



Superintendent Spotlight



6th Grade Elmwood students Julia Grzebyk and Rose Craig working on a science experiment

Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of the “Superintendent Spotlight!” This newsletter is to provide all stakeholders information from across the spectrum about what the District is currently accomplishing or setting out to achieve. It is also to provide an opportunity to explain any changes at the state and/or federal level that could potentially impact the District.

This newsletter is something intended to be distributed electronically, but will also be posted on the District’s website, in addition to having hard copies available in the main offices of our buildings.

The frequency of this newsletter will be a minimum of one (1) per semester and will be published as needed.

As you read, if you have any questions, comments, and/or concerns, I encourage you to contact me at waden@epcusd401.org or 708-583-5831. Thank you, and please enjoy the first issue.



Upcoming Events

STEMscopes Event
February 6 at Elm
5:30-7:00 p.m

Tech Checks
February 8 at Elm
3:30–6:30 p.m.
February 14 at John Mills
3:30–6:30 p.m.
February 15 at Elmwood
3:30–6:30 p.m.

Next Board Meeting
February 21 at EPHS
7:00 p.m.

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Agreement with the Elmwood Park Educational Team (EPET)



State of the District

“The State of the District” will be held on Thursday, April 19 at 6:30 PM in the Auditorium at Elmwood Park High School. This is open to any and all who wish to attend. This event is intended to provide all stakeholders an in-depth look at the District’s vision, performance, finances, and long-range plan.

At the December 20 Regular Board Meeting, the Board of Education approved the new three-year teacher contract. What follows is a review of some of the items that are part of the new agreement.

There is now a statement entered into the preamble about safety being a concern for all stakeholders and that the District would continue to take an interest in preventative safety measures and training. The District has provided [MENTA](#) training to a large group of staff members and will be expanding similar trainings focused on de-escalation and intervention in 2018-19. Also, with the District reviewing and amending its 10 year Life Safety Plan, considerations regarding safety measures are actively part of the conversation and selection process (i.e. egress windows, bullet resistant glass, etc.).

There is a cap of 15 sick days for teachers hired for the 2018-19 school year and beyond. This does not affect current teachers. With the inclusion of additional tiers for retirement in the [Teachers Retirement System \(TRS\)](#), the value of sick days, meaning days that can be attributed to years of service, is changing due to some tiers not having an early retirement option.

The teacher work year has been decreased by one (1) day, a Work Day specifically. This does not affect the students’ calendar since Work Days are non-attendance days. Also, half of the remaining Work Day is now designated for professional development opportunities. This brings the total work days for teachers to 181.

Teachers will be receiving a flat dollar amount increase for each year of the new contract. For the 2017-18 school year, each teacher will receive an increase of \$1,800. In 2018-19, it will be an increase of \$2,485 and in 2019-20 an increase of \$2,850. All increases are to the teacher’s previous year’s gross salary.

The teacher retirement incentive has changed. To be eligible for this incentive, a teacher must put in when s/he becomes eligible to retire for the non-discounted pension, as stated in TRS, or has 35 years of service. The teacher will have a choice

between four (4) years at six (6) percent or four (4) years at five (5) percent with \$3,000 annually to the [Teachers’ Retirement Insurance Program \(TRIP\)](#).

There is also the creation of three (3) committees that will focus on professional development, teacher evaluations, and the changes in working conditions.

The one on professional development was originally part of the Calendar Committee, but is now separated to allow for more staff input. This committee does not plan the actual professional development, but will be part of an active conversation of additional opportunities that can be provided to staff and ways to structure them.

The teacher evaluation committee is designed to provide an avenue for a teacher to bring his or her concerns of their evaluation to a joint committee comprised of teachers and administrators. The decision of the committee has to be unanimous and a recommendation, if applicable, is made to the Superintendent about how best to address the respective teacher’s concerns.

There has been a change in the working conditions, meaning a possible change to the bell schedule for the middle and high schools. This allows the Board the ability to now make changes to the schedule when they were originally prohibitive. The parameters for the teacher’s schedule include not teaching any more than five (5) periods, not having any more than three (3) preps, and plan time not being less than 80 minutes.

There will be a committee with teachers beginning in April 2018 and leading to a recommendation to the Board of Education in December 2018. The earliest a schedule change could occur would be for the 2019-20 school year.

There will also be a committee with parents and students to be announced at a later time.

You can find the new teacher contract [here](#).



New Curriculum Opportunities Throughout the District

With the District pursuing e-texts, it has provided an opportunity for the District to not only receive updated materials that are aligned with the state's standards, but to also be articulated K-12. Putting Chicago Public Schools aside, Elmwood Park is the only unit district in Cook County and the District is fortunate to have the opportunity to have elementary and secondary schools be able to coordinate with one another.

For Grades K-5, the District has adopted [ReadyGEN](#), a literacy program focusing on students' ability to further their critical thinking skills through reading, writing, and speaking and listening, and [GO Math!](#), a mathematics curriculum that offers a wide-variety of differentiated lessons and tools for students and teachers. Both ReadyGEN and GO Math! will be implemented in 2018-19.

For Grades 6-12, they will be expanding upon the ReadyGEN curriculum with [myPerspectives](#) and the GO Math! curriculum with [Connected Mathematics 3](#) (for Grades 6-8) and [enVisionMath](#) (for Grades 9-12). myPerspectives will be implemented for Grades 6 and 9-12 in 2018-19 and Grades 7-8 in 2019-20, Connected Mathematics 3 for Grade 6 in 2018-19 and Grades 7-8 in 2019-20, and enVisionMath for Grades 9-12 in 2018-19.

The new curricula offer a number of interventions, diagnostic tools, differentiated lessons and opportunities for students, enrichment lessons for the elementary, and standards-based assessments.

The Social Studies and Science Departments at the high school have identified updated versions of currently employed texts and the Spanish courses will be using the blended learning opportunity brought about by [Avancemos!](#) These will all be implemented in 2018-19.

Grades K-8 are aligned in Science due to the adoption of the [STEMscopes](#) curriculum last year. Social Studies for Grades K-8 is currently being looked into, but there are few textbooks or programs aligned with the [College, Career and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework](#).

At the District's "Into the Cloud," there will be booths available to see the curriculum programs in action.

Social Justice League and Restorative Justice

Last year, the District started looking into incorporating a social-emotional learning curriculum into all of the buildings. Such a curriculum is designed to provide students the skills needed to understand and handle emotions, establish personal goals, and create and maintain positive relationships with peers and adults.

This led to the creation of the Social Justice League, which is a committee comprised of teachers, social workers, and administration. The League is working on providing teachers and administrators with the tools necessary to assist students in difficult situations, manage the classroom, and develop appropriate and effective response systems.

The District has been working with [UMOJA](#) to plan and design our district-wide Restorative Justice trainings. These trainings will begin in January and connect to our District's vision for social-emotional learning. A cohort of five (5) staff members per building will participate in the Restorative Justice trainings and they will assist and/or lead Restorative Justice trainings during the 2018-2019 school year throughout the District.

The District's New 10 Year Life Safety Plan

To prioritize buildings and grounds projects, the District set out to conduct a number of audits to determine which projects should be primarily considered and in what order. For example, while it would be aesthetically pleasing to redo a number of elementary classrooms, the work and costs to do so would be moot if those areas had to be torn up to replace the plumbing or repair heating and ventilation.

The District has used IN-SPEC and CS2 to perform evaluations on the need to repair or replace anything related to plumbing, electrical, mechanical, and masonry. The results of the evaluations put a significant focus on the need for tuck pointing and window replacement at the elementary buildings. This project will begin this summer at both elementary buildings and will conclude next summer. The plan is to have all of the work happen when the students are on Summer Vacation and halt when they return for school.

The rest of the evaluations' findings are being worked on by DLA Architects to prioritize what needs to be repaired, identify the areas impacted by the scope of work, and to develop a plan to remodel the impacted areas and others that are targeted for work. The overall 10 Year Life Safety Plan will be updated this calendar year.

Co-Teaching Professional Development for Staff

Many of our District classes at all grade levels are co-taught, meaning there is a General Education teacher and specialist (e.g., EL or Special Education teacher) teaching within the same classroom. This strategy offers additional support to all students within their classrooms.

To support the District's implementation of co-teaching, the District is offering co-teaching trainings for elementary school general and special education teachers. The first training was held in December, and the remaining trainings are scheduled for the Spring semester.

This training is being provided to support teachers in understanding co-teaching models and differentiated

instruction so they can effectively execute them for improved student achievement. Co-teaching trainings and coaching will be offered during the 2018-2019 school year for middle school, high school, and EL staff.

In addition to these trainings, teachers will be coached by [Dr. Patrick Schwarz](#), a leader in the field of inclusion and co-teaching.

There will be follow-up opportunities with Dr. Schwarz and additional professional development events for all staff members beginning in the second half of next school year and continuing into 2019-20.

The Accelerated Placement Act

This August, the state adopted the [Accelerated Placement Act](#) that is expected to go into effect on July 1, 2018. This law establishes the expectation that all districts have a process in place utilizing multiple measures (i.e. multiple pieces of evidence or sources of data) to identify and recommend an accelerated opportunity for students. This accelerated opportunity includes a student being participatory in enrichment, honors, Advanced Placement, dual credit, grade level promotion, and/or next grade level coursework.

Standards-Based Report Card Committee

Last year, the District pursued a plan to become a standards-based grading institution. The purpose of the standards-based report card is to accurately communicate with parents, students and staff a measure of a student's academic and behavior progress and to guide improvements when needed.

The Standards Based Reporting Committee has met monthly since the beginning of the school year. The committee developed a purpose and discussed a timeline for a successful standards based report card rollout. As the District enters the second semester, they will be focusing on the foundational standards that will be on the report card, and committee members will look at all core content areas, as well as specials. The District will also be defining the levels of performance/criteria for the standards based report card. Year Two of committee work will be focused on grading practices, formative and summative assessments for each grade level, and parent communication.

If you are interested in being a part of this committee, please email Dr. Leah Gauthier, Director for Curriculum and Instruction, at gauthierl@epcusd401.org.

The District's Technology Initiative

The District's Technology Initiative is completing its second year of preparing the District in moving towards a blended learning experience for the staff and students. In the last two (2) years, the District has provided over 30 hours of professional development to staff in how best to use [G Suite](#) and begin moving towards a SAMR (Substitution Augmentation Modification and Replacement) Model. The SAMR model is how educational opportunities can be provided and expanded upon through the use of computer technology.

The professional development and ongoing assistance provided to staff comes courtesy of the newly formed [Department for Instructional Technology](#), led by Ms. Jessica Iovinelli, District Instructional Technology Coordinator. The District would be remiss if it did not thank Ms. Iovinelli for the incredible time and effort she put into making this initiative as successful as it has been.

The District has also greatly expanded the number of available devices in the 2017-18 school year with the plan being to further saturate the elementary buildings and middle school next year. In 2018-19, Elmwood Park High School will be 1:1 with Elm Middle School in 2019-20. There are active discussions to have 1:1 extend to Grades 5 and 6 with further saturation in the lower levels due to popular demand.

There have been improvements to the broadband and its access thanks to a number of upgrades courtesy of Mr. Tom Kinane, Director for Technology, and Mr. Doug Selix, Network Administrator. The two of them have been working tirelessly to ensure the District is prepared for the demands of 1:1 and in developing a maintenance and replacement schedule for all pertinent equipment. The network has never functioned better than it has now.

The move towards 1:1 has also led to a shift in textbooks, ancillaries, and resources. All new textbook purchases are now e-texts, or materials made available online, accessible through an app, or downloaded as a PDF. As of right now, a vast majority of the textbooks will be accessible

online and available in Spanish. The added benefit of e-texts is they are constantly updated for teachers and students, at no additional cost to the District, by their respective publishers.

The District spends up to \$300,000 a year in textbook purchases, replacements, updates, and repairs. This will no longer be the case due to how e-texts are licensed for over a number of years and their overall cost effectiveness. For example, Elmwood Park High School spends around \$40,000 a year in novels, but by moving to e-texts, it would be a one-time purchase.

The District will not be rid of hardcover textbooks as most of the curriculum purchases have come with classroom sets available for in-class use, to be checked out when needed, and by need per a student's 504 or IEP.

The District will be moving to Chromebooks because of the District using G Suite and the e-texts being online. The cost of these devices is significantly lower than a laptop operating with Microsoft Office.

There will be ["Tech Check Events"](#) at parent-teacher conferences throughout the buildings. This provides the community an opportunity to learn more about how G Suite is being utilized in differentiating and managing the learning experience. These "Tech Checks" will occur on February 8 at Elm Middle School, February 14 at John Mills Elementary, February 15 at Elmwood Elementary, and April 26 at Elmwood Park High School.

A district-wide tech event, ["Into the Cloud,"](#) will be held on April 5 from 6:30 to 8:00 PM in the high school gymnasium. Students, parents, and community members will visit a number of booths providing an opportunity to experience online District registration, cyberbullying awareness prevention, online curriculum programs and resources being used in the classroom, robotics, Google Classroom, and more. Ms. Iovinelli promises raffles, "games," and a rolling video game van (which is forbidden to Superintendents).



Elm Middle School student Teegan Walsh learning about Google from Mr. Hartwig



Google Certified Educators

Level 1:

Mary Therese Anichini
Marcia Bernas
Cami Breitzman
Hilary Coia
Penny Dahmer
Marianne DiFrisco
Christian Hartwig
Molly Hong
Jamie Kanas
Carla Malizzio
Nora O'Mahoney
Meghan Quirk
Kyle Rhoades
Kara Riley
Rosemarie Romano
Clare Thomas

Level 2:

Cami Breitzman
Penny Dahmer

Congratulations to
Employees Who Completed
Their Graduate Program

Leah Gauthier,

- Doctor of Education
- National Louis University

Gabriel Ostrander

- Master of Arts in Education
- Concordia University

Kari Smith

- Doctor of Philosophy
- University of Illinois at Chicago

Congratulations to Employees Who Are National Board Certified

Karen Bear, Elmwood Park High School

Cami Breitzman, John Mills Elementary School

Kristen Carroll, Elmwood Park High School

Charles Curtin, Elmwood Park High School

Penny Dahmer, John Mills Elementary School

Bridget Flood, Elmwood Park High School

Christina Heinen, Elmwood Park High School

Joshua Heinen, Elmwood Park High School

Nora O'Mahoney, Elm Middle School

Michael Popplewell, Elm Middle School and Elmwood Park High School

Sarah Rippe, John Mills Elementary School

Todd Siegel, John Mills Elementary School



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Photos taken by Dave Porreca



John Mills Student Natalie Budzyna focusing on an experiment