesson, focusing on speaking and listening skills that helped students prepare for their upcoming presentations. The Morton West English Department, under the leadership of Mr. Rush, is extending support for students by offering a series of after-school college essay workshops during the month of October to assist them in the application process.



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Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Morton West Journalism students pitching the theme for the yearbook.



Junior CORE students at Morton West co-constructing arguments.



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Morton East students debate an issue and the validity of the author's argument.



Students at Morton East collaborate to create thesis statements.



Math Department - Megan Holub, Director

Curriculum Updates

Below is the curriculum wave (our plan) for the Math Department for this upcoming school year:

We will be utilizing our in-school curriculum days to have teachers edit and update the curriculum for the courses:

- Integrated Math III Core and Honors
- Quantitative Literacy
- AP Statistics

ACT Data and plans:

See the proficiency bands above with percentages per campus. Something to note is the large amount of students in the Approaching Proficient band. Many students are close to proficient. So, through curriculum changes and ACT practice and support in class, we are aiming to move the needle for those students.

See some more in-depth Math proficiency data here: [JSM ACT Math Proficiency Data](#)

See the Math Department ACT Plan beginning October 1st: [ACT Math Practice Proposal Final.docx](#)

***Life Readiness:** By targeting students close to proficiency on the ACT, the department is emphasizing resilience, persistence, and continuous improvement—skills critical for life readiness.

***College Readiness:** ACT preparation and proficiency support align directly with college entrance benchmarks, ensuring our students are not only prepared for admissions but also for the rigor of college-level coursework.

Great things we've done:

Mustang Support: The Morton Math Department is fully implementing the new Tier II and Tier III Mustang Prep labs. Several Math teachers spent a day in September writing curriculum for the Mustang Support classes. Thank you to: Jessica Gonzalez (East), Ellen Casey (West), and Heidi Keske (West).

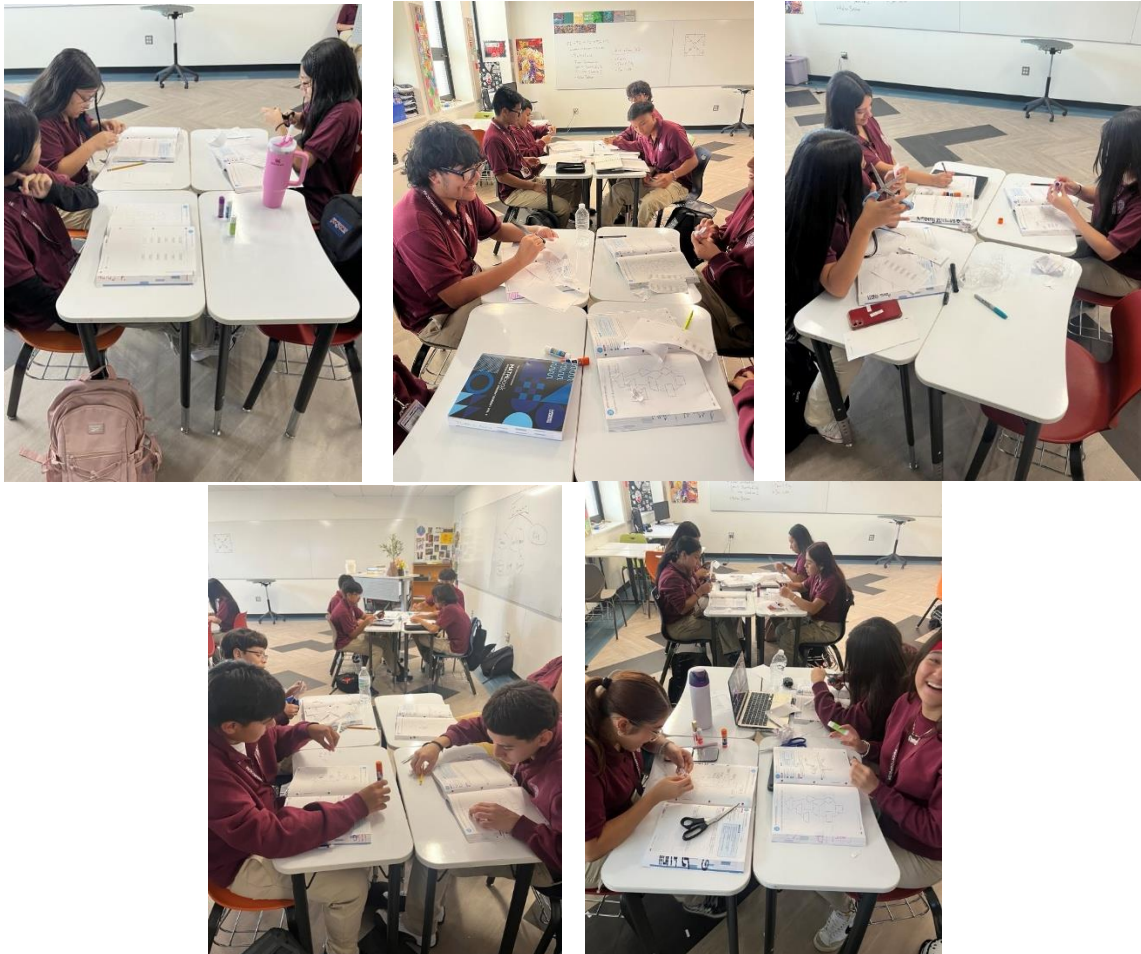
***Career Readiness:** Mustang Prep labs help students build workplace-like habits of collaboration, accountability, and persistence—skills that translate into professional success.

ACT: On Wednesday, September 24, 2025, all staff members have Pre-ACT test preparation in lieu of PLT time. We are looking forward to the data analysis and next steps come October!

Carnegie Learning in Integrated Math II: In the 5 pictures below, Mr. Elkins' students are working on a craft from the Carnegie textbooks where they sort quadrilaterals properties from pages 206-207 from the textbook.



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Probability Project: Results from a probability project completed by Mr. Kiefer's students with Mr. Elkins' class next door.



Freshman Center News: The Morton Freshman Center math department calibrated unit 1 and unit 2 rubrics to be consistent in wholistic approach to standards-based grading. In our first unit test, 85% of the core students were successful in skill 1, so that puts our

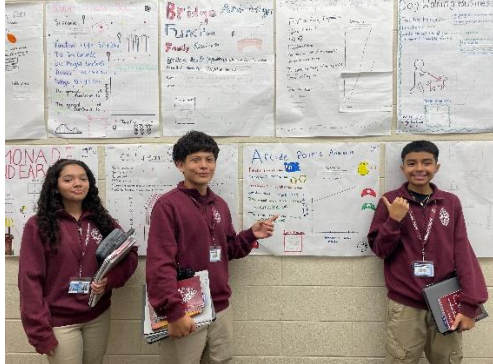


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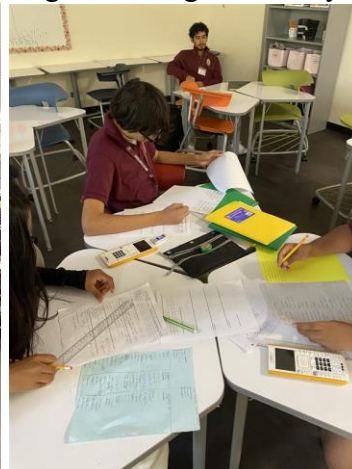
PLT is on track to meeting our semester SMART Goal: By December 12, 2025, 70% of students will have a 2.0 or above in creating and connecting mathematical representation.

The PLT is enjoying the new format of reporting back on our PLT process. Makes for an easier and more productive way to have our PLT meeting. The quick feedback from director and admin is great.

Functions: Ms. Cabral students worked on an end of the unit project showing their understanding of function families, domain and range, and independent/dependent variables.



Integrated Math II: collecting and analyzing data using a two-way table.



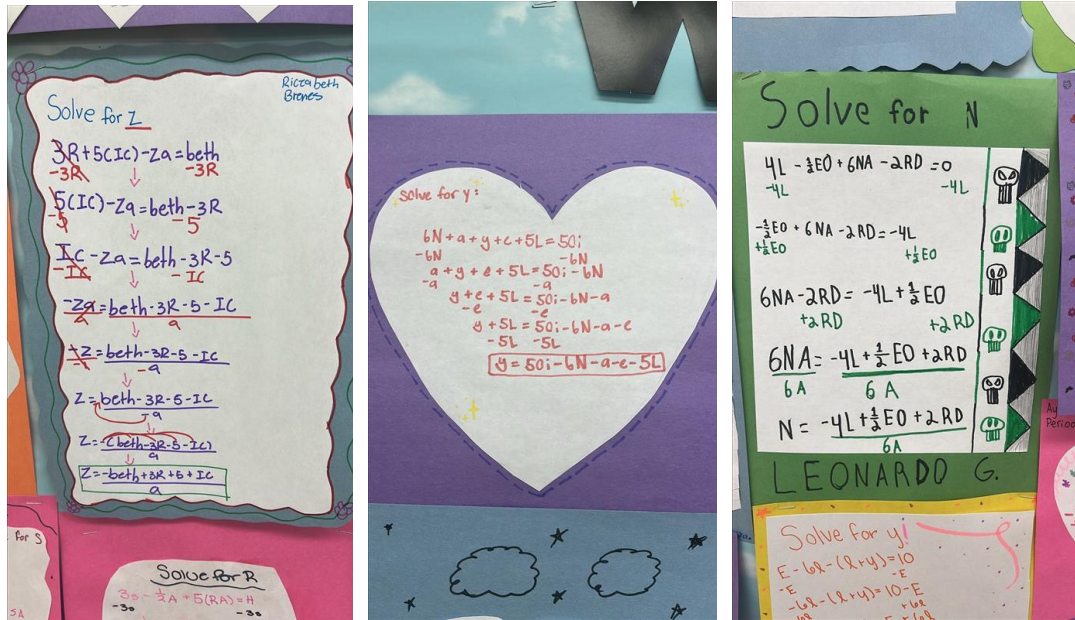
Mustang Prep/Numeracy: students are using hands on manipulatives to investigate multiplication.



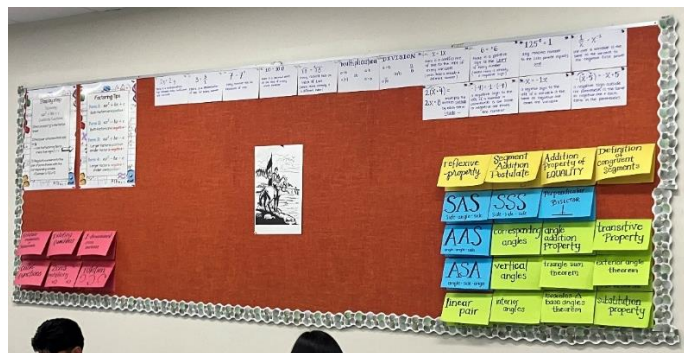
Students are building class community through fun team challenges.



Algebra 3: students practice solving equations that spell out their name.

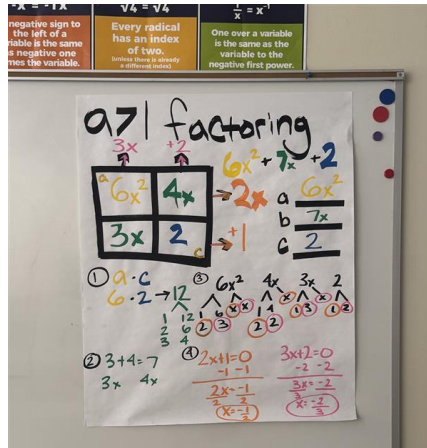


Math word walls: Anchor charts were made by our EL collaboration teacher, Marta Leshyk.

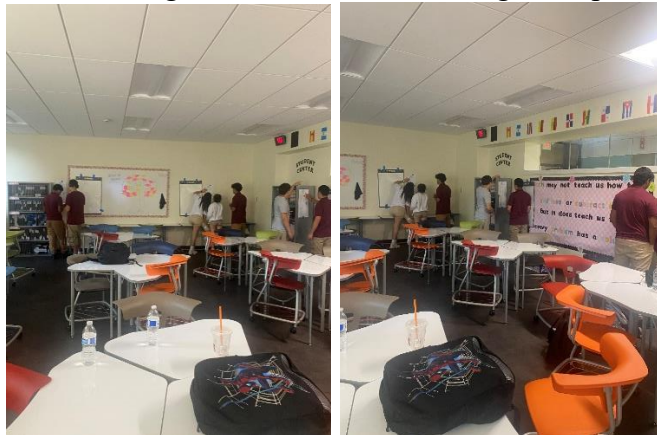




LDI Math: Teacher Callie Helton created anchor charts to break the complex process of factoring into manageable pieces.

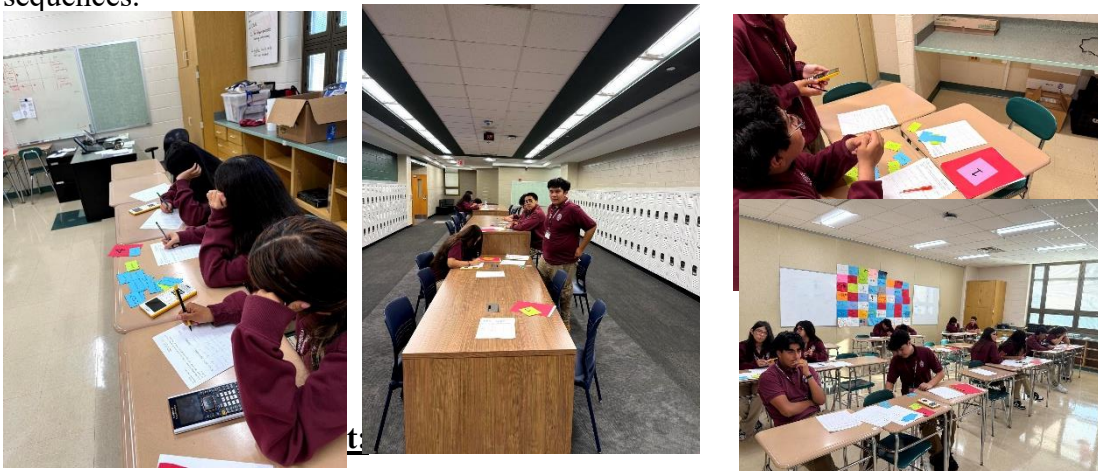


Bilingual Math: Ms. Haft's Bilingual Math 3 students doing ACT practice at the white boards



Math and English Drop In Center: is open. The west Instructional Readiness Committee is working on advertising the center.

Station Activity: Mrs. McCaleb had her students do a station activity practicing arithmetic and geometric sequences.





FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

Building Thinking Classrooms: The coaches hosted an excellent Building Thinking Classrooms debrief for the math and science departments that focused on how what we observed in the model demonstration classrooms is an exemplar of the instructional principles in the book and how all teachers can implement those ideas to achieve the four "Mustang Musts."



Co-teaching:

Co-Teaching: These teachers have been hand selected as co-teachers based off the master schedules that have been created already. The teachers that will be co-teaching Integrated Math II Core are:

West: Katie Morris and Dea Qendro

East: Zach Keiffer and Jenna Valenti

East: Jacob Paterkiewicz and Jenna Valenti



Celebrations:

Recognition: A highlight coming up next month is the AP Precalculus team members will be recognized by the Board of Education for its success in AP this past May. Congratulations to the AP Precalculus teachers and their students!



FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

Math Outings: Morton teachers attending a football game together!



Mathletes:

Morton West Mathletes: Mathletes had a very successful fundraiser in the student café!



\$5 PER COOKIE

SOLD ALL CAFE HOURS
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
HELP SUPPORT MATHLETES

Morton East Mathletes Calendar for September 2025:

West Suburban Math League:

WSML Meet #1

Tues, September 30, 2025

5:30pm @ Hinsdale South

vs. Leyden, WN

Morton East Mathletes Calendar for October 2025:

IML Math Contest: Tuesday, October 14th room 302 at Morton East.

Career Readiness: Mathletes builds teamwork, problem-solving under pressure, and leadership—all skills valued in future careers.



FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Social Science and Fine Arts- Kevin Vesper, Director

Curriculum & PLTs - College Ready

- On September 3rd, the Social Science Department met across all high schools to identify and commit to a set of common classroom routines aimed at supporting students' growth in ACT reading. These routines include, but are not limited to:
 - Weekly bell ringers using ACT-style passages - short, timed reading tasks aligned to ACT question types to build stamina and familiarity.
 - Annotation and text marking strategies - teach students how to highlight key ideas, author's purpose, tone, and supporting details.
 - Vocabulary in context practice - regular exposure to academic and discipline-specific vocabulary with a focus on meaning from context.
 - Graphic organizers for comprehension - use tools like cause/effect charts, timelines, or compare/contrast matrices to aid understanding.
- On September 9th, teachers from our department participated in the first Curriculum Steering Committee meeting to strengthen instructional alignment. They connected our Tier 1 instructional non-negotiables to the Danielson Framework, developed department strategies for implementation, and collaborated to plan how these practices will be applied throughout the school year.
- On September 23rd, the World History Core curriculum team met to revise the second semester assessments to better reflect the updated course goals. Due to this work, they have completed the “develop” stage of the curriculum wave. Completed during the curriculum day:
 - Added ACT-style multiple choice questions to the “comprehension” sections.
 - Incorporated primary document analysis to build historical reasoning,
 - Created deeper argumentative prompts to enhance students’ writing and evidence-based argumentation.
 - Aligned the new course skills and criteria to each assessment, ensuring stronger consistency and clarity across the curriculum.
- Morton West held a Revolutionary War history trunk activity that gave students a hands-on way to engage with historical artifacts and primary sources. During the activity, students examined replica items from the era and discussed their significance. This interactive approach helped students practice their analysis essential course skill by interpreting evidence, making inferences, and connecting artifacts to broader historical themes.

Professional Development

- On September 10th, teachers from our department participated in the Literacy Incubator Group, where they discussed best Tier 1 instructional practices to strengthen common literacy skills across disciplines. The group focused on strategies that support reading, writing, and critical thinking to ensure students build strong literacy foundations in every subject area.
- On September 22nd, our Civics & Economics teachers attended the Illinois Democracy Schools Annual Convening, engaging in workshops and discussions focused on strengthening civic education. The event provided opportunities to explore best practices, share resources, and collaborate with educators across the state to enhance student understanding of democratic principles and civic engagement.

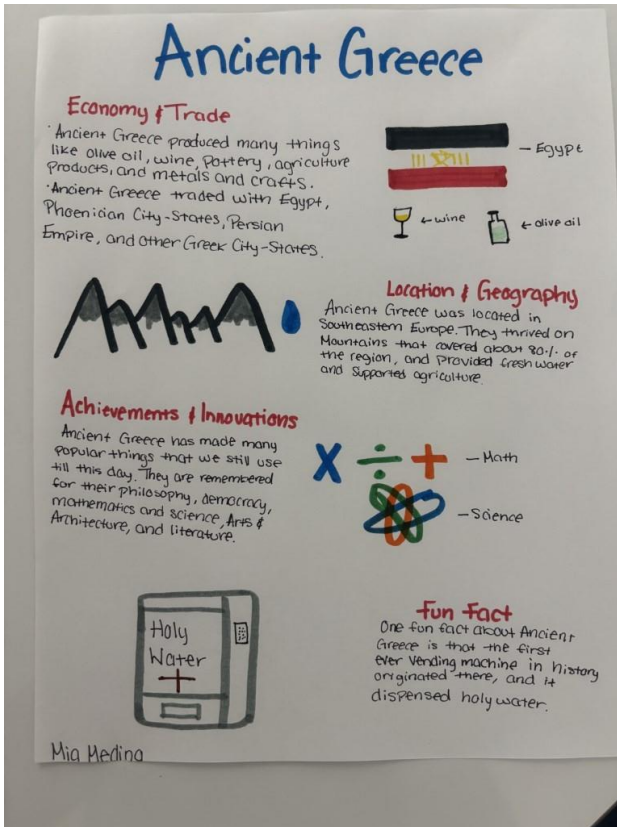
Department Highlights



At Morton West, students are strengthening their analysis skills with the American Revolution Trunks. Mr. Jim Conley shared a favorite moment from this year: *“Ms. Marines encouraged me to create Spanish-language translations for her Biliteracy U.S. History course. Later, I overheard students Karol Giraldo and Jasmine Ortiz speaking Spanish in Brenda Groeper’s class, so I gave them a Spanish translation of the Declaration of Independence. From there, they were off to the races!”*

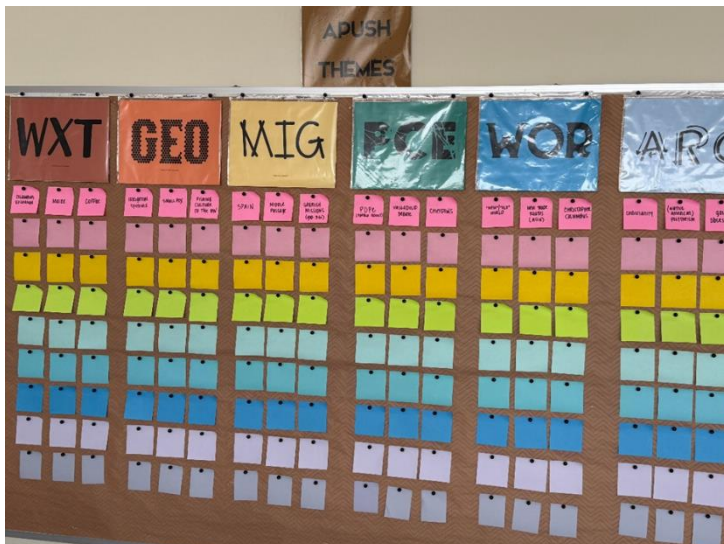


In the photos above, Ms. Serrano is guiding her Digital Photo students in applying the concept of simplicity to their photography. Students then put the skill into practice by capturing nature shots.



Sculpture students kick off the cardboard unit as they continue developing their process skills.

World History Core students practice their comprehension skill by summarizing key ideas and making connections.



Teachers can use classroom décor as more than just decoration; it can be a powerful learning tool when done intentionally. For example, Ms. Morrison has an “APUSH Themes” wall where students post examples and evidence from class that fit each category. Depending on how students write their notes on the post-its, this ongoing activity can align with either the comprehension or analysis skills.



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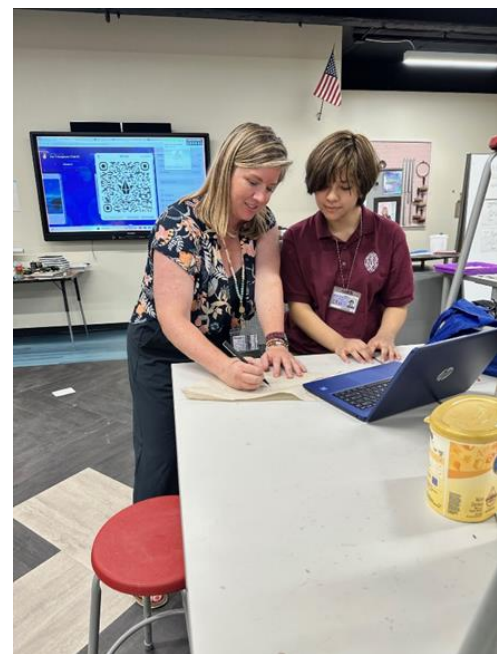
Theater students preparing for the Fall Musical under the direction of Teacher Steinhaus.



In AP Government, students take a picture with Sergeant Bob Gordon and then explain how his position at Morton is an example of state law.



Unified Art students working together to prepare for an introductory lesson on image making.



Sculpture student receives after school help from Ms. Gainer.



FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Ms. Dure introduces student artist Charlie Sanchez and his painting at the ArtSpace exhibit in Logan Square.



Ms. Crownson, Mr. Diaz Jr, and students meeting Chuy Garcia.



The Morton Color Guard march with their brand new flags during last weekend's Hispanic Heritage parade in Berwyn.



Multi-Tiered System of Supports Department – Gloria Ramirez-Solis, Director

Career-Ready

At the Freshman Center, the counseling team onboarded 9th graders on SchooLinks, the district's new college and career readiness platform, where students completed the "Find Your Path" career assessment to identify career clusters aligned with their interests. Counselors also introduced SchooLinks to parents during the September Coffee with the Principal. At East, counselors partnered with Sophomore English teachers to embed SchooLinks activities into the curriculum. At West, career exploration was supported through two CNA informational sessions with Morton College and visits from military branch representatives during lunch periods.

College-Ready

The Freshman Center (FC) student support team partnered with Mustang Prep teachers to create a presentation and materials on improving focus, while counselors developed a GPA lesson to be co-taught in Freshman Edge. FC Morton College field trips were scheduled for the fall, and Morton Alternative School (MAS) counselor led college visits to NIU and UIC, along with a Road to Success trip to Lincoln Tech.



MAS students Visit UIC



MAS students explore NIU



FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

At East, the College & Career Center hosted an FSAID family workshop to support FAFSA completion and meet state financial aid requirements. West expanded college readiness supports through ongoing College Application Workshops held every Tuesday and Thursday during lunch periods, two evening FAFSA ID workshops, six college representative visits, and a site visit to Arrupe College.



The College and Career Center held a FSAID family workshop to help students complete the FAFSA.

Life-Ready

Students across all campuses completed the Panorama Life-Readiness Survey, with a completion rate of over 80%. Our student support teams provided additional support to students who were flagged as needing more assistance. At the Freshman Center, teams have been running life-ready groups such as “AP Stress Management: Donut Stress About It” and MTC social skills groups were launched in a community setting.



FC AP Stress Management Group: Donut Stress About It



Students at MTC engage in a team building activity for social skills group.

At MAS, the student support team organized presentations such as Yo Soy Ella, which focuses on healthy relationships for female students. MAS social workers are also co-facilitating groups with Youth Crossroads on topics including online safety, life skills, conflict resolution, and self-esteem, while also celebrating the retirement of Nigel, the comfort dog.



MAS celebrating the retirement of Nigel the Comfort Dog

At West, the Student Services team delivered Erika's Lighthouse presentations in Health classes and began MTSS and BARR interventions for students struggling with attendance, grades, and behavior. Staff also provided grief support for students impacted by recent community losses.



FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

Curricular Updates

At East, the Senior Counseling PLT developed and delivered a new Post-Secondary lesson through Senior English classes. At West, support teams engaged students through classroom push-ins across multiple grade levels, focusing on academic planning, career exploration, and SchooLinks onboarding. Counselors also partnered with PCIS to provide parents with hands-on support using SchooLinks and hosted a Lunch and Learn on September 25th to help teachers deepen their knowledge of the platform.



Physical Education / Health / Driver Education – Matt Koucereck, Director

College Ready

West campus and East Campus have five teachers in the PE/Health department that have been approved by Morton College to help our Morton students achieve dual credit. This team of teachers will be providing dual credit through a variety of fitness electives. Our Morton PE teachers in congruence with the team at MC will be working diligently to move forward to sign agreements this school year.

Career Ready

West – Beth Sullivan will be connecting with the community and bringing in guest speakers for the newly added Advanced Health class. Beth has reached out to MacNeal Hospital and there will be two guest speakers coming in talking about Health careers targeting Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy in October. This is a great opportunity for our students to see career options for the future and career opportunities in our communities. PE and Health classes will continue to seek out ways to connect with MacNeal Hospital and other health careers in the area.

Melissa LeBeau has been teaching the Officiating class at West Campus for several years. Melissa works closely with the IHSA to provide opportunities for her students as referees, umpires, and officials. Through this officiating class students can gain licensure to begin officiating at many different levels including in the IHSA at the High School level. The students in the officiating class learned the rules for Flag Football and were given opportunities to transfer their knowledge in Sophomore PE classes during 2nd and 4th hour. The officiating students received tremendous feedback from the Sophomore teachers, and the Sophomore students really appreciated them being involved in class.

Life Ready

FC/West/East – Physical Education students have been working daily on increasing their muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility by starting each class with a warm-up and looking to improve our overall Fitness gram scores in December. Students have already been tested on their first 1-mile run which will provide a baseline score to create growth goals and should allow students to see their own improvement towards the end of the Semester.

FC - Health classes have completed their first Unit (Wellness and Body Systems). Unit 1 utilizes vocabulary that will be used throughout the semester and transferred into the rest of the curriculum. This will continue to drive the foundation of promoting wellness, and how this can have a ripple effect on the human body and its systems. Also, promoting wellness the FC had Cesar Mendoza gain a score of a 131 on a Pacer Test. This score was only 2 laps away from breaking a FC record. The Pacer Test is a 20 meter Cardiovascular Endurance test that starts at an 8 second interval and this interval decreases as the test continues. Cesar is on the Morton Soccer team, and these great feats not only show what is achievable when involved in outside activities, but also seeing what is attainable in a high school physical education class.