

# FOCUS

COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

# 401

ELMWOOD PARK  
EDUCATION AT ITS FINEST



## on Education

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[www.epcusd401.org](http://www.epcusd401.org)

### New, Interactive Science Curriculum

Students in grades K through five are experiencing an exciting new hands-on science curriculum this year. STEMscopes is an interactive curriculum aligned to the *Next Generation Science Standards* and is focused on students becoming inquiry-based learners. In inquiry-based learning, students are provided with questions, methods and materials and are challenged to discover solutions to problems to develop deeper level thinking skills. Science is being expanded starting in grade three, where it will be taught daily. Next year, the new curriculum will be broadened through grade eight.

STEMscopes exposes students to life science, earth and space science, and physical science every year until high school. The curriculum is taught in a “blended” learning environment, in which a number of activities, resources and assessments are done online. Grade-level lessons, activities,

and assessments are aligned to the *Common Core English Language Arts and Math Standards*, which provide inter-disciplinary connections. For example, in addition to memorizing important terms, students are expected to explain or reason positions they take on lab results, hypothetical situ-

ations, real-world events, and/or use writing, speaking and listening skills to provide scientific evidence.

The faculty and the administration received training in STEMscopes, and are eager and excited for the students to participate in this new learning experience.

### Four-year Tech Plan is Underway

One of the district’s important goals is to develop and begin implementing a 1:1 Technology Initiative. That means that every student in grades 7-12 will have a computer to use throughout the school day to enhance learning. Toward that end, district educators are currently receiving *G Suite for Education* training so they can effectively incorporate technology in the classroom and help students become digital learners. *G Suite for Education* is a set of free apps that are web-based word-processing, calendar, presentation, drawing, email, forms, and spreadsheet programs, which will soon be available for use by all district students. These apps are available 24/7 online from any Internet-connected device.

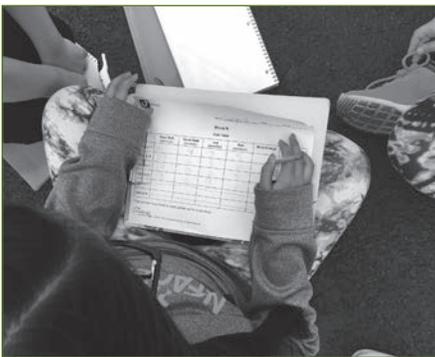
Students will use these tools to collaboratively create, edit, and share files and websites for school-related projects. Students in grades 3-12 will be able to communicate via email with teachers and with other students.

“Technology is a universal key to unlocking student engagement for students at all skills and levels. It

encourages personalized, individualized learning,” stated Dr. Nicolas D. Wade, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

District administrators and the Board of Education visited other school districts to experience their 1:1 programs. Then, they committed to professional development and hired new staff members to help support the initiative. In addition to teacher training, improvements to the technology infrastructure and bandwidth continue to be made. A new District Technology Committee will determine curriculum needs related to technology, digital citizenship and cyberbullying, student professional development, and parent and community outreach.

Implementation will begin next year in the middle school and high school, with a projected full district 1:1 implementation at EPHS in the 2018-19 school year, and in the middle school in 2019-20. For updates on training and implementation, and resources for community members, visit the District IT website at: [tinyurl.com/ep401tech](http://tinyurl.com/ep401tech).



For a STEMscopes project, Elmwood School fourth grade students recorded their times for a slow walk, quick walk, jog, and run and then charted and discussed the amount of energy used in each one.

## Introducing New Administrators

Due to promotions, retirements, and the creation of several new positions, these administrators recently began their new jobs. Introducing:

### **Kyleen Coia, EPHS Dean of Students**

Mrs. Kyleen Coia has 10 years of experience as a school administrator, including work as an assistant principal.

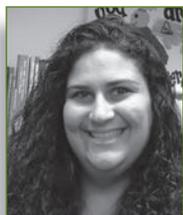
She earned a Bachelor's in Social Work (BSW) From Aurora University, a Master's in School Social Work (MSW) from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and a Master's in Educational Leadership from Concordia University, River Forest.

"I am extremely privileged and honored to be working in such an exceptional community and school district. Everyone I have met within the district has been welcoming, friendly and dedicated to creating an environment where students are excited to learn. I look forward to developing strong relationships with students, staff, parents and the community," Mrs. Coia stated.



and an Ed.S. degree in Administration and Supervision from National Louis University, Chicago.

"It is my tenth year in this district and I am very thankful for the opportunity to be part of the lives of so many students and families while still growing as an educator. As a member of the District Technology Initiative, I am fortunate to work with students, families, and all of the district staff to perpetuate the use of technology not only a learning tool, but also as a skill necessary for twenty-first century success," Ms. Iovinelli commented.



### **Jessica Klein, Human Resources Manager**

Miss Klein has 12 years of previous HR experience in the retail and medical

industries. She has a BA in Industrial Organization/Psychology, a Graduate Certificate in Organizational Leadership Development, and a Master's of Business Administration, all earned at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

"The community's top priority is the impact on the students. Without our dedicated staff, the outstanding level of service to our schools and students would not be possible! Thank you for all you do!" said Miss Klein.



### **Laura Magruder, John Mills School Principal**

Ms. Magruder has worked in education for 18 years, 4 of those as an administrator. She achieved a B.A.S in Food

Service and Lodging Management from Western Illinois University, Macomb, an M.Ed in Elementary Education from DePaul University, Chicago, and an Ed.S in Administrative Leadership and Policy Studies, University of Colorado, Denver.

"I am very excited to be the principal of John Mills Elementary and a member of the EPCUSD 401 administrative team," Ms. Magruder stated. "I am fortunate to work with such a wonderful community of teachers, students and families. It is my goal through collaboration, communication and creativity to bring the best opportunities to all of our learners. Through our work together, I know we can help each and every child reach

their true potential and be the best that they can be."



### **Jamie Ponce, John Mills School Assistant Principal**

Mrs. Ponce has been an educator for 15 years. This is her first full time administrative position.

She earned a BA, English and Spanish majors, from the University of Iowa, Iowa City, an MAT in Bilingual Education from Rockford College, Rockford, IL, and an MA in Educational Leadership from Concordia University, River Forest,

"I have received a warm welcome from John Mills School and the Elmwood Park School District. I am extremely thrilled to be working in a collaborative and diverse school district that is committed to meeting the needs of all students," Mrs. Ponce stated.



### **Sheri Costello, John Mills School Assistant Principal**

Mrs. Costello has 23 years of experience in education, including 11 years as a division head. She achieved a BA

in Mathematics, St. Mary's University, Winona, MN, and a Master's in Education, Educational Leadership, from DePaul University, Chicago.

"The district has been incredibly welcoming and supportive," Mrs. Costello remarked. "I am just getting to know the teachers in the high school, but I'm discovering many passionate people who are deeply committed to their students. I'm excited about the direction the district is headed in so many aspects, and I look forward to the years to come."



### **Jessica Iovinelli, District Instructional Technology Coordinator**

This is Ms. Iovinelli's fifteenth year in education, her tenth year

working in the district, and her first year as an administrator. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Music Education and Piano Performance from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, a Master's in Interdisciplinary Arts from Nova Southeastern University, Davie, FL,

The new EPHS Science Wing has received several major awards for its outstanding architecture and innovative design for learning! It was one of only two school projects to win the top 2015 Award of Distinction at the annual *Invitational Exhibition of Educational Environments*, sponsored by the Illinois Association of School Board Service Associates. Additionally, *Learning By Design Magazine* awarded a Citation of Excellence in educational design to DLA Architects, who designed the addition with the input of District 401 educators and administrators. *American School and University Magazine* also awarded a Special Citation, Laboratories, to the architects, recognizing the Science Wing's "inspiring, architecturally rich environment."

***District 401's website has been redesigned! Packed with great information for both parents and community members, it is colorful and easy to navigate. Check out the improvements at <http://www.epcusd401.org>.***

## EPHS Honored as a Democracy School

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) has recognized Elmwood Park High School as a 2016 Illinois Democracy School. Democracy Schools are recognized for providing students with authentic experiences in the rights, responsibilities and tensions inherent in living in a constitutional democracy. Through these experiences, participating schools strive to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for informed, effective democracy engagement.

This is a rare honor. Since 2006, only 54 Illinois high schools have successfully completed a school-wide civic assessment and have been recognized as Democracy Schools.

Democracy Schools foster a school climate that nurtures and models civic dispositions and builds strong relationships within the surrounding community. These schools provide students with various opportunities to participate in the democratic process such as engaging in current and controversial issue discussions, participating in democratic simulations and providing service learning opportunities. Though these practices, students see first-hand the critical role they play in shaping government and society.

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Local politicians were invited to share their experiences in public office with EPHS students in their civics class. (Adults, from L to R): Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Nicolas D. Wade, EPHS Principal Jim Jennings, Congressman Mike Quigley, Cook County Commissioner Peter Silvestri, Elmwood Park Village President Angelo "Skip" Saviano, and EPHS Civics Teacher Mario Fiorito.

## Long Range Plan Adopted

In October, the Board of Education approved a Long Range Plan for 2016-2020. This plan sets goals for the district during the next four years.

### The District 401 Long Range Plan

#### **Curriculum/Instruction/Technology/Activities**

1. Continue alignment of instruction to the Common Core State Standards and Career/College Readiness Standards in order to meet and exceed the annual state academic performance averages in math, reading, language arts, and science.
2. Provide high-quality, relevant professional development for educators based on the identified needs of the district, including technology learning tools.
3. Assess and improve district infrastructure annually to handle growing technology needs.
4. Complete a full 1:1 technology implementation in grades 7-12, and a cart-based saturation of devices in grades K-6 by 2020.
5. Convert instructional materials acquisition from textbooks to electronic learning materials.
6. Review and provide a variety of high-quality curricular and extra-curricular experiences for students.
7. Study the feasibility of moving kindergarten back to the elementary buildings with the addition of a full-day program.

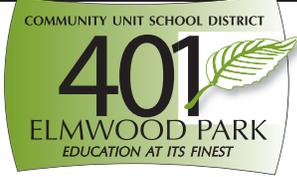
8. Plan for the recruitment and hiring of a new superintendent upon the departure of Dr. Anderson.

#### **Facilities and Operations**

1. Plan for capital improvements, facility expansion, and major upgrades as needed within a consistent cycle of maintenance and repair as identified by the district's Life/Safety Plan.
2. Develop a plan for the exterior landscaping beautification of district facilities.
3. Collaborate consistently with the Village of Elmwood Park on facility usage for youth recreation groups, safety issues, and issues of joint importance.

#### **Finance and Human Resources**

1. Plan for the allocation of funds and debt service to complete curricular and facility improvements.
2. Provide an annual balanced budget for district operations.
3. Annually review and determine cost efficiencies related to personnel, programs, purchasing, maintenance, and transportation.
4. Provide accurate and effective financial and human resource services to all district employees and families.



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## Testing Update

The State of Illinois is changing its high school testing. Eleventh grade students will no longer take the PARCC assessment, but will take the SAT on April 15, 2017. The district is pleased with this change because the SAT is a grade-level assessment and a high-stakes exam that colleges and universities accept for admissions.

The SAT has been updated. No longer do students need to memorize many vocabulary words. EPHS faculty and administrators are receiving professional development on the SAT, but with the district's alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, students are well positioned to meet the test's expectations.

Students in grades three through eight will continue taking the PARCC assessments for their grade level.

Students in grades eight and nine will take the PSAT for their respective grades – grade eight in fall, and grade nine on April 5, 2017. This is not part of the state testing, but these assessments will provide information to students, parents and teachers on the student's strengths and weaknesses.

To learn more about the SAT, visit [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org).

This year, the district will administer the *5Essentials Survey*, which provides information about learning throughout the district to the state and to the district. The survey will be taken by students, parents and staff members. Parents will receive information on how to take this survey from the schools.

## EPHS Honored as a Democracy School

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The application process involved a coalition of faculty and administrators, including building a team of teachers who want to promote civic learning, and administering surveys to parents, teachers, students and community members. The survey results were analyzed, and the data used to create future goals.

To help inspire students to become active members in their school and student government, EPHS educators created a civics class that nearly all freshmen will take. In it, students will learn an overview of government, how to be active participants in school, community, and their role in a democracy. They will participate in mock elections and debates to help them experience and understand the democratic process.

"A democracy that truly thrives depends on the informed and active participation of all citizens," explained Mario Fiorito, EPHS civics teacher. "Yet, civic learning has nearly vanished from many of our schools, leaving much of the next generation ill-prepared for meaningful engagement in public life. We are hoping that our civics program, with assistance from the Democracy School network, will help reverse this trend."