



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

April 2026

College Ready:

- 100% of AP Computer Science Principles students submitted their Create Performance Task by the April 30 deadline, reflecting strong accountability and preparation for college-level work.
- Teaching Methods students conducted classroom observations at Goodwin, building foundational knowledge of educational theory and instructional practices.
- Graphic Arts students designed ACT preparation posters with QR codes, supporting peers while reinforcing research, design, and information literacy skills.

Career Ready:

- Culinary students applied real-world food service skills through *Cake Wars* and a food truck soft opening for staff.
- Auto students are launching official Auto Shop Days, providing authentic service experiences while engaging younger students in the program.
- Morton West Engineering students earned 3rd place in 3D Machine CAD, 2nd place in 3D CAD Modeling, and 1st place in Engineering Design Team at the Illinois Design Educator Association State Competition.
- Senior Roberto Vizcaino Jr. placed 3rd out of 30 participants in the Pipefitters 597 Welding Competition, demonstrating industry-level skill.
- Graphic Arts students completed client-based projects, including the 2026 Enchanted Garden Prom ticket design contest (won by junior Lina Fierro Saavedra) and collaborative work with Civics classes to redesign classroom materials.

Life Ready:

- Fire Safety students participated in safety drills, developing preparedness and teamwork skills.
- Preschool students engaged in mini field trips throughout the building, fostering curiosity, confidence, and early exposure to different career pathways.
- Across all programs, students are practicing professionalism, communication, and problem-solving in authentic settings, preparing them for success in any path they choose.

Career & Work Based Learning:

Teacher Professional Development

CTE staff and Career and Work-Based Learning leadership continued to engage in meaningful professional learning opportunities focused on curriculum development, instructional improvement, and student outcomes. During the April 21 Curriculum Day, AP Business and Personal Finance teachers from across the district collaborated to design curriculum for the new AP Business and Personal Finance course, ensuring alignment and rigor as the program launches. Additionally, the Career and Work-Based Learning



Coordinators participated in the I-WIN Embedded Work-Based Learning Workshop and completed the *2026 Using Student Growth Data for Diverse Populations in Teacher Performance Evaluation* Administrator Academy, further strengthening support systems for diverse learners and high-quality work-based learning experiences.

Partnership Updates

The district continued to expand and strengthen partnerships with industry and community organizations to create additional opportunities for students in healthcare, skilled trades, automotive, machining, and food service industries. Meetings were held with pharmacy leaders from Walgreens, Sam's Club, and Costco, as well as representatives from multiple construction and union organizations including Painters Union DC 14 and Iron Workers Local 63. New site visits and relationship-building efforts with automotive repair shops, machining and welding companies, and food service organizations further expanded the network of potential internship and career pathway opportunities for students. In addition, students selected for the internship program participated in a preparation meeting focused on placement expectations, networking strategies, and next steps as they prepare to enter authentic workplace experiences.

Programmatic Updates

CTE programs across the district continue to provide students with authentic, industry-aligned experiences that support college, career, and life readiness. Culinary students successfully hosted the Clerical Appreciation Lunch, applying hospitality and food service skills in a real-world setting. In the healthcare pathway, 18 Medical Interventions Honors students completed the Biotechnology Aptitude and Competency Exam (BACE), while 10 students registered for the Pharmacy Technician certification program through Oakton Community College. Additionally, 24 Human Body Systems students were recognized by MacNeal Hospital as the inaugural cohort to complete an 8-week job shadow experience. Engineering students also demonstrated exceptional technical and collaborative skills at the Illinois Design Educators Association State Competition, earning top placements in multiple CAD and engineering design events. Together, these accomplishments reflect the district's continued commitment to providing students with rigorous, hands-on learning experiences connected to industry standards and workforce opportunities.

College & Career Center highlights:

East Campus:

- One Click College Admit Workshops- Class of 2027 (4/10, 4/17, 4/24):

One Click College Admit is a new initiative by the State of Illinois and is the state's free, quick, and stress-free direct admissions program into state and public universities and community colleges. In summary, this program allows current juniors to opt in to One Click College Admit and potentially receive offers for admission to state and community colleges in Illinois based on their GPA. Current juniors who are interested in opting into this initiative should see us in the College and Career Center for assistance.

- Financial Aid Award Letter Review (4/22, 4/29):

With the May 1 senior commitment day quickly approaching, we will be assisting seniors with reviewing their financial aid award letters so they know what their net cost will be for the colleges they are still considering.

- Morton College Support Day (4/28):



Morton College representatives will be visiting us at Morton East during all supervision periods to share information about their summer bridge program (free college credit), dual enrollment opportunities for next fall (free college credit), and to assist seniors with completing the various steps to enroll.

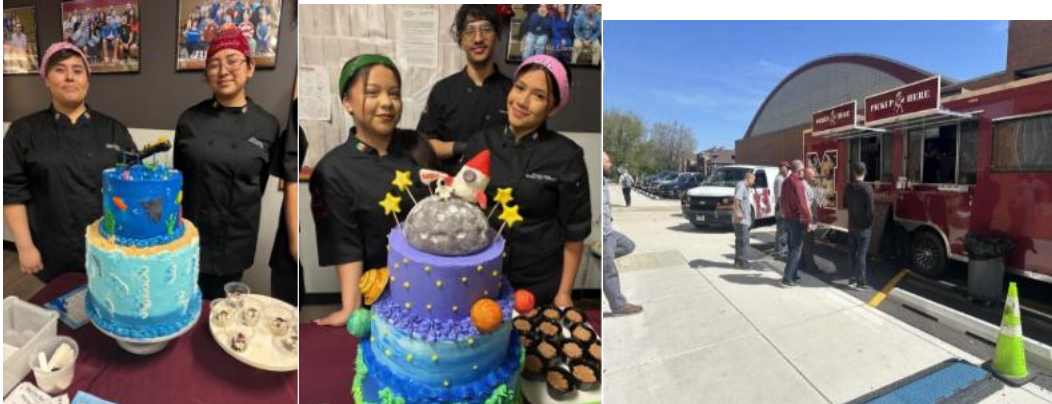
Upcoming May Highlights:

- One Click College Admit workshops for juniors (Every Friday in May)
- May 1 senior commitment day celebration and group photo
- Morton College Support Day (5/5, 5/12)
 - Dual enrollment info, summer bridge info, assistance with MC enrollment steps

West Campus:

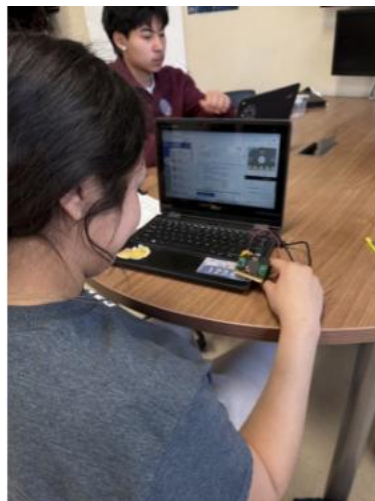
- West Career Month
- College Visits at West – A total of 30 students visited the College and Career Center for college representative visits. Seven colleges sent representatives throughout the month of April
 - April 7th – Saint Xavier University, Roosevelt University, Blackburn College
 - April 16th – Universal Technical Institute, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
 - April 21st – Eastern Illinois University
 - April 30th – Academy of Art University
- Programming Focus
 - Decision Day – The College and Career Center has been planning for the May 1st Decision Day by designing and organization t-shirt sales, photography coverage, and event set-up and logistics

CTE Department in Action:





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





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





SPED Department – Carol Best, Executive Director

College

Students in the Learning Development Intervention (LDI) biology classes completed the Strawberry Banana Lab this month. This hands-on activity supports the development of foundational academic skills and reinforces concepts that prepare students for the expectations of college-level coursework.

Vocational classes also provided students with a valuable postsecondary exposure experience by taking 26 students to Morton College. During the visit, students learned about key differences between high school and college programs, toured the campus, and connected with former students who are now successfully enrolled. Several seniors took the initiative to schedule follow-up appointments with the Coordinator of Student Accommodations to ensure appropriate supports are in place for the fall semester. The visit concluded with a career fair, where students had the opportunity to explore resources, including access to professional attire for future job interviews.

Career

In Applied Math, Functional Skills Instruction (FSI) students recently completed a unit on money management. Instruction focused on identifying coins and bills, performing addition and subtraction with money, and practicing real-world purchasing skills.

To extend this learning, Ms. Medina collaborated with instructional coaches to design an in-school, real-world simulation experience. Students participated in a mock restaurant, *Letty's Cocina*, where they were given a \$30 budget to purchase a meal. Students reviewed menus, selected items, placed orders, and completed transactions. Menu options included enchiladas, flautas, and quesadillas, prepared by Letty Ruiz. Members of Best Buddies supported students throughout the process, assisting with ordering and menu completion.

This interactive experience provided students with an authentic opportunity to apply academic skills in a practical setting while building confidence and independence in a supported environment.

Life

The ED Resource program focused this month on the theme of **Self-Advocacy and Independence**. Students explored the distinction between independence and being independent, and engaged in discussions and practice scenarios focused on appropriately requesting assistance in various settings, including the classroom, community, and workplace.

MTC Program Updates:



Cooking

Students participated in cooking activities twice this month, engaging in the full process of meal preparation, including recipe selection, menu planning, grocery shopping, and cooking. Dishes prepared included chicken noodle soup, quesadillas, Irish soda bread, and tostadas. These activities promote independence, collaboration, and practical life skills.

Community-Based Learning

Students took part in several community outings, including visits to a movie theater and local restaurants. These experiences support the application of classroom learning in real-world environments, helping students develop skills in community navigation, social interaction, safety awareness, budgeting, ordering, and payment.

Talent Show

Students spent the month preparing for a talent show by identifying and practicing a skill or hobby to showcase. This experience fostered self-expression, confidence, and presentation skills, while celebrating the diverse strengths and talents within the program.

Photos:





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Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

LDI Biology Students Completing a Lab:





English Learners and Modern Languages- Melody Becker Curriculum Updates-

College

- All PLTs strategically added ACT preparation aligned to their curricula.
- Students at the FC in Gold 2 and Blue 1 attended a Morton College Field Trip.
- **EL 1** Students have been continuing the process of reading and writing for English language mastery. They have also begun their art unit which revolves around different genres of painting; they will create original canvases, mirroring the art style, through the medium of painting.
- **EL 2** Reading students selected a global issue to research, developing awareness and empathy through the analysis and expression of diverse perspectives.
- Understanding global issues and expressing perspectives builds awareness and empathy, which are important life skills.
- **EL 3** is practicing class discussions completely in English. Students analyzed a speech about social media to identify examples of ethos, logos, and pathos. Then, they wrote a CEL/CON paragraph explaining, in their own words, how one device was used in the speech. Students are now preparing for a class discussion on social media using the spiderweb discussion technique to build collaborative, student-led dialogue.
- **EL 4** Students researched a topic, found their own credible sources (CRAAP Test – Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose), completed a peer review on their rough drafts, and finalized their persuasive essay.
- **EL 4** students have been researching different aspects regarding AI to persuade intended audiences. This research has led to a deeper understanding of AI and the role it will have in the future. Furthermore, students used different technology to develop infographics on their chosen topics.
- **Spanish I** students are learning about the present subjunctive and they did a [listening practice on gimkit](#). They've worked on a [listening review on the adjectives with a gimkit](#).
- **SLA IV:** Some classes finished the argumentative essay at the beginning of the month, which is aligned with AP Spanish Lang. Students received the sources, analyzed them, then wrote an outline for the essay and finished passing it on paper. Their argumentative essays were added to their honors portfolio.
- **SLA V:** Students are learning about different art genres in order to create their own artwork at the end of the school year.
- **AP Spanish Language** is finishing up unit 5, they are going over multiple-choice texts and audios and reviewing all the different sections of the AP exam. Ms. Herrera has gone to the classrooms to do an audio recording so students know what they have to do and if there are any issues they can work on before the test.



- **AP Spanish Literature** students finished reading the last unit, working on the FRQ4, where they have to explain a common theme in two readings by using rhetorical devices and how these devices are used to develop that theme. and are practicing for the AP test coming up in May.
- **AP Chinese** is reviewing all sections of the AP test before they take it in May.
- All classes: Students are continuing to work on their **honor's portfolio** by adding the different evidence that they need as well as reflecting on their work as well as the cultural experiences they have gone to.

Career

- The **Spanish Honors Society (SHH)** had their induction ceremony on April 23rd where 43 new members were welcomed. These new members demonstrated their knowledge in the language, had to be enrolled in a Spanish class, have Bs or higher in their classes, no school discipline referrals given, write an essay as to why they wanted to join SHH, and be involved in two school activities. Once inducted, their community hours begin.
- **Chinese** had their induction ceremony with 6 new members
- **EL 2 English** students have been actively preparing for their upcoming mock interviews. They have been practicing in pairs, taking turns as interviewer and interviewee, and offering each other verbal feedback. A day before their official mock interviews, level 3 students will visit our level 2 classes to share their experiences from last year's mock interview process. Students collaborated with core students to prepare success criteria for interviews, and this criteria will be used for mock interviews with peers on April 30th. Students have been preparing resumes, discussing body language, and selecting appropriate attire for their interviews.

Life

- **EL 1** Students are currently working on writing commands and giving commands for a speaking grade.
- **EL 2** Students are preparing for their mock interviews at East this Thursday. Ms. Fagan and Ms. Tinoco have been helping students with their job interview practice. Students enjoyed their interviews with them and are having a lot of fun with this unit.
- **EL 3** students analyzed the TED Talk *The Battle for Your Time: Exposing the Costs of Social Media* by Dino Ambrosi. Students participated in a multi-step listening and student discourse lesson before reading and analyzing the Ted Talk. Students then completed a rhetorical analysis paragraph and are currently working on a speaking interview activity related to the TED Talk
- **Chinese- FC Chinese 1** students went on a field trip to Chinatown. The weather was lovely and students had a great time exploring the area and experiencing Chinese culture.



- **Spanish III** students completed a project on living a healthy life while using the subjunctive.
- **SLA IV** students created an identity project both written and spoken. Students wrote a poem and added 10 images that represented them, or created a identity work of art where they had to add five images for their personal identity, five for their public identity, and five things both identities have in common and wrote an explanation on them. They decided whether do make their project on Canva/PowerPoint/Padlet, or by hand.
- **SLA IV:** Students reviewed the vocabulary for unit 4 by competing with a classmate. Each pair received one paper with the vocabulary words inside turtles, they each picked a color and had their hands behind their back while they listened to the definition of a vocabulary word. The first person that pointed to the turtle with their finger got to color the turtle. If they both picked it at the same time, they colored half. Furthermore, if they didn't pick the correct turtle, they put an x through it to know that that word wouldn't be repeating anymore.
- **SLA IV:** All classes began on unit 4, the environment. After reviewing what they would learn, they went over the vocabulary and they created a posters that indicated whether a statement was true or false with three reasons as to why and presented it to the class.
- **SLA V:** On April 20th, approximately 260 students visited downtown Chicago, admired the city's architecture, and also visited the Art institute to see different types of genres in real life to connect with the art unit in class. Students are now analyzing the work of Frida Kahlo and Pablo Picasso.
- **French 1** students have been learning how to order in a French café. We are fine tuning the conversation to fill in the awkward moments! They are using [this café conversation prep on Canva](#).
- **French 2** students have been working on a city unit. They finished a Google Maps project, each choosing a francophone city [French A2 Project + Rubric.docx](#)
- **French 3** students are starting the end-of-year and graduation project - a children's book in French, illustrated, written, and read. Students are using these directions [Copy of Mon propre livre pour enfants.docx](#), the examples are from middle school, just for the illustrations.
- **Chinese 1** students completed a project where they had to interview three people asking seven questions and write up a short profile for each person they interviewed. It's an overall practice on their language skills and vocab words learned from this year.
- **Chinese 2** students are working on a shopping unit and making a video about shopping.
- In **Chinese 2**, students created "A Day in My Life" vlogs in Chinese. They filmed their daily routines, described their classes, after-school activities, and personal schedules using target vocabulary and time expressions. The project focused on speaking fluency, narration, and real-



life language use. Students scripted their videos, recorded clips at home and at school, and added Chinese subtitles. This activity helped them practice sequencing events, using transition words, and speaking in complete sentences. I've attached a few screenshots from their videos

- **Chinese 3** students are on the unit “seeing a doctor.” They started the unit by going over facial features and body parts.
- **Chinese 1 and 3-** On April 14th students went on a field trip to Chinatown to Chinatown to learn more about the culture and experience the language in real life context.

Student and Staff Accolades –



EL 3: Students created their own soccer balls using recyclable materials. Students read about the process in the novel *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. Students tested their soccer balls and took data on how well their ball performed in the field.



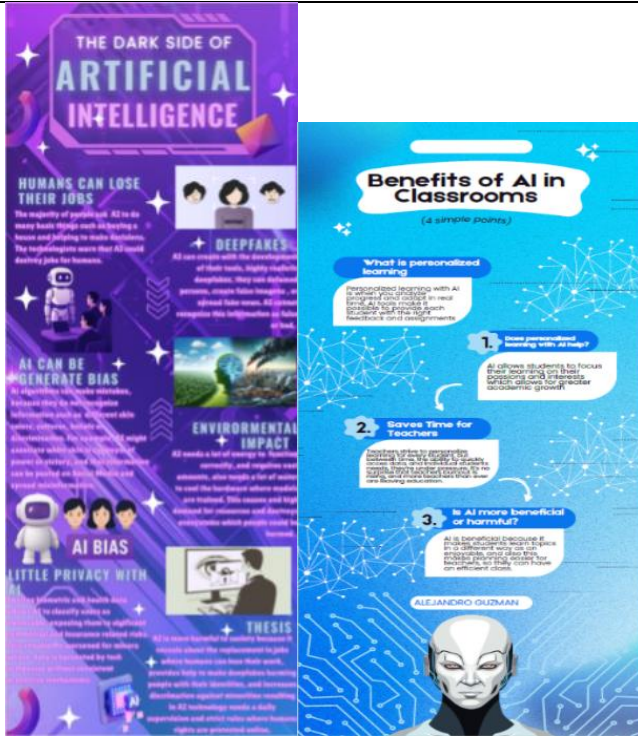
EL 3 students practice discussion skills using spiderweb technique



FC held its Future Freshman Rally.



EL 2: Students integrated their research, employed critical analysis, and utilized creative interpretation to visually represent a global issue through artistic expression.



EL 4 AI Infographics



EL 2 Interview Practice



Chinese 1- Interview Profiles



Chinese 3- Facial Features and Body Parts



Chinatown Field Trip



French 1 Cafe



SLA IV students created their own art work



SLA IV students took a field trip to the Mexican Museum of Fine Art



Six Morton West students were inducted into the Chinese Honor Society



Science Department— Eric Bjornstad, Director

Curriculum Updates –

- Curriculum & Instruction Steering Committee met on April 28th. Further development of Portrait of a Morton Teacher took place, along with future steps for our Mustang “Musts”
- The A.I. Advisory committee’s final meeting of the school year will take place on May 6th. Information regarding staff professional learning needs will be collected.
- Teachers who will be teaching Anatomy & Physiology met on April 23rd to revise assessments and align curricula further to support skills based learning.

College Ready –

- AP Testing is upon us, and this past couple weeks we have witnessed some intense review sessions happening in AP Bio, AP Chem, and AP Physics.

Career Ready –

- Medical Health Sciences students at Morton East completed their job shadowing of MacNeal Hospital employees on April 29th. A celebration was held in East 470 and several department leaders from MacNeal came to share their experiences.
- We currently have 10 students registered with Oakton and ready to participate in next year’s Pharmacy Tech cohort. This will be our largest group ever. We are currently working to expand our partnerships with local pharmacies in order to accommodate the growing demand.

Life Ready –

April 29th Partnership Celebration with MacNeal and Loyola Representatives





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

Tree Planting at West with City of Berwyn for Arbor Day



Community Gardens at West were opened on April 22nd





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

Tree Planting at MAS with Morton Arboretum



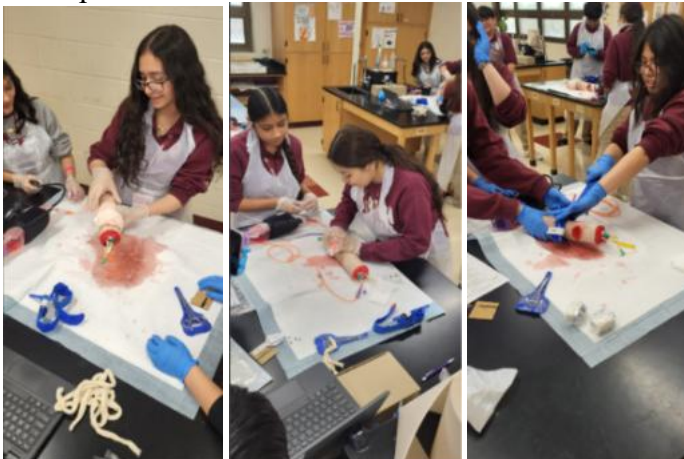


FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

Biology students plant trees at the FC.



Principles of Biomedical Science students learn to “control the bleed.”



CPR training with the PBS students.



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



Biology Students at East and West attend the “Impossible Science Festival.”





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



STEM students use their knowledge of Simple Machines to build Rube Goldberg Machines.



Astronomy at MSI





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Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



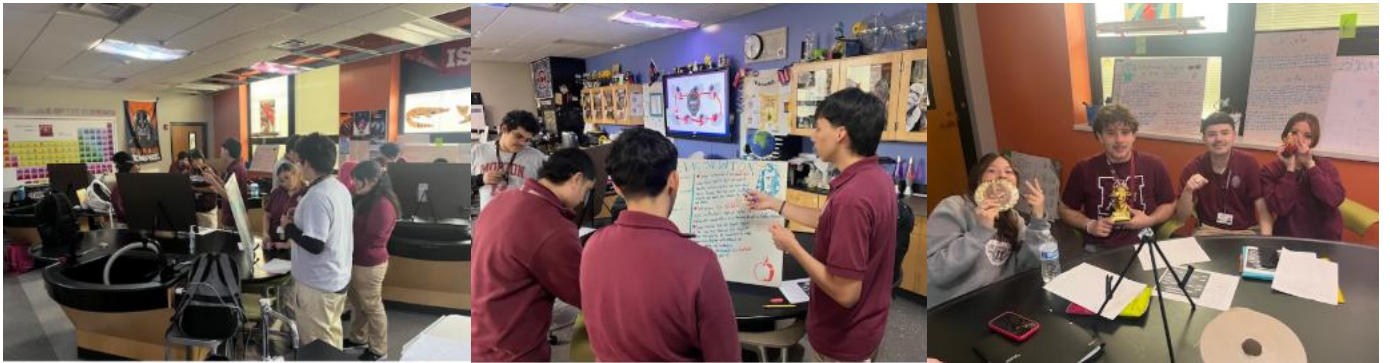
Under the Stars Astronomy Night at East



Science team sent to Anaheim for NSTA Conference



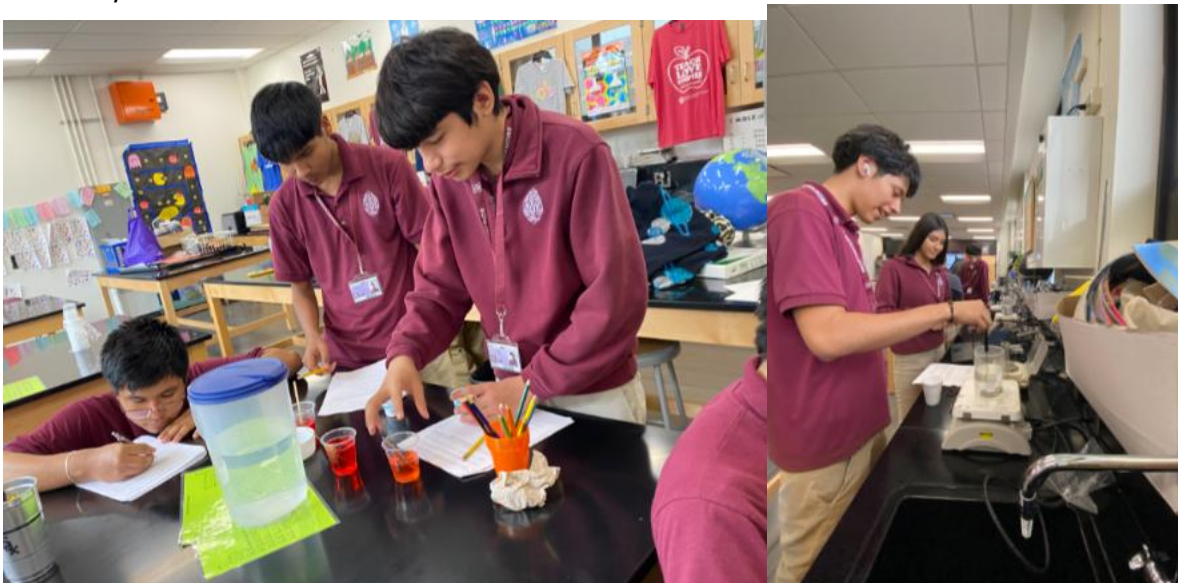
FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



GOAT of astronomy argument and winners!!!



Chemistry Labs at East





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Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Zoology Bird Watching Trip





English Department – Megan Delaney, Director

Professional Development

English Department teachers across all campuses continued engaging in ongoing professional learning aligned to district priorities, with a focus on ACT readiness, assessment design, and instructional consistency. Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) met regularly to analyze student performance data, refine instructional strategies, and plan targeted supports leading into spring testing.

Morton West AP Seminar teachers participated in professional learning focused on supporting Latino students in AP courses. At the Freshman Center, teachers remained focused on curriculum development, revising common assessments, and strengthening alignment to ACT standards and course expectations. Cross-campus collaboration continues to support alignment of grading practices and instructional approaches.

Curriculum Updates

Morton East

English II teams are currently implementing the synthesis unit, with students applying previously learned rhetorical analysis skills to evaluate multiple texts. Instruction emphasizes identifying rhetorical appeals, devices, and SPACECAT elements while developing claims and counterclaims using the C.E.R. (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) framework. Teams are also finalizing shared materials and rubrics for the upcoming novel study to ensure consistency across sections.

In English III, students recently completed a rhetorical analysis unit centered on a nonfiction speech, followed by a transition into a novel study focused on the high school experience and adolescent challenges. Instruction has included whole-class discussions, thematic analysis, and ACT-style reading practice using Formative to build readiness for standardized testing.

Advanced Placement courses are in the final phase of preparation for May exams. AP Seminar students completed their Team Multimedia Presentations and are now working on their Individual Research-Based Essays and Presentations. AP Language and Composition students have completed all required units and are using practice exam data to guide targeted review. AP Literature students are engaging in both analytical and creative approaches to literature, including performance-based and discussion-driven tasks, while preparing through full-length practice exams.

Senior electives continue to emphasize authentic literacy experiences. Students are engaging in multimedia projects, literary analysis, and discussion-based activities that connect course content to real-world applications.

Morton West

ACT testing was successfully administered this month, with minimal technical issues reported. Teachers noted student stamina during testing as an area for growth, with some students completing sections significantly faster than expected, indicating a need for continued emphasis on test-taking endurance and engagement.

In AP Language, teachers are concluding the synthesis unit and implementing alternative instructional approaches, such as hexagonal thinking with sources, to deepen student analysis and writing. AP Literature teams are engaging in forward planning for next school year while also preparing students for the upcoming exam, including addressing logistics, digital readiness, and final review strategies.

English III teams are reflecting on ACT performance and developing plans to build testing readiness earlier in the school year, with a focus on increasing familiarity and stamina. English II teams analyzed student performance data and identified a strong correlation between attendance and failing grades. In response,



teachers are implementing targeted interventions, including additional support sessions, family communication, and differentiated assignments.

Senior electives continue to provide hands-on, real-world learning opportunities. Journalism students are currently engaged in a podcast unit, utilizing the school's podcast studio to develop speaking, listening, and production skills through collaborative projects.

Freshman Center (FC)

The Freshman Center continues to focus on strengthening foundational literacy skills and building consistency across the English I curriculum. Teachers have developed and revised common assessments aligned to ACT standards and course expectations, ensuring that instruction reflects the skills students will need for future success.

Instructional efforts include targeted lessons designed to improve student performance on ACT-style English tasks, with an emphasis on grammar, usage, and rhetorical decision-making. Student performance data indicate strong outcomes, with approximately 90% of freshmen earning first-semester English credit. Teachers are continuing to refine curriculum and instructional practices to maintain and build upon this success as students progress into the second semester.

Staff and Student Accolades

Teachers across all campuses continue to demonstrate strong collaboration and commitment to student growth through intentional planning, data analysis, and innovative instructional practices. Students are actively engaged in rigorous coursework that emphasizes critical thinking, communication, and real-world application.

The department continues to build momentum as students and staff prepare for AP assessments and end-of-year learning experiences.

Morton East

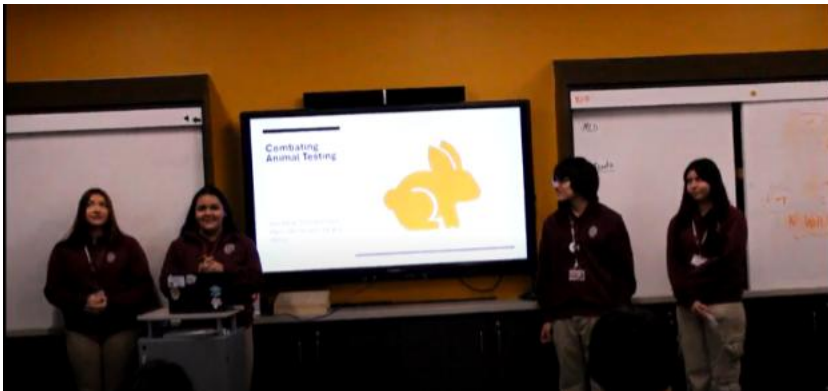


Fishbowl Discussion Activity



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

AP Seminar:



ENG 3





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

Morton West





Math Department - Megan Holub, Director

April, 2026

Curriculum Updates

We have been focusing on three courses this year: Quantitative Literacy, Integrated Math III Core, and Integrated Math III Honors. We have put an emphasis on chunking assessments into smaller, more frequent checks to better monitor student understanding. Teams are also embedding ACT-style questions across all grade levels to increase exposure and provide ongoing practice.

Integrated Math III Core has aligned curriculum and assessments to the 90–10 skills-based grading model. Quantitative Literacy will begin transitioning to this model next semester through focused curriculum writing, while AP Statistics continues refining its existing skills-based approach for greater consistency and clarity.

We recently wrapped up curriculum writing for the year with two dedicated days on April 28 and April 30. During this time, teams focused on biliteracy and translations, advancing Quantitative Literacy's shift to skills-based grading, and strengthening instruction and 90–10 alignment in Integrated Math III Core and Honors. Across all courses, we continue to prioritize intentional pacing, including time for ACT preparation and targeted remediation as needed.

Looking ahead, PLTs will continue reviewing assessment frequency to ensure each skill is assessed at least three times per semester. Additional work includes Math–Science STEM collaboration on February 26 and ongoing exploration of MyMathLab and Pearson resources within Quantitative Literacy.

****Life Readiness:*** Clear, consistent assessment practices help students better understand expectations, monitor their progress, and take ownership of their learning—skills essential for success beyond high school.

ACT & Assessment Alignment

****College Readiness:*** Across grade levels, teams are embedding ACT-style questions and chunking assessments into smaller, more frequent skill checks. This approach increases exposure to college-readiness standards while helping students build stamina and confidence with multi-step problem solving. Frequent reassessment opportunities emphasize growth and mastery — a mindset aligned with both collegiate expectations and career advancement.

Great Things We've Done:

AP Precalculus: AP Precalculus students playing Polar Battleship!



***College and Life Readiness:** Students regularly engage in structured collaborative problem-solving experiences where they must communicate their reasoning, evaluate multiple strategies, and build consensus around solutions. These classroom practices mirror both college seminar expectations and modern workplace environments, where teamwork, clear communication, and collective problem-solving are essential. By learning to articulate their thinking, listen to diverse perspectives, and refine ideas based on peer feedback, students are developing the interpersonal and analytical skills necessary for success in both postsecondary education and today's collaborative career settings.

STEM Program: In April, our administrators involved with STEM, Megan Holub, Eric Bjornstad, Dustin Heap, and Eric Ramirez, hosted two evening parent sessions to welcome and inform families of incoming STEM students. These meetings are a key step in preparing students for a rigorous, future-focused academic pathway.

During these sessions, families learned about the vision and goals of the STEM program, which is designed to cultivate problem-solving, critical thinking, and real-world application of math and science skills. In addition, we provided clarity around the unique structure of the program, including the opportunity for students to begin their STEM journey as early as 8th grade by attending Morton High School for both math and science coursework.

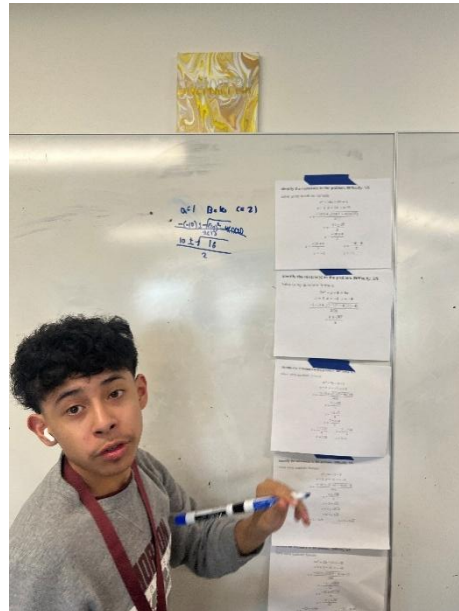
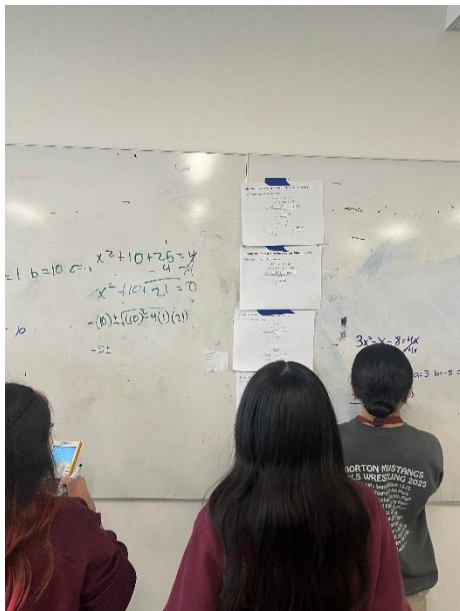
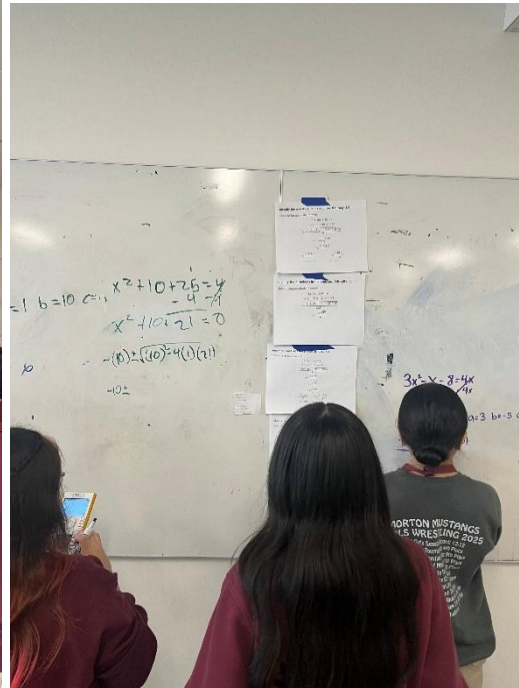
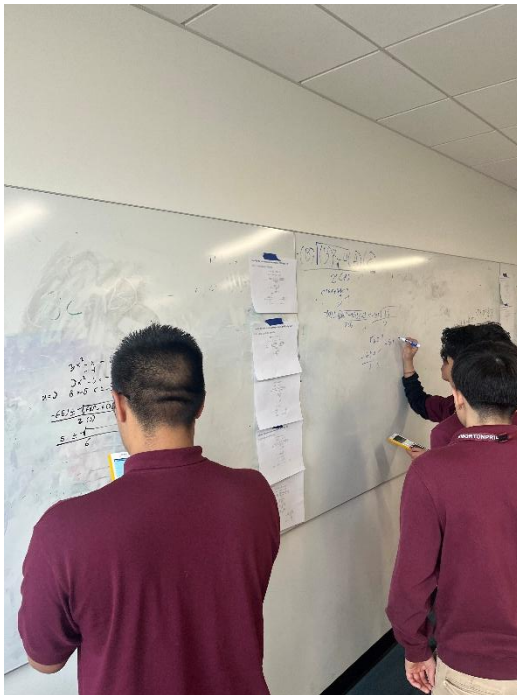
***College & Career Readiness:** These early experiences not only accelerate academic growth, but also help students build confidence, independence, and a strong foundation for future college and career opportunities in STEM-related fields. By engaging families early and providing clear expectations, we are strengthening the partnership between school and home while setting students on a path toward long-term success.





Professional Development:

Morton East Partnership with the Instructional Coaches for an Exhibition: On March 26th we had a “Coaching Expedition” in the math department at Morton East High School where a few groups of math teachers, instructional coaches, and building administrators observed a few math teachers during implementation of “Building Thinking Classroom” where groups of students work collaboratively at the vertical boards to solve math problems. See the pictures below of Mr. Elkins classroom while students were analyzing errors on a series of solutions to quadratic equations by using the quadratic formula.





Mathletes:

Morton East Mathletes: On Saturday, April 18th, the Morton East Mathletes participated in the ICTM State Mathematics Contest at Illinois State University against the top schools from all over the state. Santiago Zarco Rodriguez, Oswaldo Barron-Alvarado, Jesus Brito, Ramon Gamboa Robles, Alan Mejia-Gonzalez and Nahir Garcia competed on the Pre-Calculus team. Bryan Gaborit-Moran, Pedro Alvarez and Juan Urgiles competed on the Algebra 2 team.

Santiago Zarco Rodriguez, Oswaldo Barron-Alvarado and Jesus Brito placed in the top 101 out of approximately 200 students in our Pre-Calculus division.

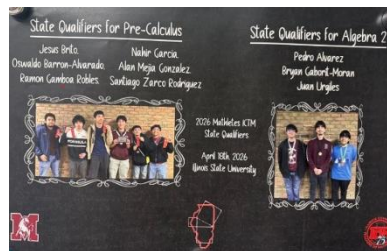
The Pre-Calculus team broke a Morton East record at state with 66 points!

Bryan Gaborit-Moran placed 34th and Pedro Alvarez place 80th out of approximately 200 students in our Algebra 2 division.

Our team total score broke a Morton East record with 136 points!

Thank you for all of your support during this outstanding season!

Congratulations to all of our amazing Morton East Mathletes state finalists and their coaches!



To celebrate the Mathletes, the coaches held their annual Mathlete Banquet at Morton East. This was a lovely evening with a potluck dinner, and an award ceremony. See photos below:





Social Science and Fine Arts- Kevin Vesper, Director

Curriculum & PLT Updates

- In late March, Mr. Kendall Ruff hosted the annual Choir Fest at Morton West High School, bringing together hundreds of students from feeder schools for a day of joint rehearsal culminating in an evening community performance. The event highlighted strong collaboration among staff, students, and families across schools and demonstrated meaningful engagement with the broader community through the performing arts.
- This April marked the 20th anniversary of Ms. Jennie Crownson’s leadership of the History Fair at Morton East High School. Under her guidance, students have advanced to state and national competitions and participated in enriching educational experiences in Springfield and Washington, D.C. The program has had a particularly strong impact on English Learner students, supporting academic growth, confidence, and access to authentic learning opportunities through historical research and presentation.
- Morton East and Morton West High Schools held their annual arts shows, celebrating student creativity and achievement. Morton West continued its tradition of showcasing a wide range of student artwork across multiple mediums, reflecting both technical skill and artistic diversity. Morton East introduced a new, interactive format during its “FAME” week, with student exhibits displayed throughout the building and opportunities for peers to vote on their favorite pieces. The week concluded with a celebratory event where students socialized and created art together, fostering community, engagement, and collaboration through the arts.
- On April 29, the Animation Studio and AP African American Studies curriculum teams held their final meeting, marking the successful completion of both curricula. The programs are fully developed and prepared for implementation in the 2026–27 school year, reflecting collaborative planning and alignment with instructional goals.

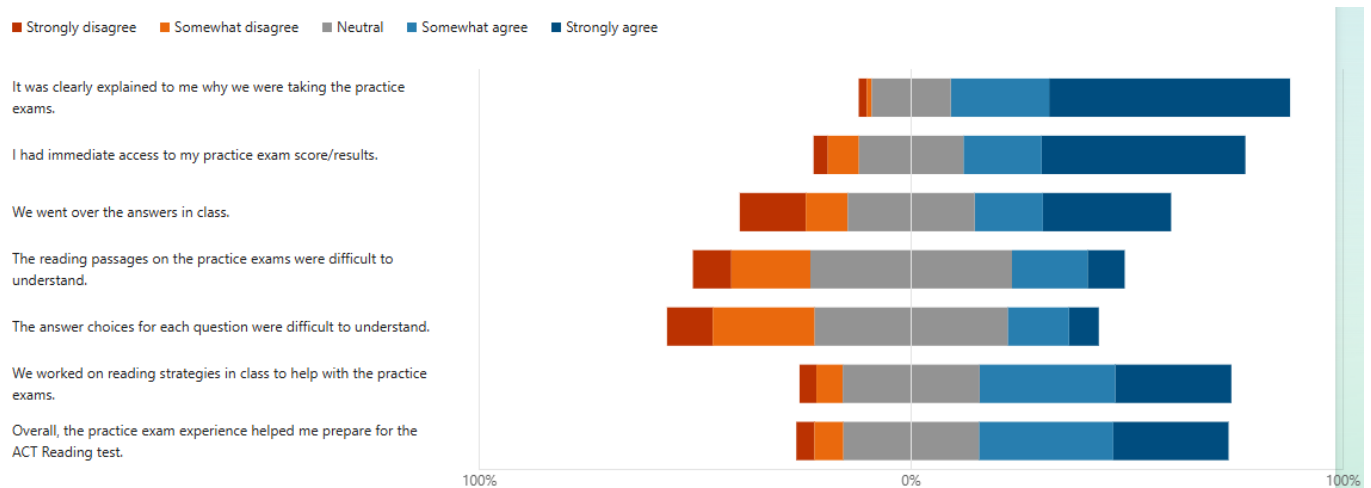
Professional Development

- Music director Andy Boland attended the North Central Division Conference of the College Band Directors National Association, held April 9–11, 2026, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The conference featured presentations by distinguished music educators focused on innovation, instructional strategies, and the evolving role of bands, as well as exemplary performances of both traditional and contemporary works. Participation in this national conference supports Mr. Boland’s students by informing instructional practice, expanding repertoire selection, and bringing current best practices and creative approaches directly into the classroom and ensemble experience.
- On April 11, AP Psychology teachers attended the Chicago Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (CHITOPSS) conference. The event provided opportunities for collaboration with area educators, sharing best practices, and engaging in professional learning aligned to AP Psychology content and assessment. Participation supports instructional quality and ensures students benefit from up-to-date strategies, resources, and disciplinary knowledge.

ACT Reading Preparation Survey – U.S. History



During March, U.S. History students completed weekly ACT Reading practice exams as part of regular instruction across all sections. Following this series of assessments, students completed a survey reflecting on their experiences, including skill development, confidence, pacing, and the effectiveness of instructional strategies. The feedback is being used to evaluate the impact of embedded ACT preparation, refine instructional supports, and strengthen targeted readiness for the ACT Reading test.



Survey Data Insights:

Purpose and Structure Were Clear

A strong majority of students *somewhat or strongly agreed* that it was clearly explained why they were taking the ACT Reading practice exams, indicating intentional alignment between instruction and assessment.

Timely Feedback Supported Learning

Most students reported *immediate access to their practice exam results*, suggesting effective systems for feedback and reflection.

Instructional Follow-Up Occurred Consistently

Responses show that many students agreed that answers were reviewed in class and that reading strategies were explicitly taught to support success on the practice exams.

Rigor Reflected ACT Expectations

Students generally perceived the reading passages and answer choices as challenging, with responses clustering around *neutral to agree* on difficulty. This suggests the practice accurately mirrored ACT-level rigor without being overwhelming.

Positive Impact on ACT Preparation

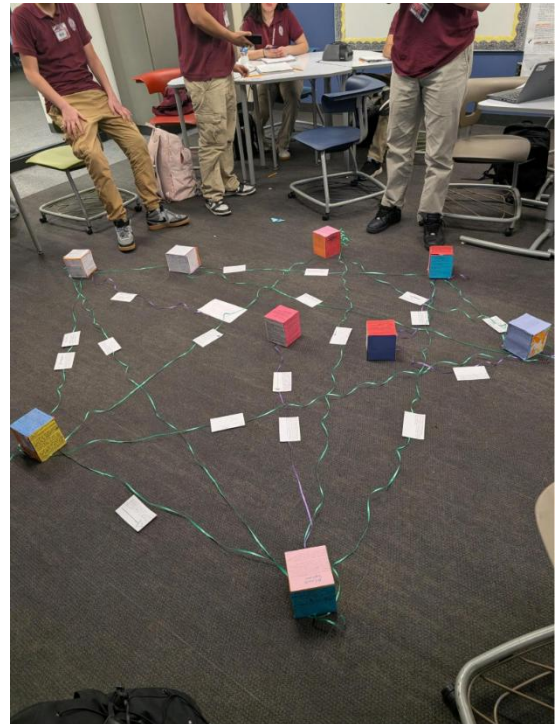
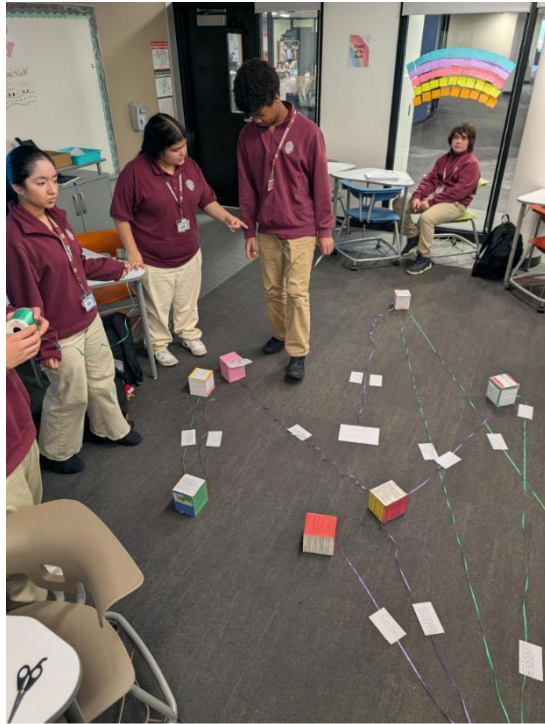
Overall, a clear majority of students *somewhat or strongly agreed* that the weekly ACT Reading practice helped prepare them for the ACT Reading test, indicating the approach was both meaningful and effective.

Areas for Refinement Identified

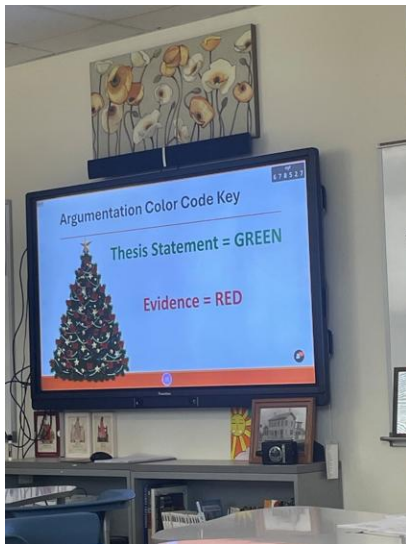
Neutral responses across several questions point to opportunities to further strengthen clarity of passages, answer choices, and strategy instruction for certain students.



Department Highlights:



AP World History students completed a “BOXED IN – Causes of WWI” project, transforming tissue boxes into six-sided *analyses* featuring definitions, case studies, primary sources, data, learning outcome connections, and argumentative claims. Once finished, students used string to map cause-and-effect relationships between the boxes, leading to high engagement and strong preparation for their SAQ practice.





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

Congratulations to Emerson Steinhaus, our talented performers, and the incredible behind-the-scenes crew on a successful showing of *Radium Girls* last week. It was a powerful production, and you can find photos from the play below.



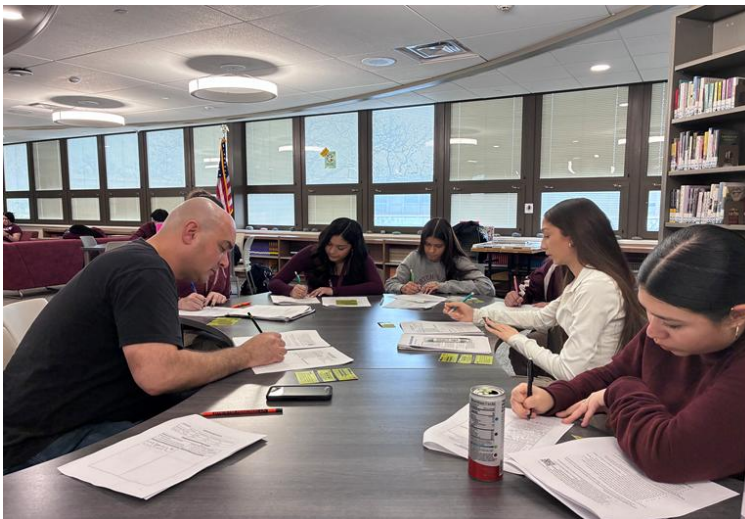


FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Nahir Garcia, Isabella Salgado, and Alec Dominguez-Villanueva on receiving the Distinguished Historical Citation from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) of Illinois.

The Wind Ensemble delivered an outstanding performance at the UIC Band Festival in Chicago, receiving a “Superior” rating, the highest honor available at the festival.



Morton West students participated in a collective bargaining simulation in partnership with DePaul University, an experience that engaged all three of our core Social Science skills: comprehension, analysis, and argumentation.

Unified Art students are exploring creative expression through tie-dye, choosing colors that resonate with their identities or symbolize something important to them.



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

Congratulations to Tyler Lubinus, our talented student performers, and the incredible behind-the-scenes crew on a successful showing of *Little Shop of Horrors* last week. It was a wonderful musical with a high-level production, and you can find photos from show below.





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

Congratulations to our Freshman Center students who were nominated for our April Students of the Month!





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

College Ready

The Morton West Senior Leader Bulletin Board has been finalized with all of those Leadership students leaving good ole' JSM at the end of the year. This group of Leaders did a great job throughout the year servicing and supporting students and teachers in their Physical Education classrooms, gyms, and throughout our outdoor facilities. Tracey Bornheim celebrated this amazing group of students with an end of the year in-house Field Trip. Students were able to have an hour in the pool for a pool party, and students celebrated with Paisan's pizza and cake. Ms. Bornheim did a nice job of decorating her classroom for those Senior's that will be moving on from this Leadership program and beyond.

Career Ready

Melissa Le Beau attended the Officials Advisory Meeting at the IHSA and learned a lot of valuable information she can relay to her student officials. Melissa has been doing a great job of creating opportunities for her Officiating students on campus and helping with Job Placement. The IHSA Officials representatives are looking to utilize Ms. LeBeau in other capacities to reach out to other schools that currently have an Officiating program. We will continue to grow this program at Morton High School District and in other areas of Chicagoland. This is a critical time in High School Athletics, and there has been a shortage of officials in the state of Illinois for a very long time. Hopefully, this program and others can help build a bridge and minimize the divide.



Life Ready

Samantha Gutheim and Mike McGlennon completed a Curriculum Day for Driver Education. This will help solidify some resources, including ancillary materials for all Driver Education teachers could use



in the classroom and Behind-The-Wheel. This will create an amended version of our Libguides, so that all Night School teachers and Summer School teachers will have access to them. Looking to gain access to the 11th Edition of the Drive Right text which is the resource that all Public Schools use in the State of Illinois. Gaining access to this text will allow the Driver Education program to streamline its process in pedagogy.

The East PE department closed out the year by having the annual JMR Fitness Challenge. The East team had guests from various branches of military and collaborated with the culinary department to utilize the new food truck to showcase healthy snack options. Students participating in the event competed in various strenuous exercises during the completion to be crowned the best in their gender and grade class. We have photos included of some of the winners from that day. It was an overall success and a team effort from the department.

Freshmen Center

We have begun creating a space for our incoming Freshmen ASI/FSI program, where students will be able to engage in light fitness activities and cardio exercise with bikes and machines.

In Physical Education, we are slowly making the transition to outdoor activities. Our workouts are incorporating more calisthenics, to fully prepare for the FitnessGram post-tests taking place in May. We've worked on building strength and endurance throughout the semester and will now put that into our body-weight movements to increase the capacity for muscular endurance. The selection of Leaders is complete for the Sophomore year program. Health wrapped up Unit 3, Nutrition and Lifestyle diseases, meeting our target Smart Goal. Students will now begin learning about substance abuse, how to identify risk factors of substance abuse, and its effects on the brain and body.





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



West Campus

The leadership pool party was a success. The leaders enjoyed their hour in the pool playing basketball, volleyball, and having kayaking races. Some even had fun ‘bellyflopping off the diving boards. Melissa Le Beau attended the Officials Advisory Meeting at the IHSA and learned a lot of valuable information she can relay to her student officials. The senior bulletin board is posted in the hallway and looks amazing. PLTs are wrapping up at the end of the year's units.

East Campus

The PE department has been also working on various interventions to help students stay on track for graduation. We have held various makeup opportunities throughout the month. Our interventions have been successful with participation, and we hope to help as many students as possible reach the finish line this semester. This month we also had teachers work on curriculum work to better prepare for next year. We have had teachers work on a new curriculum for our new dance course. We have also had teachers work on tweeting curriculum for our Athletic PE.

Below are the JMR Fitness champions from Thursday, April 16th at Morton East:



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





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

College Ready

In April, students across campuses engaged in activities that supported career exploration, goal setting, and future planning. At Morton East, WBL internship candidates met with the WBL Coordinator to discuss job placement opportunities for the 2026–27 school year. At Morton West, students participated in post-secondary workshops, senior survey meetings, monthly goal-setting workshops, and junior end-of-year presentations. At FC/MAS, students participated in mock interview preparation prior to attending mock interviews at Morton East, providing them with an opportunity to practice interview skills and build confidence in career-readiness experiences.



FC Counseling team and Principal Mr. Ramirez place laminated college signs throughout the school.



Students at West engaged in a College Prep Workshop



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



West Counselors run a Schoolinks lunch and learn!

Career Ready

Districtwide, College Week 2026 took place March 9–13 and culminated with the Spring College Fair on March 13. Throughout the week, students engaged in activities that promoted college awareness and exploration. Juniors also had the opportunity to participate in One Click College Admit Workshops on March 20 and March 27. A Morton East alum and Posse Scholar hosted an informational meeting for interested sophomores and juniors, and seniors were reminded of the Morton East Local Scholarship deadline, with application details available in the local scholarship bulletin.

Students continued to engage in college and post-secondary planning opportunities across the district. Morton East hosted One Click College Admit Workshops for the Class of 2027, a State of Illinois initiative that provides students with a free and direct admissions pathway into participating state universities, public universities, and community colleges. Morton East also held Financial Aid Award Letter Review Workshops, where students received support reviewing their financial aid award letters to better understand college costs. Morton College representatives also supported students through the enrollment process during Morton College Support Day.

At Morton West, students participated in college visits with Saint Xavier University, Blackburn College, Roosevelt University, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Eastern Illinois University. West also hosted Morton College Visit Days, monthly college workshops, a college workshop celebratory lunch, and financial aid award letter meetings for seniors. At FC/MAS, students received individualized support related to graduation planning and transition planning, including support for students with the potential to return to their home campus for the fall semester. Freshman Center students also participated in college and post-secondary field trips throughout the school year, with all houses completing a college or post-secondary visit.



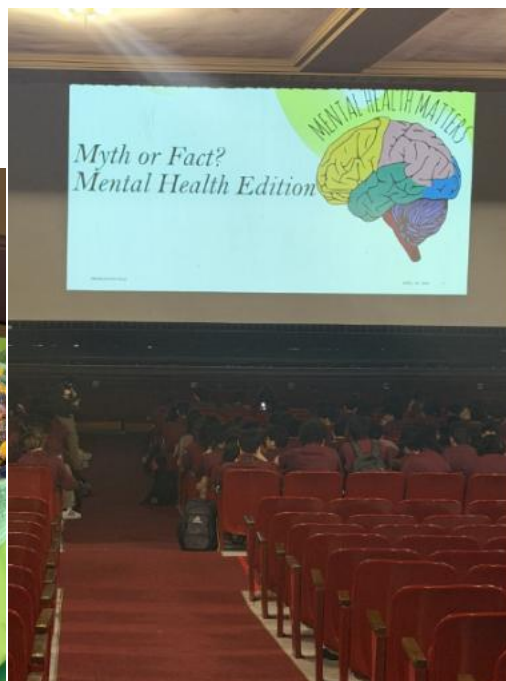
Blue 2 students learning how to imagine a movie scene while listening to classical music with Mr. Montgomery at Morton College.

Life Ready

Districtwide, students in grades 9–12 completed the Spring benchmark administration of the Life-Readiness Student Survey. Following the survey, staff reviewed Fall to Spring benchmark data, identified students flagged as critical during the Spring administration, and connected with appropriate teams to ensure students were discussed and supported.

Students and families participated in a variety of activities focused on wellness, mental health, and student support. Morton East held a Mental Health Fair with eight community organizations in attendance.

Organizations shared resources to support students and families, including programming and supports available throughout the summer months. Students identified through Panorama as possibly needing additional support were provided follow-up support and connected with summer support options.






At Morton West, families participated in parent presentations focused on supporting student mental health and engaging in hands-on learning experiences. Staff also conducted Panorama follow-ups and developed student response/intervention plans based on identified needs. Additional work included staff PREPaRE training and certification, continued planning for Mental Health Awareness events, and ongoing BARR and MTSS meetings to strengthen student support systems.

School Based Mental Health Programming

9 th Grade	10 th Grade	11 th grade	All grades	
Erika's Lighthouse Presentation Educate students about anxiety, depression, reduce stigma around mental health, and how to access support.	SOS Signs of Suicide Presentation + Screening for signs of depression Educate students on how to identify signs of depression and suicide in themselves and their peers, and how to access support.	NAMI Mindfulness Presentation Empower individuals with practical tools for managing stress, improving focus, and fostering emotional well-being.	Angela Rose Presentation School-wide presentation on raising awareness on interpersonal relationships and safety. Panorma Life Readiness Survey School Wide Social Emotional Survey	HOPE Squad A group of students nominated by their peers to become trained advocates of mental health in their school building.

Worry and Anxiety



Fight Flight Freeze Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpolpKTWrp4&t=16>

Worry is your brain's response to realistic/specific concerns. These thoughts are usually temporary and can be resolved with problem solving.

Anxiety is your body's response to stress. It is a feeling of fear or worry about what is to come in the future; often irrational. It includes tension, worried thoughts and physical changes.

Common symptoms: feeling restless, wound-up, or on edge; having trouble concentrating and controlling your worried feelings; physical changes such as muscle tension, nausea, sweating, trembling, and difficulty sleeping.

The Student Support Team at Morton West planned and implemented mental health programming to support students' life-readiness skills.

At FC/MAS, staff participated in professional learning focused on supporting a strong end to the semester and addressing challenging end-of-year classroom behaviors. Students participated in the Signs of Suicide screening, and students identified as high priority were connected with appropriate school-based or community-based supports and resources. Following the Life-Readiness Student Survey through Panorama, staff developed resources to support students through school-based and community-based supports. MAS students participated in healthy relationship workshops, and additional student wellness opportunities are being explored.



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



Lucy Brannigan and Liliana Cabrera presenting on student impulsivity and strategies at one of 4 SST lunch and Learns.



West Peer Mediators celebrate their hard work and dedication.



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

Curriculum Review and Updates

Counselor PLTs engaged in cross-campus collaboration during Curriculum Day. Teams updated the PaCE Framework to identify non-negotiable experiences that all students across campuses will engage in. The updated PaCE Framework is now available on the district webpage. Counselor teams also aligned the PaCE Framework to SchoolLinks and developed supporting scope and sequence materials. The team has created a shared materials hub to support the development of similar experiences across the district.

