



DATE: March 2026

TITLE: Academics and Administrative Services

TYPE: Information

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

BACKGROUND:

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

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

Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment

- **Principal Professional Development:** Principals have been engaged in School Improvement Plan (SIP) work by closely examining each strategic priority. This process has included reflecting on the past year's progress, identifying areas of strength and need, and beginning to make decisions about upcoming learning priorities, implementation steps, and standard work. As part of this planning, principals are also determining which practices or initiatives should be phased out and how staff development time will be strategically allocated to support the most impactful work moving forward.
- **Leadership Professional Development:** The District Leadership Team continues to meet regularly to collaboratively monitor progress on key elements of each school's/department's improvement plan. Through shared data analysis, reflection, and cross-department coordination, the team is ensuring alignment and momentum toward our strategic priorities. These conversations are not only strengthening current implementation efforts but also informing thoughtful planning for the next iteration of improvement work. This proactive approach positions the district to begin the next school year with clarity, coherence, and a strong foundation for continued growth.
- **Teacher Mentorship:**
 - Year 1 teachers recently participated in a learning session focused on continuing contract expectations, the processes for earning and tracking CEUs, and the steps required for license renewal. These conversations also provided an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their progress and identify areas for continued growth.
 - Year 2 teachers are continuing their professional learning work centered on differentiation practices. This includes exploring strategies to better meet the diverse learning needs present in their classrooms. Across all cohorts, teachers continue to engage in strengths-based reflection, examining how their individual strengths show up in their professional practice and developing skills to identify and elevate strengths in colleagues and students.
- **Human Resources Dept. Audit Implementation:** The Human Resources Department is committed to supporting staff members as they transition out of the district due to retirement or other career opportunities. Each departing employee is provided with an exit survey to gather valuable feedback about their experiences within the system. This input helps identify strengths to celebrate and areas for growth, ensuring continuous

improvement in how we support and retain staff. The information gathered will guide future district planning and development efforts.

Packer Profile for all learners

- **Grow Your Own:**
 - The GYO Teacher Club has been actively engaged in a variety of learning experiences and leadership opportunities. Students have participated in regular club meetings, heard from guest speakers, and recently shared highlights of their work at the Packer Profile event. Members also attended the AI/STEM professional development event hosted by the Southeast Service Cooperative.
 - Program coordinator Colleen Owens is currently collaborating with Sumner Elementary on a pilot project that pairs GYO students with classrooms to support lunch and recess activities, providing early hands-on experience in school settings.
 - Looking ahead, several college exploration trips are being planned, including visits to Augsburg University, Concordia University–St. Paul, the University of Minnesota, Winona State University, and Saint Mary’s University.
 - The Future Teacher Scholarship has officially launched, with applications due March 31. Students who apply, qualify, and are selected may receive full coverage of tuition, room and board, and books. We anticipate awarding up to four scholarships in May.
- **Packer Profile Implementation:** The Packer Profile alignment work continues. Please reference our website as additions, edits and new content are continually being added. <https://www.austin.k12.mn.us/district-offices/teaching-and-learning/packer-profile>

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

- **MTSS Implementation:** Katie/Andrea/Sheila – A grades 5–12 team has been collaborating to strengthen alignment between BARR and MTSS practices. Their work focuses on clarifying how the two frameworks complement one another while maintaining distinct purposes. This intentional alignment will help us better identify system strengths and pinpoint areas for refinement, ultimately enhancing the support we provide to both students and staff throughout the MTSS process.
- **EL Program Review:** Our K–12 EL team met on the last professional development day and spent time walking through a protocol for unpacking the new WIDA Language Development Standards Framework language charts. This collaborative work strengthened vertical alignment across grade levels and built shared understanding of how to apply the updated standards to daily instruction and student language goals.
- **Math Program Review:**
 - A Math Best Practice Grant proposal was presented to the Staff Development Committee to support a team of K–12 educators attending the Math Conference in Duluth, Minnesota this April. The conference theme, Math Standards, will provide aligned professional learning to strengthen instructional practices and ensure consistent implementation across grade levels.
 - High school math teachers have begun the process of unpacking the new math standards. Their work includes identifying changes within the standards, determining what students need to know and be able to do, clarifying how students will demonstrate their understanding, and examining how learning can be connected to real-world applications.
 - Middle level teams will begin this same process following MCA testing. This initial review of the standards will help identify any gaps and support vertical alignment, ultimately informing the upcoming curriculum adoption process.
- **GT Program Review:**
 - Thank you to our Advanced Academic teachers and the elementary staff who supported the administration of the CogAT assessment in grades 2 and 4. The testing administration was highly successful. The data collected will be used in multiple ways, including identification for advanced programming and as part of MTSS conversations, as the reports provide valuable insights into how to support student learning.

- In addition, several Advanced Academic and Pi teachers attended the State Gifted and Talented Conference in St. Cloud. This professional development opportunity offered updated guidance on best practices in gifted education and further strengthened our capacity to meet the needs of advanced learners. We are fortunate to have strong programming in Austin, and we continue our work on program alignment to ensure consistency and excellence across grade levels.

Excellence in Resource Management

- Teaching and Learning:
 - We continue to make strong progress in our review and purchase of Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and Career & Technical Education (CTE) curriculum.
 - At IJ Holton, the PLTW team has decided to sunset the Green Architecture course and replace it with *Magic of Electronics*. This shift is especially exciting because the new course aligns closely with other PLTW coursework, allowing for greater coherence across the program. Staff are currently reviewing course needs and identifying any updates required for the other PLTW offerings. PLTW courses continue to be a highlight for many IJ Holton students.
 - At the middle school and high school levels, teachers are reviewing curriculum options across their CTE pathways. Some courses are exploring updated curriculum and textbook resources, while others are focusing on equipment upgrades and alignment with current industry standards to strengthen workforce-readiness.