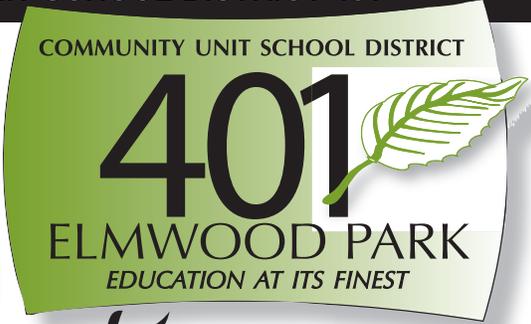


FOCUS



on Education

Volume 26 Issue 1 Fall 2021

www.epcusd401.org

District 401 Board of Education Officially Adopts Board Goals Board Goals

In June 2021, the District 401 Board of Education officially adopted five board goals that the district will focus on achieving over the next three school years.

Goal 1: FACILITIES

Have facilities that are reflective of and are conducive to student learning.

The District 401 community is excited about the upcoming construction and renovations to Elmwood and John Mills Schools. These two projects, scheduled to begin in April 2022 and conclude in August 2024, will add additional learning spaces, update current classrooms, and replace aging infrastructure. Although construction can at times present an inconvenience for community members, staff, and students, the long-term benefits will be worth any short-term disruptions. View the schools' new floor plans on the district website: www.epcusd401.org.

The district recently celebrated the opening of Elm Middle School's new addition! The beautiful, functional space includes five science classrooms, five general classrooms, a practice gymnasium, and a media center. Existing classroom space was also repurposed to create two new art rooms. Renovations to other existing classrooms included updated technology and establishing a modern look and feel throughout the entire building.

The administration is working with the district's architects on plans to repurpose and remodel Elmwood Park High School's large group instruction room and library, areas which are currently under-utilized. Some of the district's ESSER (federal pandemic) grant funding will be used to provide additional learning spaces and workspaces for students and staff.

Goal 2: FINANCES

Maintain fiscal responsibility.

District 401 is in strong financial standing and currently maintains an operating fund balance of 48% of total operating

District 401 is Back to School!

The 2021-2022 school year began with a return to full in-person learning! Students and staff are enjoying being back in their classrooms. Elmwood Park District 401, like all Illinois public schools, is adhering to the state's safety mandates, social distancing requirements, enhanced cleaning procedures, and staff Covid vaccination requirements.

"It feels great to have the students back in the classrooms, learning in-person from their teachers," stated Superintendent Leah Gauthier. "Students are also enjoying their extra-curricular activities, which are once again in place."



Back to School! Students are enjoying in-person learning and socializing once again.

expenditures, placing the school district in the Illinois State Board of Education's highest category of recognition for Fund Balance to Revenue Ratio. The district's approved budget for the 2021-2022 school year continues the district's long-term practice and tradition of maintaining a balanced budget.

Goal 3: DISTRICT-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Enhance communication with stakeholders through open and timely dialogue.

District 401 administrators, educators and staff are proud of the work that is taking place within the schools and continue to discover ways to partner with the community to inform them of the many ways that students are learning and receiving support throughout the year. Monthly updates are shared by each building's administration team to communicate what is happening in the schools.

Parent organizations are a great way for families to get involved in each school. Community members can become

Continues on page 2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 **Board Goals**

involved through the Elmwood Park Education Foundation that provides additional support to District 401 schools.

Goal 4: PROGRAMS/SERVICES/CURRICULUM Expand upon learning opportunities that can be supported and sustained.

The district's Curriculum and Instruction Department continues to maintain consistency throughout all grade levels with an articulated curriculum in all subject areas from kindergarten through grade 12. In addition, the district's four coaches in the curriculum areas of ELA/Social Studies, Math/Science, English Language and Instructional Technology, help support instructional best practices through teachers' professional development, modeling, and data-driven decision making.

Consistency within the curriculum is not the only aspect of the district's approach. Middle and high school students are offered courses in College and Career Pathways. This program helps match the course offerings for middle school and high school students with their post-secondary interests. The goal of Pathways is to better align students with post-secondary plans and skills that prepare them for career and academic success.

Common grading practices and assessment alignment are another goal for this department. Teachers' professional development, and opportunities for teachers to discuss and share student data through weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), are provided. PLC teams discuss various assessments and provide consistent practices for grading

them. Grades K-6 use the Standards Based Grading model that emphasizes student mastery of the district's priority standards in all subject areas. Grades 7-12 use traditional grading with students assigned letter grades in all subject areas.

The Curriculum and Instruction Department continues to revisit, revise and refresh the district's approaches to instruction to ensure that all students and families in EPCUSD 401 are provided with equal access to and opportunities for learning.

Goal 5: STUDENT NEEDS Create and implement strategic plans to meet the needs of all students.

The Student Services Department continues to evaluate the services that students receive. The department works with local agencies to expand upon relationships that support students' needs. New Student Services' staff members have received professional development on processes, procedures, and understanding of student services. The district is continuing to implement co-teaching district-wide, in which a general education and special education or English Learner teacher work together in the same classroom to meet the needs of all students. Co-teachers are supported by administrators and a coach to implement the different models of co-teaching to best meet the needs of students.

The Student Services Department staff is working on a multi-year Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) strategic plan that addresses the implementation of SEL in all classrooms. Currently, to start the year, SEL is provided within the classroom with teachers focusing on community-building. The district continues to have an SEL committee that meets monthly to support the implementation of Social-Emotional Learning within the district.

School Spotlight: A Look Inside the Schools

John Mills Elementary School *by Principal Frank Kuzniewski*

At John Mills, we are working on establishing routines and expectations while creating a culture of learning. We are creating the mindset of always being respectful, responsible, and safe. This is essential as students are acclimating to being in school and socializing appropriately with others. The entire staff provides a safe and positive experience for all students, every day.

As we continue to implement best practices in education, teachers use Standards Based Grading to identify what a student knows, or can do, in relation to the learning targets, as opposed to simply averaging grades or scores over the course of a trimester. A student who may have struggled at

the beginning of a grading period may still demonstrate mastery by the end of the grading period. This differs from traditional grading, where a student's performance for the entire quarter is averaged together and students are graded on something they did not previously know, rather than on their current level of performance and knowledge.

The John Mills School Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) helps bring our school community together. Monthly meetings are open to all faculty, staff, and parents, who are encouraged to join.

Weekly Theme Thursdays and School Spirit Fridays bring the school community together, furthering creativity, individuality, and school spirit. Families can show John Mills pride throughout their community

by wearing school apparel that can be purchased from the School Spirit Store.

We thank all Mills families for ensuring that students arrive on time daily, stay home when they are not feeling well, and for reinforcing the school's expectations. Further information regarding John Mills can be found on the school website, on our district website, and on Twitter.

"We are many cultures, but we are one John Mills."

Elmwood Elementary School *by Principal Matthew Lerner*

"I can feel the excitement!" said a second-grade teacher on the first day of school. A second-grade student shouted, "I am happy to be at school again!" On August 18, Elmwood Elementary School welcomed over 500 students to the new

Continues on page 3

School Spotlight: A Look Inside the Schools

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

in-person school year. Students, parents, and community members were ready and eager to return to a normal routine. We are excited to begin our full-day kindergarten program in person for the first time at Elmwood! There are currently 82 students and four classrooms to support them as these students begin their educational journey. Kindergarteners are learning to read, write, develop math skills, and socialize with other students. The new kindergarten program will help our students grow!

Elmwood is beginning to offer after-school programs and activities such as intramural sports, choir, multicultural club, Panther Fit Club, and Student Council. We also welcomed a few speakers such as children's author Julia Cook, and BMX bike rider Matt Wilhelm.

Thank you to the community, parents, and students for their perseverance during this past year. Check out our webpage or join us on Twitter.

We are the Panthers!

Elm Middle School

by Principal Ashley Groeneveld

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this message to the community and to our Elm Middle School families. Elm Middle School (EMS) is a very special place, because it marks the first time that children throughout the Elmwood Park community come together to create a united community of learners. At EMS, our entire staff's goal is to provide students with a nurturing environment for them to take risks as learners, feel both challenged and supported in their academic endeavors, and build meaningful relationships with others.

At Elm, we are an all-hands-on-deck team, who always support one another. We take pride in knowing that every child who enters our doors will learn and be cared for and respected regardless of gender, race, religion, or ethnicity.

In order to support our school community, staff and students spent the first few weeks of school designing and creating an Elm Middle School 2021-2022 Cougar Code. This code is a system of beliefs for all of us to live

by to ensure all students always feel safe and accepted. We know when students feel safe and accepted, they feel comfortable. We encourage all Elm Families to review the Cougar Code to continue to foster our school-home partnership and strengthen our Elm Middle School learning community.

We look forward to working with our Elm Families and seeing all the wonderful things our students will accomplish this year!

Elmwood Park High School By the Numbers

By Principal Douglas Wildes

We are very excited to welcome the 2021-2022 school year with everyone back to our building! It is truly amazing to see 988 students and 110 faculty and staff members back in the classrooms and hallways working together in person every day.

We are very proud to have nearly 600 students enrolled in our honors coursework, over 500 students enrolled in our Advanced Placement classes, 114



Extra-curricular activities are back. Students are enjoying participating in 27 active clubs and extra-curricular activities at EPHS.

District 401 Website QR Code

Scan this QR code for direct access to the EPCUSD 401 website! Find district news and information from all the district schools on the website.



www.epcusd401.org

students in dual enrollment courses with either Triton College or Benedictine University, 10 students taking career pathways programs at the Technology Center of DuPage, and seven students taking evening classes at Triton College in addition to their EPHS full academic schedules. With more than 90 courses throughout seven departments designed to help students pursue their college and career goals, EPHS truly is a comprehensive school where high levels of teaching and learning take place in every classroom!

As we welcomed students back after nearly 17 months, we added significant resources to help students who need additional support. In addition to our three school counselors, two

social workers, two deans, and one school resource officer, we now have a Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) specialist, two English Language Arts interventionists, two math interventionists, two instructional aides, and one community liaison to our building. ESSER federal funding pays for the additional supports that help our struggling students and provides them with the resources they need. In addition to the added staff,

Continues on page 4

Elmwood Park Community Unit School District 401
8201 W. Fullerton Avenue
Elmwood Park, IL 60707

Elmwood Park Community Unit School District 401
8201 W. Fullerton Avenue
Elmwood Park, IL 60707
(708) 452-7292
www.epcusd401.org

Board of Education

Frank J. Parisi, President
Michael V. Scheidt, Vice President
Susan S. Capraro, Secretary
Mary Bruscato
Timothy P. Loughnane
Jonathan M. Rivera
Peter A. Volpe

Dr. Leah Gauthier, Superintendent
(708) 583-5831
gauthierl@epcusd401.org

Elmwood Park High School
Grades 9-12
8201 W. Fullerton Avenue
(708) 452-7272
Douglas Wildes, Principal
ephsinfo@epcusd401.org

Elm Middle School

Grades 6-8
7607 W. Cortland Street
(708) 452-3550
Ashley Groeneveld, Principal
elminfo@epcusd401.org

Elmwood Elementary School

Grades K-5
2319 N. 76th Avenue
(708) 452-3558
Matthew Lerner, Principal
ewinfo@epcusd401.org

John Mills Elementary School

Grades PK-5
2824 N. 76th Avenue
(708) 452-3560
Frank Kuzniewski, Principal
millsinfo@epcusd401.org

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage

PAID

Carol Stream, IL
Permit No. 1369

Postal Customer Local
Elmwood Park, IL 60707

School Spotlight: A Look Inside the Schools

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

we developed grade level advisories, Tiger Learning Labs for English and Math, study halls, and an eighth hour academic period to help support students.

The EPHS fall athletic season is underway, with nearly 250 students participating in six fall athletic programs. Students have a variety to choose from, with 19 total athletic programs spread over three seasons for freshmen, sophomore, junior varsity, and varsity levels. There are also 27 active clubs and extracurricular activities for students who want to connect to our school, provide community service, and/or grow their love of a specific academic area.

Finally, our building and grounds have had a nice facelift over the past few months. Upgrades include parking lot resurfacing, concrete sidewalk replacement, repairs to damaged grassy areas in the front of the school, freshly

painted walls, and refinishing of some of the building's original woodwork. With the school's recently renovated state-of-the-art six science labs and band and choir rooms, the interior has never looked better! Additionally, we resurfaced our main gym floor, outdoor stadium turf, and our five baseball/softball fields, four tennis courts, two sand volleyball courts, and the 1.5-mile gravel superloop ready for student athletes and our community members to use. With plans to make additional



Football is just one of Elmwood Park High School's 19 athletic programs spread over three seasons for students in all grade levels.

renovations to our library, large group instruction room, and main office areas, we are excited for the future of Elmwood Park High School!