

District 23 Working Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 21, 2021 4:30 PM

Grodsky Administration Building, 700 N Schoenbeck Rd, Prospect Heights, IL
60070

I. Call to Order

II. Working Items

A. Principal Appreciation Day

B. Halloween Celebrations

C. Teacher Institute Day

D. American Education Week

E. Community Connections Newsletter

F. Community Survey Development

G. IKE - Family Fitness Game Night

H. BPAC Winter Party

I. District Staff Meeting - Dec. 13

J. Polish Bilingual Family Night - Dec. 14

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

V. Adjournment

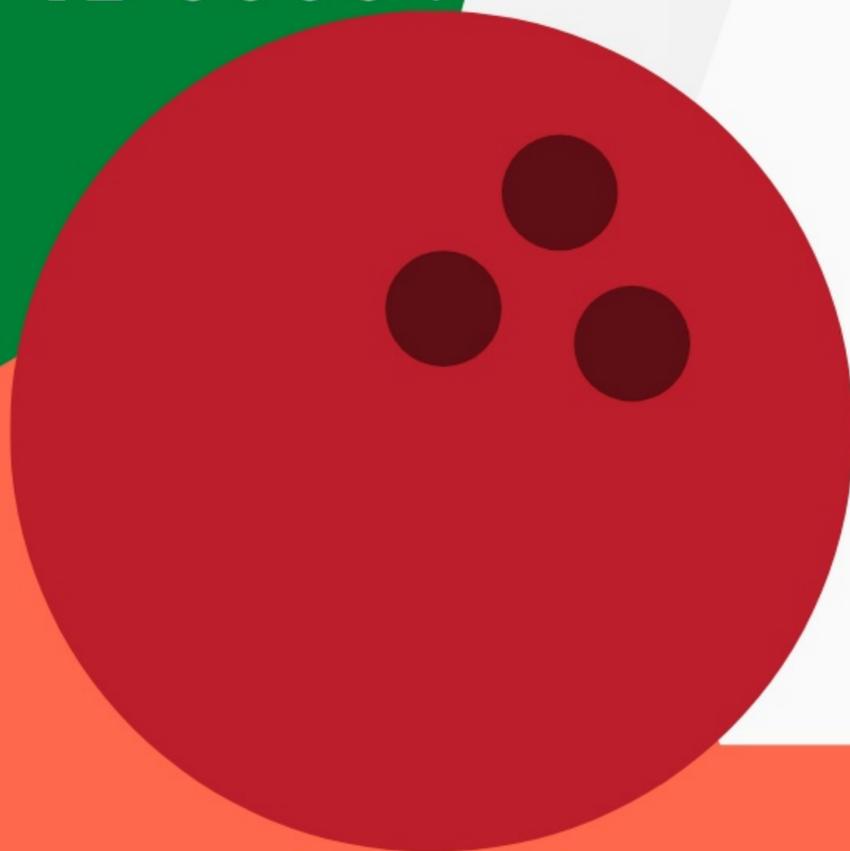
Knock'em Down!



Nov. 1
3:30-5:30

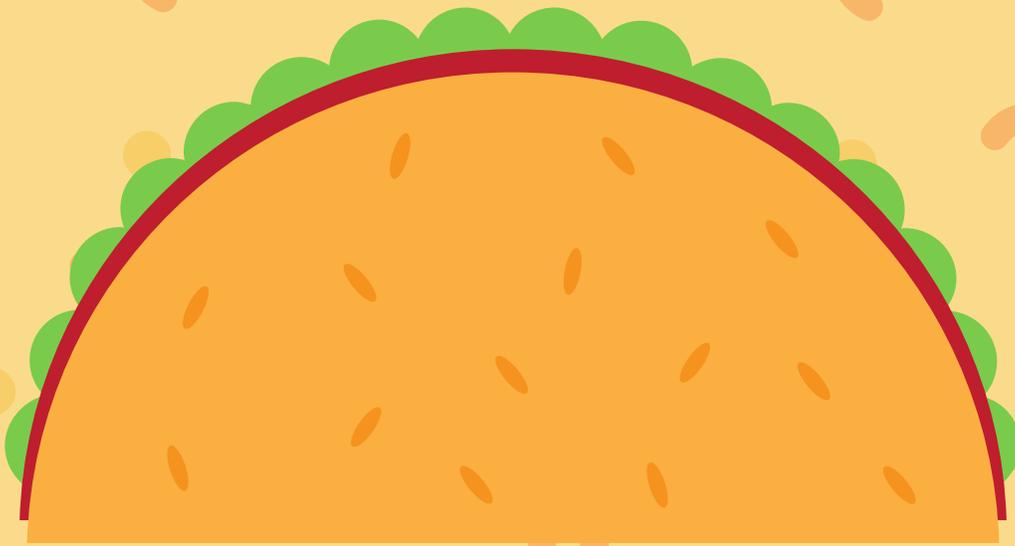
JOIN US FOR A
LITTLE BOWLING
FUN & PIZZA

@ ARLINGTON LANES
3435 N KENNICOTT
AVE, ARLINGTON
HEIGHTS, IL 60004



RSVP HERE

**LET'S
TACO
'BOUT HOW
AWESOME YOU
ARE!**



**YOU ARE INVITED TO A TACO LUNCH
PROVIDED BY D23 ADMINISTRATION AND
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION IN RECOGNITION
OF
AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK
NOVEMBER 2 - EISENHOWER
NOVEMBER 3 - ROSS, SULLIVAN, & GRODSKY
NOVEMBER 4 - MACARTHUR**

ROSS GARDEN AND GREEN THUMB CLUB BRING SCIENCE LESSONS TO LIFE

Young minds are not the only things growing and blossoming at Betsy Ross School. There's also a bountiful crop of fruits and vegetables tucked in a courtyard near the playground, thanks to the hard work of the Bulldog Green Thumb Club.

Second- and third-grade classes that are part of the club grow seedlings in their classrooms in late spring, then plant them in the Ross Garden just before school lets out for the summer. Harvesting takes place in the fall.

"Our goal is for kids to be involved in all the stages of growth, and even taste some of what we produce," says third-grade teacher Angie Levato, who leads the club and organizes the activities, along with second-grade teacher Stella Geller. They invite other teachers to get their students involved. There are usually up to 12 different classrooms helping with the garden and taking part in other Green Thumb Club activities.

"This club is not only an exciting opportunity for students, but it reinforces our science curriculum for second and third graders, which includes topics like the study of the plant life cycle, traits of plants, seeds and roots," says principal Craig Curtis. "They are able to see the processes they study coming to life right in their own garden."

Levato says the Ross Garden has produced tomatoes, peppers, carrots, cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, potatoes, asparagus, herbs – even some flowers. A highlight is when students do "taste tests" in their classrooms after the harvest. Sometimes they even get to bring vegetables home to try with their families.

Curtis says the Ross Garden adds "a touch of community and family engagement" to the school. "Not only does it bring classrooms together toward a common initiative, but it also brings families into the picture. Each summer, families can volunteer to take care of the garden for a week-long span. What a great way to build community while also showing one of the school's core character traits of responsibility."

SULLIVAN CHALLENGE BUILDS LIFELONG READERS

Anne Sullivan School has found a fun and creative way to expand students' reading horizons and get them to explore new and different genres – the 40-Book Challenge. The program is part of the school's effort to enhance literacy during the crucial fourth- and fifth-grade years, when it's so important to foster a love for reading that can last a lifetime.

All students are challenged to read 40 books throughout the year. Their selections must span a variety of color-coded genres, such as historical fiction or mysteries. When they finish each book, they either submit a recorded book talk or take an online comprehension assessment. At the end of the year, Sullivan holds a celebration for everyone who has made it to 40 books.

Teachers publicly celebrate when their students reach the milestones of 10, 20, 30 and 40 books. They also get recognized during weekly schoolwide announcements by principal Traci Meziere. “They love the recognition. And it really spurs the interest,” says fifth-grade teacher Laurie Travis. “They start fifth grade knowing about the program and excited to begin reading. We’re only a couple months into the year, and many kids have already read 15 or 20 books. They are eating it up.”

“This is one of many ways we strive to build a culture of readers at our school,” Meziere says, pointing to 20 Book Bingo for fourth graders as another example. The bingo squares include things like “a book that teaches me something new,” and students have all year to read and fill their boards as they go.

Meziere says the school also enjoys a strong partnership with the Prospect Heights Public Library, with librarians regularly presenting to staff and students. Fifth graders recently took a walking field trip to the library and toured the newly renovated space.

This fall, Sullivan’s own library/media specialist Betsy Yager set up a “book tasting” for staff. They explored “menus” that featured several genres, then sampled a variety of books and reserved the ones they were interested in for their classrooms.

“Our students are at an age where teachers have a big influence on them. So the adults in the building really model a love of reading,” Meziere says. “Our goal at this grade level is to keep and grow their interest, exposing them to a lot of variety, so they become lifelong readers.”

‘WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER’ – SEL CURRICULUM TEACHES SKILLS FOR LIFE

During the formative years of elementary and middle school, students are developing behaviors and interpersonal skills they will draw upon throughout their lives – such as building positive relationships and managing their emotions and stress. That’s why District 23 has prioritized social-emotional learning (SEL) and is launching a new, innovative curriculum called Second Step this school year.

Second Step is a comprehensive SEL program that starts with simple lessons in pre-k and builds on those learnings as students progress all the way through eighth grade. “We’re now using the same language across the District, in structured activities as well as learning that is woven throughout the day,” says Eisenhower School principal Luke Lambatos, who served on the curriculum selection committee, along with other administrators and teacher representatives from every grade.

He says the committee researched several options and chose Second Step because “it is steeped in research and is a well-crafted program that schools can build on year to year.” The curriculum includes units such as developing a growth mindset and goal setting, emotion

management, empathy and kindness, and problem solving. There's also a bullying-prevention program.

For the District's youngest students at Eisenhower, many of the Second Step lessons are covered during daily "morning meetings" (pictured above), when teachers discuss behavior expectations and check in with how children are feeling that day. Lambatos says he's already seeing great results in pre-k and first grade, including richer classroom discussions and staff members using new tools to help support students and teach important skills.

Lambatos says having a strong SEL curriculum supports academics and is especially important as children are dealing with the mental health impact of the pandemic. "We want to have a positive learning environment where everyone feels safe and secure, ready to learn and able to process the outside stressors in our world," he says, adding that SEL enhances the school community and emphasizes that "we're all in this together, whether it's a pandemic or any other challenge."

MIDDLE SCHOOLERS EMBRACE RETURN OF CLUBS, MUSIC AND SPORTS

Middle school presents an opportunity for students to explore their interests and passions – or find them – through extracurricular activities. That's why MacArthur has always provided a wide range of options that appeal to its large and diverse student body. This fall, with everyone back in the building, the school has been pleased to bring these opportunities back, and students are embracing the chance to get involved.

MacArthur offered some extracurriculars last year, including shortened basketball and volleyball seasons and virtual clubs. But this year the school has returned to a full menu of activities, including basketball intramurals and cross country; band, orchestra and chorus; a robotics team; and clubs devoted to yearbook, newspaper, art and innovation, to name a few.

The response? "More than ever, kids want to be part of something," according to principal Camron Nystrom, Ed.D. "The limitations of last year have contributed to the huge interest we're now seeing."

MacArthur tries to capture many interests – including sports, writing, STEM, the arts and fitness – and design opportunities that complement the work done during the school day. It's part of serving "the whole child," which is important when students are trying to figure out who they are, who they want to be. "They need more than class time to do that," Nystrom says, adding that extracurricular involvement also helps students connect with each other, as well as with adults they can trust. Another benefit is many students discover interests in middle school that they carry with them into high school and college, even careers.

A FEW WORDS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT 359

The 2021-2022 school year is off to a great start! All of us in the District 23 community are thrilled to be back in the schools full time. There are exciting things going on in all four buildings, as you'll read in this newsletter – the fall 2021 edition of the District 23 Community Connection. Whether you have children in our schools or not, I hope you'll take a few minutes to review it, so you can get up to date on our curriculum, finances, accomplishments and the work that goes on at MacArthur, Anne Sullivan, Betsy Ross and Eisenhower Schools every day.

I am proud of our staff, students and families for persevering through the uncertainty and changes last year. We made the most of things, and students continued to learn and make great progress. This year is much different. We're back with a "new normal," thanks to mitigations that are keeping us safe and in school. (Read more on Page 5.)

I've enjoyed being able to spend more time with students and staff in the schools this fall. There's nothing better than seeing their enthusiasm firsthand. This includes attending MacArthur cross country meets (pictured on this page), serving as a guest reader, participating in book talks, taking part in staff professional development, meeting families at Parent Nights – even being a substitute teacher in a middle school English Language Arts class. (Don't worry, I promised the kids I'll keep my day job!)

I'm also glad that my administrative team and I have been able to get back to the traditional work of running the District, which includes ensuring that we are acting on our strategic plan and vision for the future. This summer, we completed necessary roofing and HVAC work at the schools. We are now planning the next enhancements to our facilities and programs, including the potential expansion of Early Childhood and kindergarten programs. We are also determining how we will spend our federal ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) money to upgrade outdoor learning spaces, audio visual technology and libraries.

I hope you enjoy our fall newsletter. The stories here are just a few of the many reasons we are **PROUD TO BE D23!**

Don Angelaccio, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools, Prospect Heights School District 23

Pullout Quote:

"I am proud of our staff, students and families for persevering through the uncertainty and changes last year."

ELA IS UNDERWAY: A LOOK INTO THE CURRICULUM REVISION PROCESS

District 23's English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum Committee is working to implement new instructional materials that better prepare students as they journey throughout elementary and middle school, as well as high school and beyond. The goal is to refine instructional practices and improve student achievement in areas such as reading, writing and foundational skills like phonics, grammar, handwriting and more, according to Amy Zaher, Ed.D., assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction

The Curriculum Committee has been working its way through an extensive adoption process for the past two years, including researching new [or should this say current] state standards to understand how they have shifted, and finding curriculum options that most effectively meet the standards and student needs. The committee is continuing to look at a variety of options and piloting some lessons to get feedback from students. The goal is to select a new curriculum by this spring, so that professional development and teachers' guides can be delivered before summer break. The curriculum would be rolled out at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.

The curriculum adoption process consists of ensuring that all grade and ability levels are represented as new materials are researched and tested, according to Zaher. She says the current ELA Standards include the following requirements:

1. **Complexity:** Practice regularly with complex text and its academic language.
2. **Evidence:** Ground reading, writing and speaking in evidence from the text, both literary and informational.
3. **Knowledge:** Build knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

Using these requirements as a guide, the Curriculum Committee is evaluating materials using criteria such as the promotion of cultural diversity, the use technology when appropriate and the incorporation of tools for differentiating instruction.

"We still have a lot of work to accomplish this school year, but it is work worth doing," Zaher says. "The data we are collecting will help us make informed decisions and ensure our new ELA materials help students meet expectations and prepare them for the future."

ACKNOWLEDGE. ADJUST. ADVANCE.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLUEPRINT GUIDES SUCCESSFUL RETURN TO THE BUILDINGS

All four District 23 schools returned to a full in-person model of instruction for the 2021-2022 school year, with COVID-19 mitigation strategies in place to maintain safe and healthy learning environments. Superintendent Don Angelaccio, Ed.D., says the strategies are working, and there has been a smooth transition to the “new normal” in the school buildings.

“Our COVID cases have been very low, less than 2 percent of our population. This is the result of a collaborative effort, with everyone doing their part and living up to their responsibility,” he says.

Camron Nystrom, Ed.D., principal of MacArthur Middle School, agrees that staff, students and parents/guardians have been adaptable and supportive of adjustments to the school day and extracurricular activities. “There’s an energy of doing whatever it takes so we can continue to safely come together as a school community.”

The COVID-19 mitigation strategies are outlined in the District’s [Back-to-School Blueprint](#), which has a theme of “Adapt. Acknowledge. Advance.” The mitigations include masking on buses and while inside the schools, other than during lunch and outdoor recess. The schools are also maintaining three to six feet of distance, per Illinois Department of Public Health and Centers for Disease Control guidance, except for instances such as passing periods. And the District is prioritizing regular cleaning and disinfection in the schools.

In addition, District 23 has launched optional weekly COVID-19 screening for students and staff, utilizing the non-invasive SHIELD Illinois saliva-based test. The highly effective test identifies pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic staff and students. District 23 schools are among the more than 1,200 in Illinois that are utilizing SHIELD Illinois. “We believe this will reduce the spread in our schools and help us sustain in-person learning,” Angelaccio says, adding that the testing takes only a couple minutes and causes minimal disruption to the school day.

Now that students are back, District administrators see some unexpected benefits that have occurred since March 2020, such as improved technological capabilities. For example, the schools have achieved an effective balance between digital and in-person instruction, and streaming technology is being applied more frequently to communicate with and reach broader audiences (for example, School Board meetings and Parent Nights).

Angelaccio says he’s also pleased to see the resilience of the District 23 community. “These are still changing and uncertain times, but it’s gratifying to know we can rally together to support our students’ academic and social growth and keep our community safe,” he says. “I am confident we will continue to meet whatever challenges come our way.”