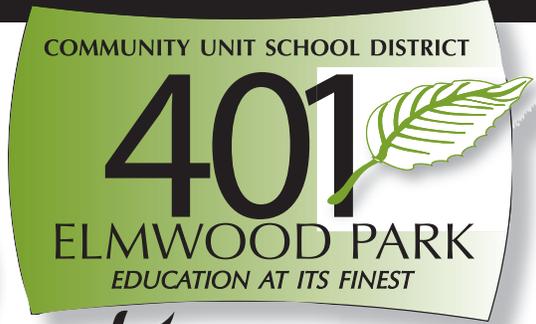


# FOCUS



## on Education

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### Community Outreach Expands



*Dr. Nicolas Wade, superintendent (L), and members of the district's administrative cabinet met with community residents at the start of the school year.*

The 2017-18 school year was barely a day old, but District 401's new superintendent of schools, Dr. Nicolas Wade, was already reaching out to residents to listen to their comments and concerns.

On August 17, over coffee and donuts in the morning and pizza and soda in the evening, Dr. Wade and his administrative cabinet met informally with parents and other community members at Elmwood Park High School.

"With so many changes occurring within the district, I wanted to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to meet the new District Office cabinet members and engage in conversations about where the district is currently, and where it is headed," Dr. Wade explained. "At the minimum, I wanted to provide another avenue for community dialogue."

Three new administrators joined Dr. Wade at the informal meetings: Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations James Jennings, Director for Curriculum and Instruction Leah Gauthier and Director for Student Services Kari Smith.

#### Positive Response from Stakeholders

Topics included the district's ambitious Technology Initiative, which is incorporating Google instructional technology throughout the curriculum, while providing faculty and students with thorough training.

By investing in training, the district empowers teachers and students to get the most out of their new learning environments, especially at EPHS and Elm Middle School,

where the student-to-device ratio will eventually be 1:1. (One computer per student.)

"It was nice to hear how supportive the community is of our technology direction and of our plans for new curriculum programs and opportunities in the elementary schools," Dr. Wade said.

#### Increased Community Engagement

The district recently sponsored two Public Health and Safety Forums with the Elmwood Park Police Department. Each one focused on lockdown drills and procedures and cyberbullying and cyber safety. Two additional forums will be

presented during the winter, with topics to be determined.

"We are planning a Superintendent's Newsletter for the community and, in the spring, we will present a 'State of the District' event for everyone to attend," stated Dr. Wade. "It will be a complete overview for all stakeholders, and will include what is happening in education at the state and federal levels, the progress of current district initiatives, the district's financial status with future projections, and facilities planning. It will also provide attendees with an opportunity to ask me and my administrative cabinet any questions they may have."

### Ambitious District Technology Initiative Continues

**D**istrict 401 has a very ambitious District Technology Initiative: the 1:1 four-year technology plan that began during the 2016-2017 school year. Now in its second year, the goal of the initiative is that by the end of year four, every student in grades 7-12 will have a computer to use throughout the school day. Much planning and teacher training is needed to successfully incorporate new online learning tools, including Google's *G Suite for Education*, into the curriculum and into the classroom experience.

Additionally, upgrades are being made to the district's hardware and software. The district will be replacing most of the Windows devices at the elementary and middle school levels with *Chromebooks*. These laptops allow students to access their Google accounts directly and prepare

*Continues on page 2*

## Ambitious District Technology Initiative Continues

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for the deployment of a 1:1 environment. The district's wireless infrastructure is also being upgraded with current technology and equipment to handle the increased number of devices as the curriculum changes. Over the summer, the connection to the Internet was increased to two gigabytes.

Jessica Iovinelli, the district's instructional educational technology coordinator, shared these highlights from this year's Technology Plan Initiative:

### New Hire Training

Last year, our staff received over 24 hours of Google training in eight half-day sessions. This year, the district has 20 new hires including teachers of various content areas and grade levels and administrators. To get them up to speed on all of the training that our staff received last year, on August second and third, prior to the start of the school year, we held a two-day, nine-hour total crash course in all things Google-related. New staff members learned about *Google Drive*, and *Google's Docs, Forms, Sheets, Gmail, Calendar, and Classroom*, and had the opportunity to connect with other new educators in the district. Though many of the new staff members had prior experience with Google, they left the training with a plethora of new tips and tricks, as well as with a list of point people in their buildings who will provide them with continued support. The new staff members are now part of the 2017-18 training teams, and will receive additional training this year along with their fellow department members. Overall, this training was a great success.

### Google Circuit Training

The students at Elmwood Park High School and Elm Middle School are approaching the District Technology Initiative's 1:1 goal and will be spending much of this year using Google tools to enhance their learning. On August 16, the first day of school at EPHS, and on Monday, August 21 at Elm Middle School, the students received *Google Circuit Training* to help them learn the basics of Gmail, Calendar, Drive, Classroom and all of the *GSuite for Education* apps. The students rotated through multiple sessions that were taught by faculty members, and afterwards engaged in discussions about cyberbullying and the responsibilities of digital citizenship.

### Full-day Staff Training

Last year, staff members received eight half-day trainings on all of the *GSuite* apps and the other innovative Google features for educators. This year, training continued with two full-day sessions. The first training session focused on updates and changes to Google apps from those taught last year, as well as training in *Google Sites, Blogger* and *Google Plus*. The second training session encompassed *Google Maps, Drawings, Expeditions*, and other topics that were determined through staff feedback and need. In addition to the training, after-school professional development sessions were offered regarding integrating other forms of technology into

classrooms, and the SAMR Model for technology integration, which helps teachers infuse technology into teaching and learning.

### New Help Desk Tickets for the Community

When District 401 staff members have email questions or need to request an in-person visit from the Technology Department either for observation or lesson planning assistance, they use a "Help Desk Ticket." This year, community members can also use Help Desk Tickets to ask questions or leave comments for the district's Instructional Technology Department. To access the community Help Desk Tickets, visit <https://goo.gl/9kvHYh> on the district website.

### All Kinds of Kinds Project

As part of a goal to further students' Social Emotional/Learning strategies, Elmwood and John Mills Elementary Schools collaborated with the Instructional Technology Department on a project called *All Kinds of Kinds*. The All Kinds of Kinds' project supports the district's belief in the importance of Social/Emotional Learning and helps students celebrate diversity, respect people's differences, and promotes individual pride. It originated at North Park Junior High School in Lockport, New York, as a social studies teacher's school project that ultimately grew into a program implemented in schools across the country.

At our schools, the project began with students and teachers completing an activity in which they watched North Park Junior High's video and completed a lesson in class, then determined what "Kind of Kind" they are. Photographs were taken of each student and staff member holding up a sign with their "kind." The photos are displayed in a picture path around the schools, allowing staff, students, and visitors to see the diversity in our buildings, appreciate the uniqueness of others, find people who may be similar to their own "kind" and learn a little bit about each person in the school.

A video that grouped people of similar kinds together was made for each building, with Miranda Lambert's song "All Kinds of Kinds" as the background. The videos were shown at each school building during the first quarter assemblies.

To view the original All Kinds of Kinds video, visit YouTube and search "All Kinds of Kinds North Park Junior High."



Elm Middle School students are approaching the 1:1 goal and are using Google tools to enhance learning.

## Social/Emotional Learning

District 401 is in the development phases of a multi-year initiative related to providing a continuum of Social/Emotional Learning supports districtwide, from early childhood, through high school. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

The district's vision is to seamlessly integrate SEL into the academic environment by using a variety of research-based programs, along with staff development, to teach students the social/emotional skills they need to be successful learners. The ultimate goal is to have an interconnected, districtwide set of Social Emotional Standards with a common language, common behavioral expectations,

and a learned set of social/emotional skills that are being explicitly taught districtwide.

District 401 has adopted five core Social/Emotional Competencies, encompassing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These core competencies will lay the foundation for instruction on social/emotional skills at each grade level. Additionally, the district is working toward building a responsive multi-tiered system of supports to identify at-risk students and target interventions based upon the students' individual needs.

Last year, the district formed a Social Justice League Committee to support the social/emotional initiatives and to align the district's efforts to Illinois Senate Bill 100. This law, enacted in September 2016, states that schools should provide appropriate and available interventions and supports to students demonstrating social,

emotional or behavioral difficulties. The committee is comprised of a cross-section of district personnel, including district office administrators, school administrators, teachers, school social workers, speech therapists and other service staff members. Over the past year, the committee has worked to provide professional development opportunities for staff members on the importance of social/emotional learning, how trauma impacts learning, and on classroom management strategies.

With support from the Social Justice League Committee, District 401 dedicated its May 2017 Teacher Institute Day toward providing districtwide professional development on Social/Emotional Learning Practices. Highlights from that Institute Day, which received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the participants, with over 90% indicating the information helped to improve their professional practices, include:

*Continues on page 4*

## New Math and Reading Programs are Selected

After a great deal of collaborative research and input by teachers and administrators, District 401 educators recently selected a new math program and a new reading program for grades K through 5. The reading program will be *ReadyGen* by Pearson Publishing, and the math program *Go Math!* by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Until recently, educational publishers did not have materials that were fully aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards. These companies recently released updates to their curriculums that support the needs of twenty-first century learners.

The new, comprehensive curriculum is aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards, meets the needs of ALL learners, and provides the core foundation for all students. Importantly, the curriculum is also provided digitally to give students access to e-texts (online text "books"). Spanish materials for bilingual classes are also included.

Implementation of the new curriculum will begin in the fall of 2018. Teachers will undergo intensive training to learn the content of the new curriculum and best teaching practices.

The selection of materials was an intensive process:

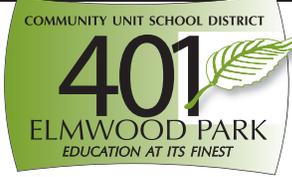
- The assistant superintendent reviewed multiple reading and math programs during the 2016-2017 school year.
- Representatives from two math programs and two reading programs presented their curriculum to teachers during a Teacher Institute Day.

- Teachers at the elementary schools reviewed samples of the four programs, then completed a survey to share feedback on each program.
- Teachers selected *ReadyGen* and *Go Math!* as their preferred curriculum. After further discussions with the superintendent and with the director for curriculum and instruction, and a second survey, *ReadyGen* and *Go Math!* were selected.

### Teacher Training

Professional development will begin in the spring of 2018. All teachers will have an overview of the materials and the curriculum. Further professional development will be offered for two additional days during the 2018-2019 school year to support teachers. Coaches will support teachers based on what they need to be successfully teach the standards within the program. The school principals will visit classrooms to follow up on full implementation of the program. Over a two-year period, teachers will have seven days of training in each of the two programs.

To learn more about the new K-5 math and reading curriculum, go to YouTube and search for *ReadyGen*, which will connect you to several videos about the program, and also visit the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt website at [www.hmhco.com](http://www.hmhco.com) and search for *Go Math!*



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# Social/Emotional Learning

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- Highly-regarded keynote speaker, Dr. Robert Spicer, who spoke on Restorative Justice Strategies. (The “Restorative Approach” is a philosophy or guiding principle that sees relationships as central to learning, growth, and to providing a healthy school climate for students and adults.)
  - Thirty different choices for professional development sessions throughout the day on a variety of social/emotional practices.
  - Eight presenters from a variety of professional social/emotional and mental health organizations.
  - Thirty-four District 401 staff members who made presentations, offering 14 different break-out sessions.
  - Five Students from the high school’s LGBTQ+ Spectrum Club who made presentations to staff members at a professional development session.
2. Establishing a cohort of staff members at each building to participate in a year-long Restorative Justice Professional Development to integrate Restorative Practices into their classrooms. Staff members will receive professional development under a “Train the Trainer” model, where they will learn, implement, and reflect on their own Restorative Justice practices to then take that experience and train their colleagues in the same implementation model.
  3. Creating a comprehensive *Multi-Tiered System of Supports* (MTSS) to include universal, Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions that are responsive to all students’ needs.

The District’s three SEL goals/initiatives this school year are:

1. Investigating and piloting various universal research-based social/emotional curricula to determine which best meet the district’s social/emotional needs at each grade level.

Kyleen Coia, EPHS dean of students, who also directs the Social Justice League Committee, stated:

“I am incredibly excited about the direction our district is heading to ensure curriculum and interventions are available to support students’ social/emotional well-being and emotional intelligence. The district is focused and dedicated to ensuring that social/emotional learning will be a component of students’ curriculum throughout the entire day. The ultimate goal is to further a positive learning environment for every student.”