



Please find below a summary of the past month's professional development, curriculum updates, Portrait of a Morton Graduate recaps, and personnel updates for each of the departments.

CTE Department – Colleen Del Monaco, Director

March 2026

College Ready:

Students in AP Computer Science Principles strengthened their computational thinking skills by programming animations using micro: bits. As part of this project, students were assessed on their ability to create computational artifacts using sequencing, selection, and iteration within the Python programming language. This work reinforces advanced problem-solving skills and prepares students for continued study in computer science and related postsecondary programs.

Students across several CTE programs participated in activities that strengthened their preparation for postsecondary education and technical training. During Trades Week (March 9–13), students met with representatives from multiple trade unions and participated in field trips to Morton College and union training sites, where they learned about apprenticeship programs, certification pathways, and postsecondary opportunities within the skilled trades.

Students in Culinary Arts and Child Development also engaged in leadership and competitive experiences through FCCLA. Culinary students competed at the FCCLA State competition at the College of DuPage on March 27, with results pending, while Child Development students will compete at the FCCLA State Leadership Conference in Springfield in April.

Career Ready:

Eight Morton West students advanced to the Illinois Design Educators Association (IDEA) State Competition, demonstrating excellence in design and engineering-related coursework. Their advancement reflects the high level of technical skill and creativity developed through the district's CTE programs.

Students participated in several experiences designed to expose them to industry professionals and career pathways. Auto Technology students attended the 63rd World of Wheels Student Career Day in Rosemont, where they explored a wide range of opportunities in the automotive industry and connected with industry professionals.

Students in the Culinary Arts program also demonstrated real-world hospitality and service skills by hosting the Mustang Café fundraiser on March 17 to support program activities. In addition, culinary students provided a dining experience for donors at the district's March 20 Dinner & Theater event prior to the performance of *Little Shop of Horrors*, showcasing their culinary and event service skills in a real-world setting.



Additionally, Morton West construction students recently completed their unit on residential wiring, gaining practical knowledge and hands-on experience aligned with skills used in the construction and electrical trades.

Life Ready:

Students in the Intro to Teaching course welcomed a Morton West alum and retired music and ESL teacher who shared insights from her career in education. She discussed her educational journey, professional experiences, challenges, and the rewarding aspects of working in education. This opportunity allowed students to hear firsthand about the realities of the teaching profession and reflect on their own potential career paths in education.

On March 5, more than 100 sophomore and senior students participated in CTE course interventions, providing targeted academic and skill-based support to help students strengthen their understanding of course content and successfully complete program requirements.

Career & Work Based Learning:

Teacher Professional Development

On the March 24 Curriculum Day, AP Cybersecurity teachers from across the district collaborated to develop curriculum for a new AP Cybersecurity course. This work focused on designing course content, assessments, and learning experiences to prepare students for the launch of this new advanced computer science pathway.

Partnership Updates

The Career and Work-Based Learning team continues to strengthen partnerships that expand opportunities for students. Coordinators connected with the Will County Center for Economic Development to learn more about how their summer high school internship program is structured and funded, as the district explores ways to grow its own internship opportunities.

Additionally, partnerships with higher education and industry continue to expand. Coordinators connected with Roosevelt University to arrange for university professors to speak with students in computer science and engineering courses. Students selected for the district internship program also met with coordinators to discuss placement opportunities and next steps in the process.

Programmatic Updates

Work-based learning opportunities also continue to expand. Fourteen Morton East students began a multi-week clinical rotation at MacNeal Hospital, allowing them to shadow professionals and explore different careers in healthcare. In addition, eleven Morton West students recently completed a seven-week rotation at MacNeal Hospital, gaining exposure to multiple departments and healthcare career pathways.

Looking ahead, fourteen students have been accepted into the Pharmacy Technician program for the 2026–2027 school year. An informational meeting and registration session for selected students and families was held on March 24.

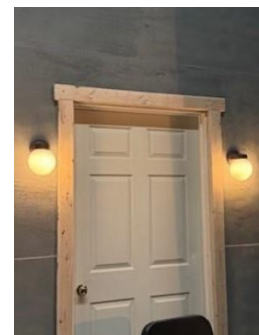


College & Career Center highlights:

West College & Career Center Highlights:

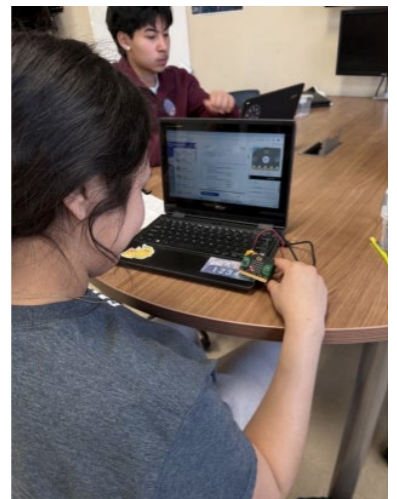
- Field trip to IBEW to learn about electrician apprentice program
- College Exploration Workshops for all grade levels with the CCC
- Visit at West – Pipefitter’s Local 597 came to discuss apprenticeship
- Visit at West – How To Fade Beauty & Barber came to discuss programs and give free haircuts
- Visit at West – Auto Mechanic’s Local 701 came to discuss apprenticeships
- Visit at West – National Association of Hispanic nurses came to discuss nursing pathways
- Visit at West – Current DPT student came to discuss physical therapy and sports medicine pathways
- Resume Workshops hosted in the CCC to help students start/polish their resumes
- Pop-Up Job Fair – Various employers will be here at West to offer students interviews/positions for the upcoming summer
- Military visits at West – Visits from the Army, National Guard, and Navy in the CCC
- Field trip to Triton college to learn about Sonography
- Visit at West – Roosevelt University’s Cybersecurity and Computer Science programs
- Visit at West – Morton College’s Welding program
- Local Scholarship applications are currently being processed. We had about 75 students apply this year!

CTE Department in Action:





FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs





SPED Department – Carol Best, Executive Director

College

Students in the Learning Development Intervention (LDI) biology classes completed the Strawberry Banana Lab this month. This hands-on activity supports the development of foundational academic skills and reinforces concepts that prepare students for the expectations of college-level coursework.

Vocational classes also provided students with a valuable postsecondary exposure experience by taking 26 students to Morton College. During the visit, students learned about key differences between high school and college programs, toured the campus, and connected with former students who are now successfully enrolled. Several seniors took the initiative to schedule follow-up appointments with the Coordinator of Student Accommodations to ensure appropriate supports are in place for the fall semester. The visit concluded with a career fair, where students had the opportunity to explore resources, including access to professional attire for future job interviews.

Career

In Applied Math, Functional Skills Instruction (FSI) students recently completed a unit on money management. Instruction focused on identifying coins and bills, performing addition and subtraction with money, and practicing real-world purchasing skills.

To extend this learning, Ms. Medina collaborated with instructional coaches to design an in-school, real-world simulation experience. Students participated in a mock restaurant, *Letty's Cocina*, where they were given a \$30 budget to purchase a meal. Students reviewed menus, selected items, placed orders, and completed transactions. Menu options included enchiladas, flautas, and quesadillas, prepared by Letty Ruiz. Members of Best Buddies supported students throughout the process, assisting with ordering and menu completion.

This interactive experience provided students with an authentic opportunity to apply academic skills in a practical setting while building confidence and independence in a supported environment.

Life

The ED Resource program focused this month on the theme of **Self-Advocacy and Independence**. Students explored the distinction between independence and being independent, and engaged in discussions and practice scenarios focused on appropriately requesting assistance in various settings, including the classroom, community, and workplace.

MTC Program Updates:



Cooking

Students participated in cooking activities twice this month, engaging in the full process of meal preparation, including recipe selection, menu planning, grocery shopping, and cooking. Dishes prepared included chicken noodle soup, quesadillas, Irish soda bread, and tostadas. These activities promote independence, collaboration, and practical life skills.

Community-Based Learning

Students took part in several community outings, including visits to a movie theater and local restaurants. These experiences support the application of classroom learning in real-world environments, helping students develop skills in community navigation, social interaction, safety awareness, budgeting, ordering, and payment.

Talent Show

Students spent the month preparing for a talent show by identifying and practicing a skill or hobby to showcase. This experience fostered self-expression, confidence, and presentation skills, while celebrating the diverse strengths and talents within the program.

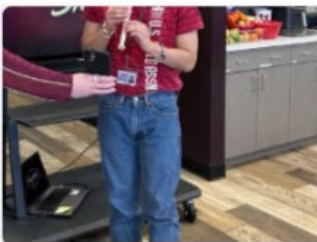
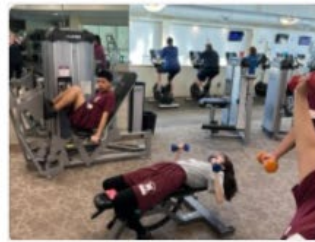
Photos:





FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

LDI Biology Students Completing a Lab:





English Learners and Modern Languages- Melody Becker

Curriculum Updates – College

- 171 Morton Freshman Center students took the Spanish Placement Test for the 2026-2027 school year.
- On March 27th the National Chinese Honor's Society had their induction ceremony. After being inducted, students made a small speech about their process and growth in the Chinese classes and what it has done for them in their personal lives.
- **AP Spanish Language** students are finishing writing e-mails, which is a requirement for the AP exam. They also completed a practice argumentative essay, to refresh their memories, since it was seen in first semester.
- **AP Spanish Literature** continues to analyze the readings and completed the FRQ3.
- **SLA V** students completed a movie review of "Innocent Voices" and then began working on the argumentative essay with the theme of social realism in social media, junk food in schools, and guaranteed income. This is aligned with AP Spanish Language, as well as the ACT. Students will be adding their argumentative essay to their honors portfolio as evidence of one of the presentational writing skills.
- **SLA IV** completed visual biographies on César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, or other activists and presented them to their peers. SLA IV also started working on the argumentative essay with the question of whether Spanglish is something positive or negative. This is aligned with AP Spanish Language, as well as the ACT. Students will be adding their argumentative essay to their honors portfolio as evidence of one of the presentational writing skills. The students also completed the unit tests where they practiced reading and multiple-choice questions like how they will have in the ACT.
- **French 1 and 2** are finishing unit 3 and getting ready to complete the common assessments for it.
- **French 3** watched the latest version of *Le Conte de Monte Cristo* (2025). They are learning about the aftermath of the Napoleon era leading to the Revolution of 1848. As it is based on a literary classic by Alexander Dumas, we had a discussion on the motivation (and moral growth) of the main character, Edmond Dantes. Afterward, students took a comprehension test.
- EL teachers from all three campuses are working together to create ACT practice materials and support for all our EL classes.
- **EL 1 Reading:** The team has decided to create different small stories each day. These stories will consist of different characters and plot. The main goals are for students to be able to understand what the central claim of the story is, including main idea and different themes. At the end of the story, students will work on drawing conclusions based off evidence from the text and their own ideas.
- **EL 1:** on Mondays and Tuesdays will practice ACT materials. In addition, every other day of the week, each Bell Ringer will consist of a short reading and answering three questions to continue reinforcing ACT skills.
- **EL 2 Reading:** Will be focusing on Identifying Central Claims and Compare Draw Conclusions across texts through 3/27. Students will complete daily micro-readings with comprehension micro-quizzes on Microsoft Forms.
- **EL 2:** [ACT Preparation PPT English SY 26](#)
- **EL 3:** [ACT Preparation PPT English SY26](#)
- **EL 4:** [ACT Preparation PPT English SY 26](#)



- **EL 1:** Students are currently reading the novel, *Seedfolks*, by Paul Fleischman, and exploring the lives of immigrants and their struggles. They are modeling the writing from this novel to write their own narratives. Students have also been practicing compare / contrast and various grammar skills.
- **EL 2:** Students created posters that reflected literary devices as they were present in popular/ favorite songs. Students have also been learning vocabulary related to jobs and careers, and they are currently using that knowledge to build their resumes. Additionally, students have been engaging in one-on-one conversations to help improve their speaking skills and build their confidence in English.
- **EL 3:** Students have been reading the novel, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. They have been analyzing the life of a young boy in Africa, his struggles in poverty, and how he learns about science through independent study. Students used his examples of life in Africa as a springboard to research a variety of cultures around the world, and their cultural masks. Finally, students created cultural masks out of various supplies.
- **EL 4:** Students have completed the novel, *Bodega Dreams*, by Ernesto Quinones, and wrote a character analysis essay that revolved around important themes, relevant character quotes and their unique personalities.
- **EL 4** students worked on a mock trial based on the novel, *Bodega Dreams*. This assignment helped critical thinking and discussion skills by having students evaluate multiple perspectives and be able to respond clearly to the opposition. This assignment also helped students develop their ability to analyze texts, construct evidence-based arguments, and able to communicate their ideas clearly written and spoken. They have also finished reading the novel and have chosen a theme to focus on and have written a character analysis essay looking at how the character has developed through the lens of that theme

Career

- FC Gold 2 (**EL 3 and 4**) won the attendance challenge for the FC. The house with the most improved attendance won a treat! One strategy that was used was to message parents about attendance.
- **EL 2** students have now begun their Job Unit. To introduce the topic, they completed a brief job research jigsaw activity where they explored how to dress for an interview, how to practice effectively, helpful interview tips, and the importance of body language. In their teaching groups, students presented their expert topics and then created a mind map that captured all the key ideas they heard from their classmates. Students are now moving on to creating their resumes.
- **French 1** students are creating their dream house where they label the floor plan in French with using housing vocabulary. They also answer questions about their house in a one-on-one interview.
- **French 2** is creating a video advertisement for the Earned Honors Portfolio Presentational Speaking project. They are imagining a charity of their choice and making an advertisement seeking volunteers to help at their organization.

Life

- **AP Spanish Literature** after reading the play “La Casa de Bernarda Alba,” the students created an adaptation of the play and presented it to the class.
- All **French** classes are also participating in Manie Musicale, which is a song contest. They vote, send in votes, and follow the results (while enjoying the songs and admiring the diversity of



the French-speaking cultures). They are working on a project that goes with Manie Musicale as well as for their honors portfolio.

- **Spanish I** students created presentations on Afro-Latinos.
- **Spanish II** students made posters about cultural events in different Spanish speaking countries. For the grammar component, we took notes on the imperfect and to practice, they interviewed each other about their childhood. They also interviewed a Spanish speaking adult in their lives about their past. This week they were assigned a decade to create a collage on and answer questions about what was trending during this time.
- **Spanish III** students created presentations, both written and spoken on prominent women.
- **SLA IV** students read or listened to the story of how Ms. Melero Juárez arrived in the United States and then they had an opportunity to interview an immigrant. With the answers from their interview, they created a podcast or a videoblog in which they told the person's story.
- **SLA IV** students also worked on the 1968 student movement in East Los Angeles where they saw how Latino students were treated before and what that student movement has done for their education and lives. In addition, they created a news report on one of the children seen in the documentary "Which Way Home."
- In **Chinese 2**, students created "A Day in My Life" vlogs in Chinese. They filmed their daily routines, described their classes, after-school activities, and personal schedules using target vocabulary and time expressions. The project focused on speaking fluency, narration, and real-life language use.
- Students scripted their videos, recorded clips at home and at school, and added Chinese subtitles. This activity helped them practice sequencing events, using transition words, and speaking in complete sentences. I've attached a few screenshots from their videos.
- **Chinese 1** students learned about hobbies and the students made a poster to tell their own hobbies.
- **Chinese 3** classes just learned about how to carry small talks at a party and describing people's facial features; after the lesson, they are working on a project "My Secret Person" using their new learned language. They will write up two paragraphs and present for the class to guess.
- **EL 1** has worked on Unit 4, acquiring new vocabulary while continuing to review all the vocabulary learned from their Word Wall. They have worked on past tense verbs as well as reading analysis. Additionally, they also took their speaking exam, in which they had to create sentences for each image using pronouns, past-tense verbs, and descriptions of the pictures shown on each slide. For their writing exam they had to use previously studied vocabulary words to complete sentences. They were required to use the verbs in the appropriate tense, depending on the sentence. The exam concluded with a reading comprehension section, designed to further reinforce their preparation for the ACT.
- **EL 1 Reading**-While reading the book students are required to answer questions based off of each chapter. Students complete summaries, vocab, and their character chart. They also look upon main ideas of the chapter, and how theme plays a role. Students have completed their CA project this week, where they need to create their own chapter and connect with different characters from the book as if they were in *Seedfolks*. By writing themselves into the story and reflecting on what they would "plant" in their community, students develop self-awareness and empathy while exploring their personal identities in relation to other
- **EL 2** students are discussing the importance of a resume and will begin to create our own.
- **EL 2 Reading** students turned in their ethos, logos, pathos commercial. The commercials were very creative and fun. Students have engaged in an introductory slide presentation,



scaffolded worksheets, a magazine advertisement hunt, collaborative card-sorting activities, individual product analysis, a classroom mural, listening comprehension exercises, and a Teams-based debate. Students are currently developing a video commercial selling a product to a target audience using persuasion techniques, building career-readiness skills in marketing and public speaking.

- **EL 3** is continuing their student of *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. Students have finished their masks and will be moving onto a new unit on rhetorical device identification. Students will also continue to participate in STEM related chapter challenges which relate to the text theme of perseverance and overcoming obstacles.
- **EL 4** students are currently working on a rhetorical analysis essay unit while they continue their reading *Bodega Dreams*.

Professional Development –

- **Biliteracy Coaches** attended the Illinois Reading Conference in Springfield, IL and was able to take away many research-based strategies to improve multilingual instructional practices.
- Member of the EL department attended the NABE conference in Chicago. This conference focused on building a positive bilingual identity and improve biliteracy for improved student outcomes.

Student and Staff Accolades



EL 3 students completed their cultural mask and are practicing presenting them



Biliteracy Coach Partnerships and showcased literacy strategies
Mr. MacDougall and his INSPECT literacy wall



Mr. Wallace teaches a partnership lesson.



EL 2 Reading students build their rhetorical analysis skills

MARCH 11, 2026 – MORTON WEST UBUNTU EVENT:

Students created a various of cultural and personality-based artwork to display at Ubuntu. The students dance group were also invited to perform. This event did an amazing job of promoting our students' unique talents and the ways in which they complement their personal and cultural experiences.





EL 3 students create cultural masks



EL 1 students practice speaking and listening



Chinese 1 students create cartoons about hobbies



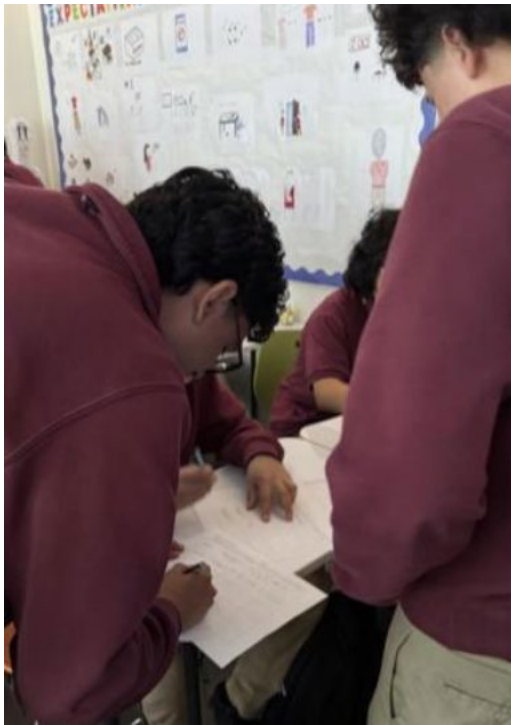
Chinese 3 students create My Secret Person Projects



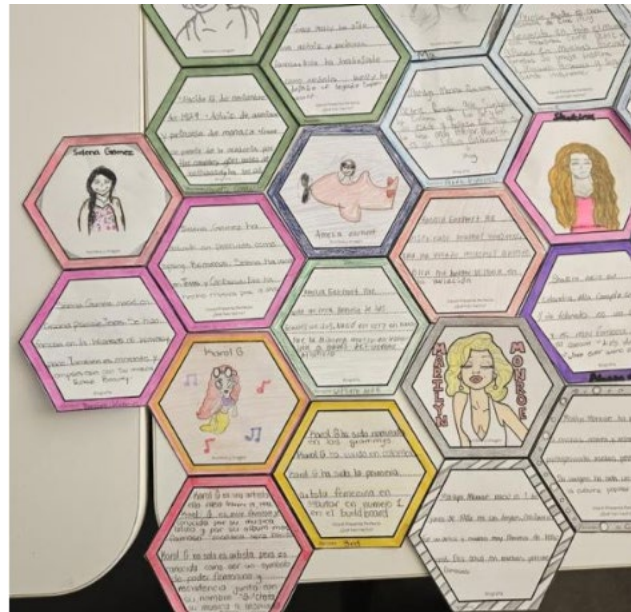
AP Chinese students create Environmental Posters



French students study French Language Music through an international competition, Manie Musicale



Spanish 2 students interview each other using imperfect tense



Spanish 3 students complete Prominent Women Presentations



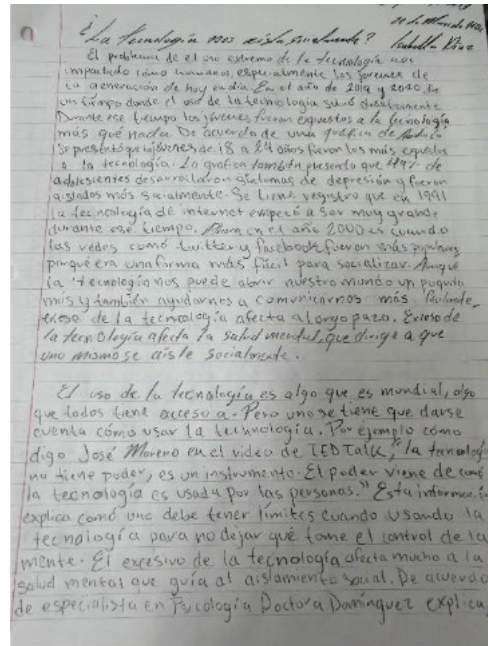
SLA IV students created visual biographies



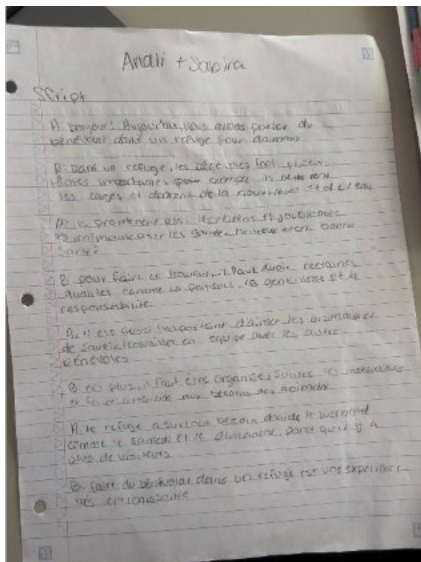
AP Spanish Literature students perform an adaptation of "La Casa de Bernarda Alba"



23 Chinese Students at Morton East were inducted into the Chinese Honor Society



SLA IV Students complete their argumentative essays



French 2 students create advertisement interviews



Spanish 1 students present about their dream vacations



Science Department— Eric Bjornstad, Director

Curriculum Updates –

- Curriculum & Instruction Steering Committee will meet on April 28th. Topics will include supporting the Qmlative/4.0 gradebook transition, as well as further development of Portrait of Morton Excellence.
- The A.I. Advisory committee met on March 9th. From this meeting, we have worked in sub-committees to gather input on the current draft of the guidelines from the community, parents, and student advisory groups.

College Ready –

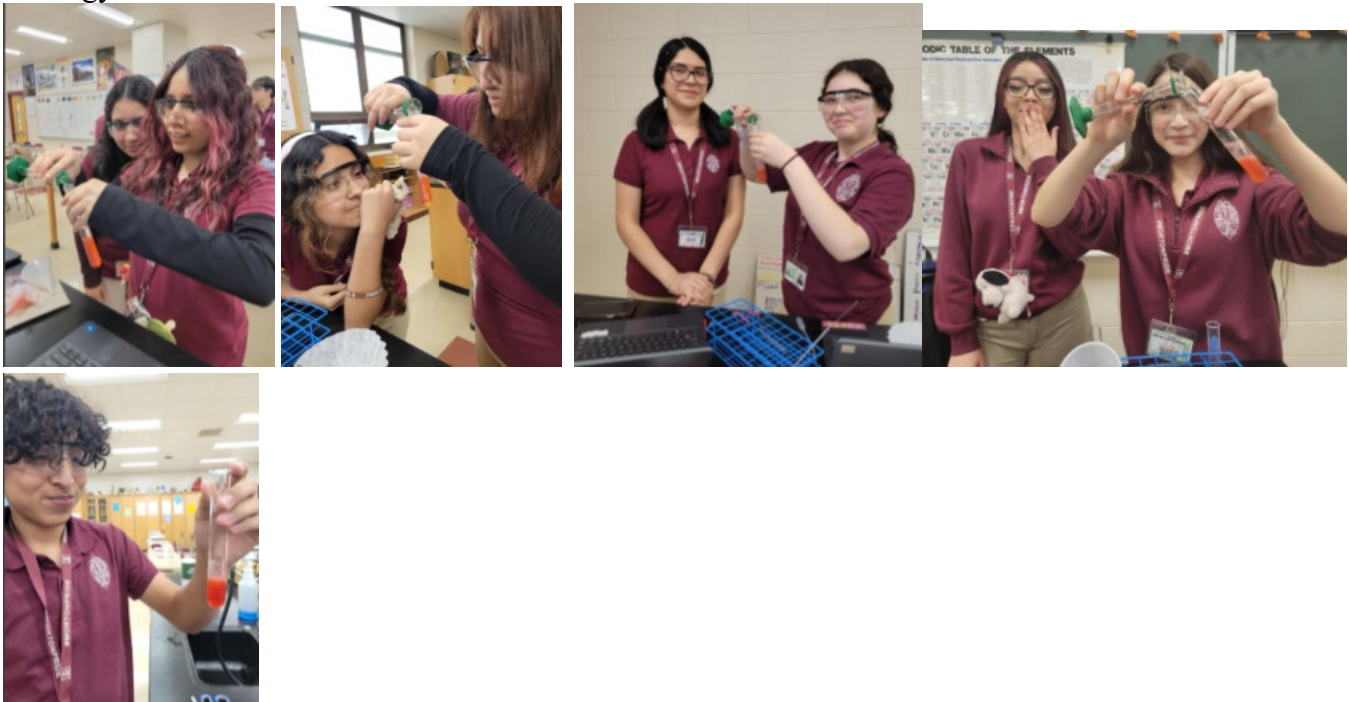
- Science staff at both East and West campus have been working on ACT practice sets with students that focus on the ACT skill of “Interpretation of Data.”

Career Ready –

- Medical Health Sciences students at Morton East began their job shadowing of MacNeil Hospital employees, sponsored by Loyola Health. East Medical Intervention students are scheduled to continue the program through April 29th.
- Registration process for next year’s Pharmacy Tech Cohort begins April 7th. We hope to expand to 14 students participating.

Life Ready –

Biology students at FC extract DNA from strawberries.





FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

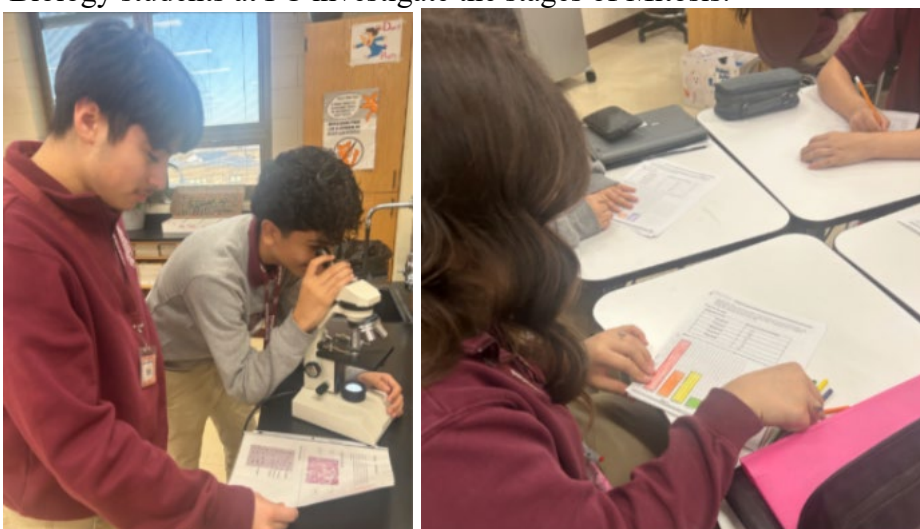
Breakout EDU boxes to review DNA and protein synthesis at the FC.



Biology students at FC present their Cancer research to other students.



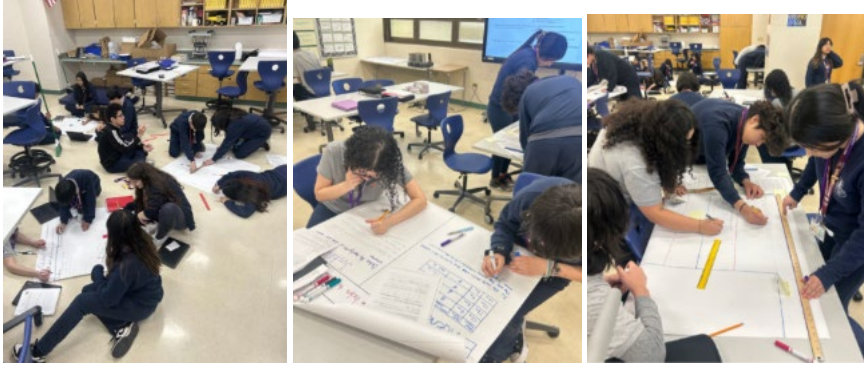
Biology students at FC investigate the stages of Mitosis.





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Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

FC STEM students investigate simple machines.



Zoology students at East and West campus visit the Lincoln Park Zoo





Students at East are doing a Solutions lab in core chemistry

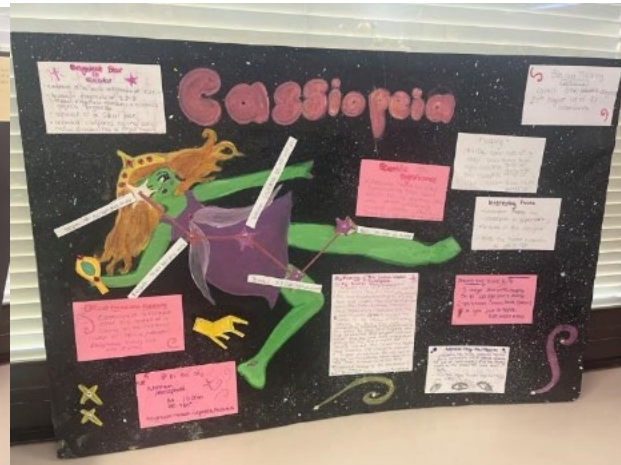
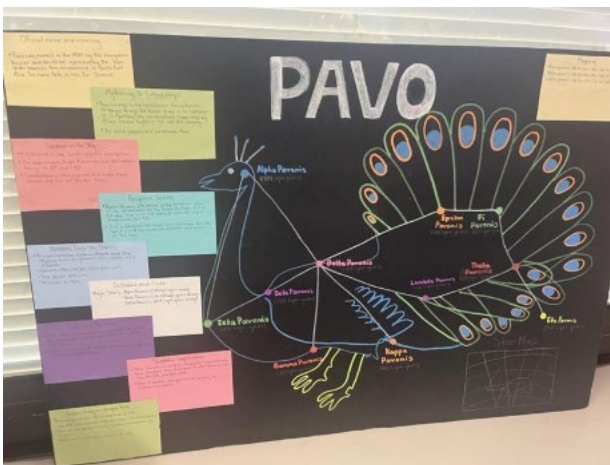
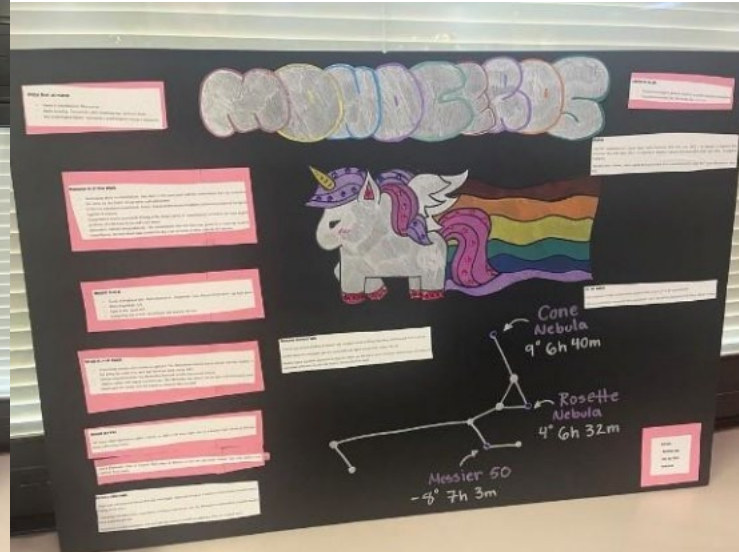
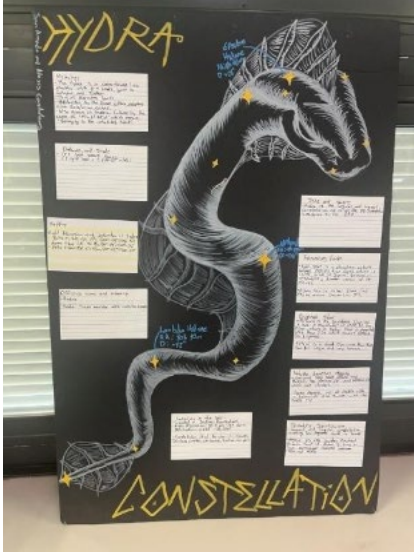


East MI students using chromatography and collecting highly fluorescent fractions for analysis





East Campus Astronomy Constellation Projects



East Campus students complete a Water filtration in Earth Science





East Campus students Dissecting sheep plucks in HBS



Students in Biliteracy Earth Science went to MSI





English Department – Megan Delaney, Director

Professional Development

English Department teachers across all campuses continued their professional growth through participation in ongoing Danielson 2022 Framework implementation, completing classroom observations and post-observation conferences aligned to the updated domains and components. Teachers also engaged in content-specific professional learning communities (PLCs), refining instructional strategies for ACT preparation, AP exam readiness, and differentiation techniques for multilingual learners. Additionally, cross-town collaboration sessions provided English teachers from East and West opportunities to share best practices, align curriculum pacing, and discuss common assessments as students prepare for spring standardized testing.

Curriculum Updates

English II

The English II CORE teams continued their synthesis unit, utilizing rhetorical analysis skills from earlier in the year to identify appeals, devices, and SPACECAT elements across multiple texts. Teachers employed C.E.R. (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) structures to support students in developing claims and counterclaims within their synthesis essays. Following spring break, teachers began collaborative planning for the upcoming novel study unit, developing common rubrics, shared materials, and aligned instructional strategies to ensure consistency across sections. All English II teachers successfully completed their classroom evaluations this month.

English III

English III students engaged in a variety of rigorous units designed to develop their analytical reading, rhetorical analysis, and authentic literacy skills. Mr. Janco's students concluded their Rhetorical Analysis Unit by examining Nelson Mandela's Nobel Prize speech, writing analytical essays that explored the motivations and emotions underlying Mandela's rhetoric, and participating in whole-class discussions on civil rights and racism to meet Speaking and Listening Common Assessment requirements. Students then transitioned to *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* unit, engaging in discussions about the high school experience and adolescent social-emotional challenges while reading supplementary articles on bullying and depression. Students answered ACT-style questions in Formative to prepare for the upcoming ACT test administration.

Advanced Placement Courses



AP Seminar

AP Seminar students at Morton East completed their Team Multimedia Presentations (Performance Task 1) with strong results, demonstrating significant growth in confidence and presentation skills. Students are now transitioning to Performance Task 2, the Individual Research-Based Essay and Multimedia Presentation. Teachers requested clarification on the uniform policy regarding presentation recordings, noting that students observed other classes receiving out-of-uniform passes and asking whether their students may record their Individual Multimedia Presentations out of uniform at the end of April.

At Morton West, AP Seminar students participated in AP Day at the Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, an extraordinary experiential learning opportunity. Six students, accompanied by Ms. Palazzolo and Mr. Rush, attended the day-long event. Students from eight Illinois high schools gathered for breakfast, introductions, and political presentations, followed by lunch and collaborative activities designed to prepare students to introduce themselves and advocate for AP programs to state senators. Students toured the State Capitol Building, met with Illinois State Senator Bill Cunningham (President Pro Tempore of the Illinois Senate) and State Senator Mike Halpin, and had the opportunity to speak directly with Senator Porfirio, with Brady Wyant serving as the first student to introduce the group. When assigned senators were unavailable due to legislative sessions, students met with administrative assistants to share their advocacy messages. The day concluded with a tour of the Illinois Governor's Mansion before the group returned to Morton West. This experience provided students with invaluable civic engagement and real-world application of their research and communication skills.



AP Language and Composition

AP Lang students across both campuses kicked off their practice AP exam administration this month, with teachers planning to utilize the assessment data to implement targeted interventions in the weeks leading up to the May exam. Teachers celebrated a significant curricular milestone: the successful completion of all



seven prescribed units in the AP Language and Composition Course and Exam Description (CED), with every single learning objective addressed and assessed. This achievement reflects two summers of collaborative course redesign and represents a major step forward in curriculum alignment and instructional coherence.

AP Literature and Composition

AP Lit students engaged in creative and analytical activities designed to deepen their understanding of complex texts. Ms. Lloyd's classes put Emily Grierson from William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" on trial for murder, with students arguing prosecution and defense using textual evidence, witness interviews, illustrations, and re-enactments. The jury successfully convicted Emily Grierson of all charges, with students examining her dysfunctional childhood, abandonment wounds, attachment issues, the callousness of her crime, and her complete lack of remorse. All AP Lit students prepared for and completed a full-length practice AP exam on April 9th to assess readiness and identify areas for continued growth before the May exam administration.

Senior Electives

Senior elective courses continued to provide students with authentic, engaging literacy experiences tailored to their interests and post-secondary pathways.

College Prep students completed Hexagonal Thinking activities for Patron Saints of Nothing, exploring complex connections between characters, themes, and literary elements. Journalism students created photo essays documenting their spring break experiences, applying photojournalism principles and visual storytelling techniques. Additionally, journalism students transformed articles they had written for the school newspaper into summary news broadcasts, incorporating multiple sources, producing note cards for their scripts, and recording their broadcasts into Formative as an interim assessment of their multimedia communication skills.

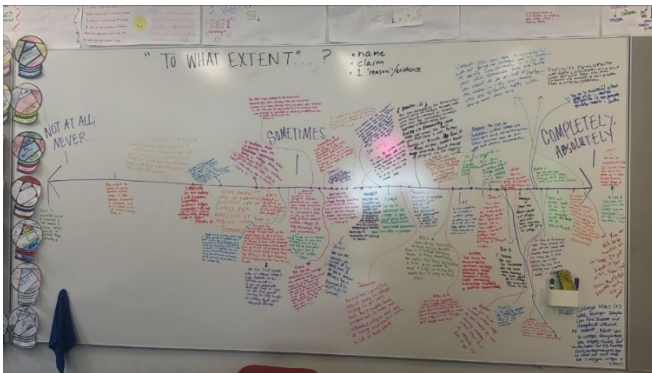
Staff and Student Accolades

The English Department continues to recognize outstanding achievements and innovative instructional practices across all campuses. Teachers demonstrated exceptional dedication to student growth, curriculum alignment, and professional collaboration throughout March, with recognition for those who facilitated author visits, organized field experiences, and created authentic learning opportunities that extend beyond traditional classroom walls. Students across all grade levels showed tremendous engagement, analytical thinking, and creative expression in their coursework, presentations, and projects. The department celebrates



FROM THE OFFICE OF
Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

the collective commitment to excellence and looks forward to continued growth as we approach spring assessment season.





Math Department - Megan Holub, Director

Curriculum Updates

We currently have three courses engaged in targeted work: Quantitative Literacy, Integrated Math III Core, and Integrated Math III Honors. Each team is focusing on breaking assessments into smaller, more frequent checkpoints to better track student understanding and respond accordingly.

In addition, teams are intentionally incorporating ACT-style questions across all grade levels to increase exposure and support ongoing, meaningful practice.

The Integrated Math III Core team has been working to align both curriculum and assessments with the 90–10 skills-based grading model. Starting next semester, the Quantitative Literacy team will begin curriculum development to fully transition to this model as well. AP Statistics will continue to refine its current skills-based framework to improve consistency and clarity in grading practices.

Additionally, Math–Science STEM collaboration is scheduled for February 26. Quantitative Literacy teachers are participating in a MyMathLab demo and reviewing Pearson’s Quantitative Literacy resources. Across all courses, PLTs will analyze assessment frequency and make adjustments as needed to ensure each skill is assessed at least three times per semester, promoting consistent grading practices and supporting the development of career- and life-ready skills.

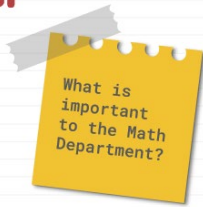
***Life Readiness:** Establishing clear and consistent assessment practices helps students understand expectations, track their progress, and take ownership of their learning—essential skills for success beyond high school.

LSS Curriculum Share-Out: On Tuesday, March 17th, the LSS team gave a presentation to the Principals/LSS teams about curriculum.

Here are a few slides from the Math portion of the presentation:



Math Curriculum Foci



Instruction

Creating BTC lessons, skill-based activities, and more projects



EL/SpEd

Incorporating more scaffolds and accommodations, biliteracy



Rubrics and Assessments

Refine rubrics, chunking assessments, giving feedback, student reflection and ownership of grades

Integrated Math III Core & Honors (Junior-level course)

- Skill 1: Create and Connect Mathematical Representations
- Skill 2: Simplify, Solve, Evaluate
- Skill 3: Analyze, Interpret & Justify

Skills Assessed



Items to Note:

- These courses were already skill-based.
- Moved to 90-10 this year with no time for exam adjustment
- We refined and adjusted rubrics
- Chunking assessments: moving to smaller, more frequent exams, assessing each skill 3-5 times a semester
- Major focus on instruction (BTC activities)
- Include the language of Math (RWSL)



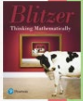
Quantitative Literacy
(non-STEM, senior level elective)

- Skill 1: Create and Connect Mathematical Representations
- Skill 2: Simplify, Solve, Evaluate
- Skill 3: Analyze, Interpret & Justify

Skills Assessed

Items to Note:

- New to Skill-Based
- Teachers need mini PD on skill-based, example assessments, practice scoring (use Fargo examples, Tony Reibel slides)
- Adopting a new book, pacing, online platform
- Re-writing assessments from scratch, with rubrics and grading on a 0-5 scale



What is to come!

Curriculum Dates

Math III: April 26th
AP Statistics: Senior Teachers

Senior Electives to Skill-Based & 90-10


Algebra 3
College Algebra & Trigonometry
AP Calculus

Rubrics on a 4 point scale

27-28 SY
We will drop the 5 and adjust the rubric

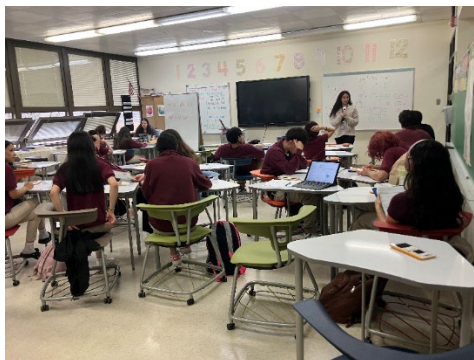
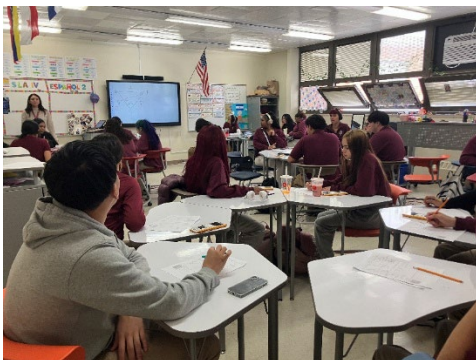
Instruction

Continued focus on inclusive practices and engaging instruction (BTC), include more RWSL



ACT:

Practice ACT Day: Math intervention classrooms were packed on the March 5th Practice ACT day. Over 200 students showed up to the math rooms and worked on remediating their D or E.



ACT & Assessment Alignment

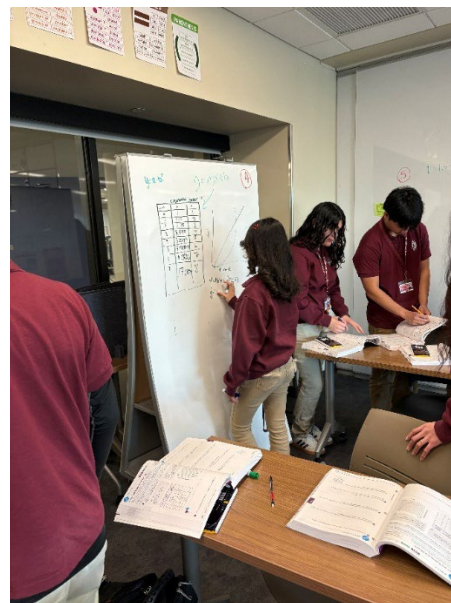
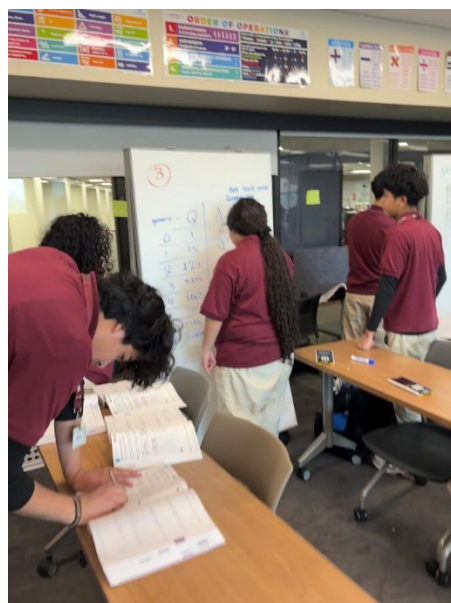
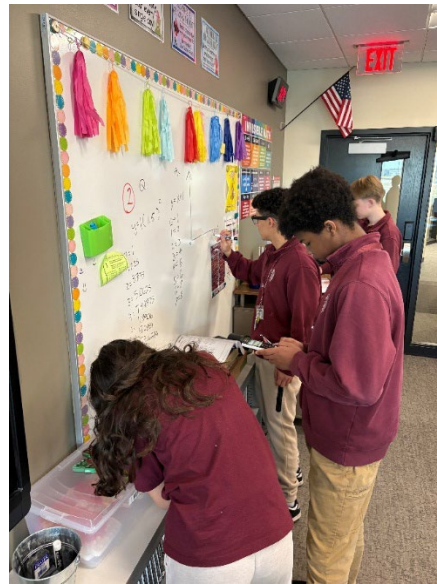
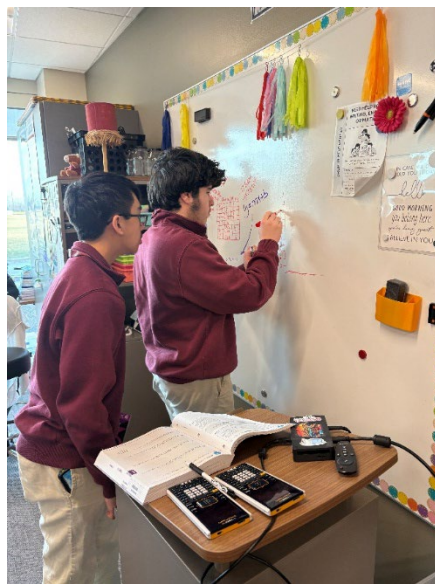
***College Readiness:** Across grade levels, teams are embedding ACT-style questions and chunking



assessments into smaller, more frequent skill checks. This approach increases exposure to college-readiness standards while helping students build stamina and confidence with multi-step problem solving. Frequent reassessment opportunities emphasize growth and mastery — a mindset aligned with both collegiate expectations and career advancement.

Great Things We've Done:

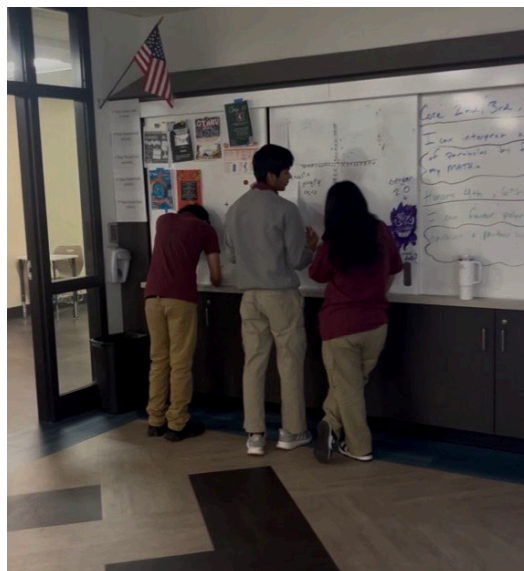
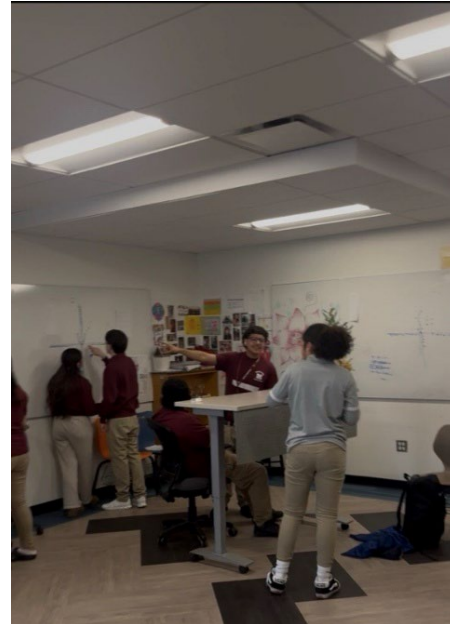
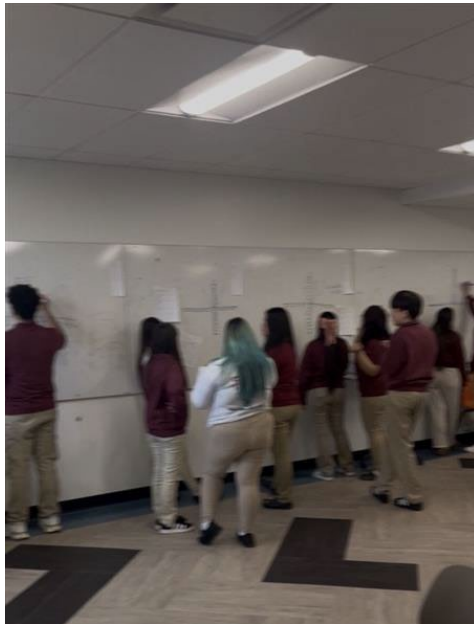
Building Thinking Classrooms: Students working at the whiteboards in Mrs. Terpstra's class.





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Dr. Josh McMahon
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs

Following the Full Day Institute Day in January: Our professional development to implement Building Thinking Classrooms, which are classrooms where students work in groups of 3, standing and doing math problems at the markerboards. See the photos below from the month of March in Mr. Elkins classrooms as his students are doing math problems “Building Thinking Classrooms” style: Students out of uniform were presenting in their AP seminar class.



Speed Dating: Here is Mr. Kieffer’s classroom doing a special activity: In the photo, we are doing speed dating so students "dressed to impress". Students worked with a partner for a 3 minute period where they had each other's answers. This focused on student collaboration so Ms. Valenti and Mr. Keifer really just



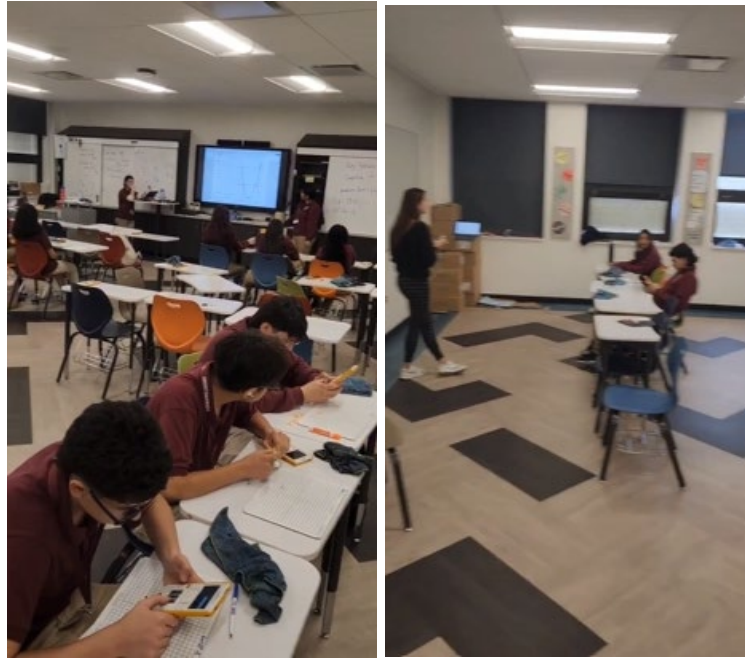
sat back as students taught one another or helped each other get to the correct answer. Disney music was also involved 😊



Note below, the pictures are where co-teachers Ms. Valenti taught one concept, and Mr. Kieffer taught another, and **then two students who were the students of the month were teaching key features of quadratics at the promethean board.** Those two students came in during my supervision to go over what they would teach and I was so proud watching them teach their peers. We allowed students to pick which session to attend and then they could switch or stay at each group after 15 minutes depending on their confidence on the material.



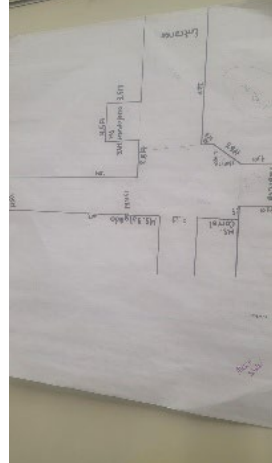
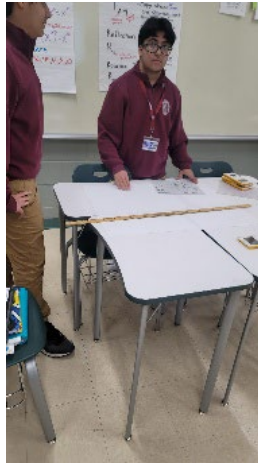
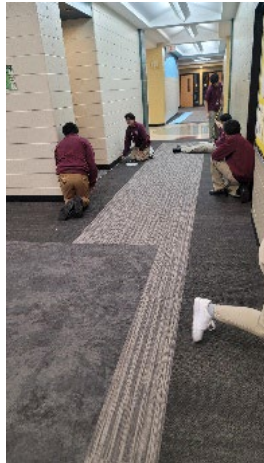
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East Math Teacher of the Month: Here is a department photo of us celebrating Kristeen Anthonen, Morton East Math Teacher of the Month:



Integrated Math I at FC: Ms. Corral's students calculated the perimeter and area of the carpet in the house area to apply what they had learned in unit 8 Honors on how to find area and perimeter of composite figures.



Instructional Coaches at FC: Ms. Medina used her coaching cycle to bring life to her idea of real-world math to her Applied Math FSI students. She had the help of Omar Sanchez, Libby Comeau, and Letty Ruiz where they organized an in-school field trip where students visited a mock restaurant called *Letty's Cocina*. Each student was given a budget of \$30 to spend on their meal, allowing them to practice the money skills they had learned in class.



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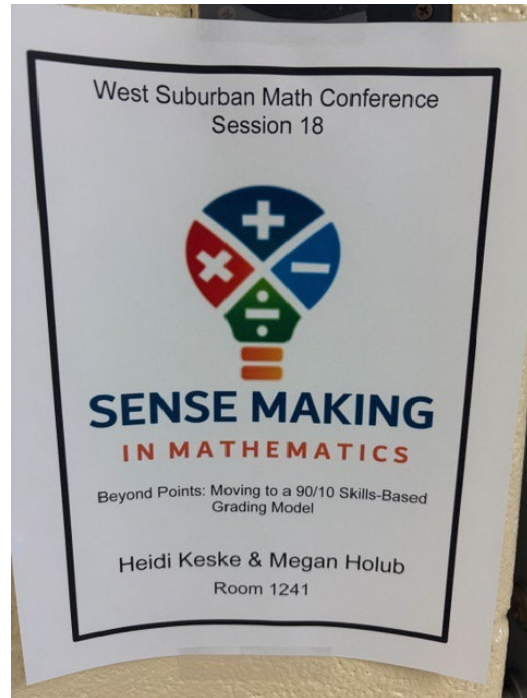


Professional Development:

2/27 Full-Day Institute: We sent nearly our entire Math Department to the West Suburban Math Conference at Glenbard South High School, where we collectively attended a wide range of sessions and brought back valuable insights. We were also proud to have several Morton Math staff members present, including Megan Holub, Heidi Keske, Rocio Dezotell, Gordon Dezotell, and Jim Dobrzanski.



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Job Fair at University of Illinois:

Megan Holub & Colleen DelMonaco attended the education job fair at University of Illinois on early March. We spoke with several candidates who were qualified and hopeful to work at Morton one day!



Mathletes:

- Morton West Mathletes: On Tuesday, March 10, the Morton West Mathletes proudly hosted our annual Middle School Mathletes Competition, welcoming students from all Morton middle schools for an evening of problem-solving and collaboration.



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Participants showcased their mathematical thinking in both an individual event and a team competition, demonstrating perseverance, creativity, and strong analytical skills. It was exciting to see students engage with challenging problems while building connections with peers across the district.

We encourage all participating students to continue their mathematical journey by joining the Mathletes at any of our Morton high school campuses when they begin high school. We look forward to seeing these talented students grow and thrive in our programs!



- **Morton East Mathletes:**

Morton East High School both hosted and competed in their fourth WSML math contest this month! Please read the report from Head Mathletes Coach, Mr. Volk:

On Saturday, February 28th, the Morton East and Freshman Center Mathletes participated in the ICTM Regional Mathematics Contest at Concordia University against Hinsdale Central, Lyons Township, and Oak Park River-Forest.



The following individuals qualified for the state math competition!!!

Santiago Zarco Rodriguez – 3rd place Pre-Calculus

Oswaldo Barron-Alvarado – 8th place Pre-Calculus

Pedro Alvarez – 5th place Algebra 2

Bryan Gaborit-Moran – 7th place Algebra 2

Juan Urgiles – 7th place Algebra 2

They will compete against the top Mathletes in the state at Illinois State University on April 18th.

Additional outstanding individual performances were turned in by Dorian Vega in Geometry and Juan Avina in Algebra 1.

The Pre-Calculus team got 2nd place at regionals!!!

Led by top-scorers Santiago Zarco Rodriguez, Oswaldo Barron-Alvarado, Jesus Brito, and Ramon Gamboa Robles they also broke a Morton school record by scoring 90 points in the Pre-Calculus contest.

We additionally had two record breaking performances by:

Freshman/Sophomore 8-person team – 55 points

Claudia Pina, Nayeli Gutierrez, Ariadna Villegas Mendez, Gabriel Andablo, Melinda Vazquez

Freshman Sophomore 2-person team – 22 points

Dorian Vega, Valeria Haro

As a team, the Mustangs scored a record breaking 419 points! Congratulations to all the Mathletes and their coaches: Barb Kane, Kevin Volk, Rachel Kaiser, and Matt Horvath.

Pre-Calculus State Qualifiers



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Algebra 2 State Qualifiers



2nd place Pre-Calculus team



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Full Team photo





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“And in a surprise announcement...In addition to the 3 algebra 2 juniors headed to state, the entire pre-calculus team has qualified for state!!!

Santiago Zarco Rodriguez

Oswaldo Barron-Alvarado

Jesus Brito

Ramon Gamboa Robles

Alan Mejia Gonzalez

Nahir Garcia”

Congratulations to all of our amazing Morton East Mathletes state finalists and their coaches!



Social Science and Fine Arts- Kevin Vesper, Director

Curriculum & PLT Updates

- On March 3, Social Science teachers visited Unity to observe eighth-grade students' Genocide Museum exhibits, an experience that provided a valuable opportunity for cross-school learning and collaboration. Teachers reviewed student work, examined how students analyzed historical evidence, and discussed instructional strategies used to support research, source analysis, and presentation skills. This visit supported meaningful dialogue between middle school and high school educators and contributed to ongoing efforts to better vertically align social science skills, expectations, and instructional practices across grade levels.
- On March 17, departmental teams presented district and building administrators with an overview of the key instructional and curricular focus areas that have guided their work throughout the year, with a particular emphasis on the development and use of shared skill rubrics. The presentation highlighted how these rubrics support consistent feedback, align learning across courses and grade levels, and remain adaptable as the district prepares for a transition to a four-level proficiency system, giving administrators a clear picture of both current practice and long-term instructional planning.

Built around 3 essential skills

- Comprehension
- Analysis
- Argumentation

Each rubric includes four "success criteria"

-These define what proficiency looks like at each level

This model is fully adaptable to a four-level proficiency scale

-This allows for smooth alignment once the District transitions to a 4-level system

Analysis: LCan Evaluate written and visual sources and data (including historical documents, literary texts, music lyrics, works of art, material culture, maps, tables, charts, graphs, and surveys).

5- Exceeds	4- Meets	3- Making Progress	2- Basic	1 - Getting Started	0 - No Attempt
Meets all success criteria at a deeper level, providing unique and thought-provoking evidence.	Meets all success criteria.	Meets 3 success criteria.	Meets 2 success criteria.	Meets 1 success criteria.	Meets no success criteria.
Success Criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and explain a source's claim(s), evidence, and reasoning. • Describe a source's perspective, purpose, context, and audience. • Explain the significance of a source's perspective, purpose, context, and audience. • Describe and draw conclusions from patterns, trends, and limitations in data, making connections to relevant course content 					
Student Self-Reflection:			Feedback:		

This example slide highlights a typical skill rubric used in a Social Science classroom.

- Morton West High School hosted Vietnam Museum Trunks for U.S. History students, providing an immersive learning experience focused on analyzing the Vietnam War through authentic primary and secondary sources. Students examined artifacts, photographs, letters, and informational texts to strengthen comprehension and historical analysis skills while evaluating perspective, context, and reliability. To extend this work, students also interacted with AI-generated historical characters representing individuals from the time period, asking questions and exploring multiple viewpoints to deepen their understanding and incorporate additional evidence into their analysis.



ACT Preparation Update

- During the month of March, Social Science teachers continued targeted ACT preparation by addressing specific reading skill gaps. Analysis of March 5 ACT practice data indicated that approximately 17% of students were just one to three questions away from meeting the benchmark in identifying central claims and drawing conclusions across texts. To support growth in these areas, U.S. History teachers implemented a guided ACT reflection that helps students review their practice test responses and strengthen these skills. Students then applied these strategies by analyzing paired World War II perspectives from the home front and the battlefield to practice drawing conclusions across multiple texts.
- The Fine Arts department supported ACT preparation by emphasizing physical and mental strategies for test-day success. Teachers implemented a brief, five-day bell-ringer lesson series that helped students practice stress management, focus, positive self-talk, and test-day readiness, reinforcing whole-student support aligned with the department's instructional approach.

Career Ready

- On March 9, Morton East alumni and professional event planner Julissa Stokes met with Fine Arts students to share strategies for promoting events across artistic disciplines. Drawing on her real-world experience, Stokes guided students through key elements of event promotion, including identifying target audiences, crafting effective messaging, and using marketing tools to showcase artistic work. The session helped students connect their creative skills to practical applications beyond the classroom and emphasized the importance of communication, branding, and audience engagement within the arts.

Professional Development

- Fine Arts teachers attended the National Art Education Association (NAEA) Conference in Chicago, where they engaged in professional learning focused on strengthening visual arts instruction and student engagement. During the conference, teachers participated in sessions centered on contemporary art practices, culturally responsive teaching, assessment in the arts, and strategies for supporting student creativity and voice. Teachers also explored ways to integrate new materials, technologies, and instructional approaches into their classrooms while collaborating with art educators from across the country, bringing back ideas to enrich curriculum, instruction, and student learning experiences.

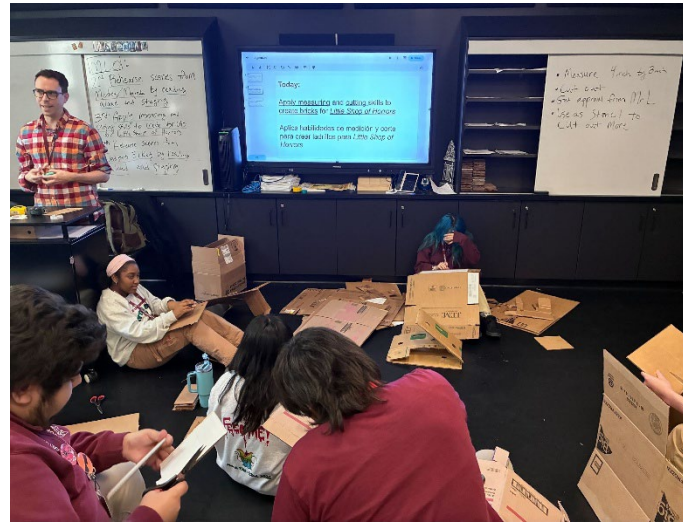




Department Highlights:



Students Addison Gonzalez and Jesus Cabrera deliver remarks at the Presidents Day Luncheon hosted by the Town of Cicero.



Stagecraft students construct set pieces in preparation for the upcoming musical.



We are proud to share that four of our AP seniors will have their artwork selected for the ArtConnectED Senior Showcase at the Bridgeport Art Center this spring. In addition, they will be eligible for potential college scholarships. Congratulations to Alisson Hernandez, Mariana Ramirez, Mason Dominguez, and Ryan Briana Orozco. Their selected works are below:



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Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



Artist - Mason Dominguez



Artist – Mariana Ramirez



Artist – Alisson Hernandez



Artist – Ryan Orozco



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These photos highlight an English and Social Science collaboration, where students recited a poem honoring influential Latin American historical figures.



On February 28, Morton East Social Science students traveled to Springfield to deepen their understanding of state government. In the right photo, Elizabeth Lisa Hernandez, Deputy Majority Leader and Cicero native, speaks with our students about her work and experiences in state government.



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Morton West students smile for a photo as they help make the Photo Club fundraiser a success.



Morton West High School is hosting a Vietnam History Trunk activity for U.S. History students, giving them the opportunity to strengthen their *analysis* skills by working directly with primary and secondary sources from the era. Students examined historical documents, artifacts, and photographs, and were even encouraged to try on select items from the trunk to deepen their understanding and enrich their analysis.



Physical Education / Health / Driver Education – Matt Koucereck, Director

College Ready

All three campuses have been meeting in PLT's implementing lessons to promote ACT readiness. PE/Health lessons initiatives include strategies in the following: literacy, numeracy, graphing, getting proper sleep, nutrition, and stress reduction. These lessons will continue throughout the month of April in hopes to strengthen ACT outcomes for our JSM students, but also create readiness for AP Testing.

Career Ready

The Morton East PE team brought in the Marines on Friday, March 27th. Braxton Whitney from the Marines is the TEAM Lead contacted our campuses to provide our students with the Marines Fitness challenge. Students in the Personal Fitness and Cross-Fit class were able to give their best effort in the gauntlet of activities that were provided by the Marines. Some of the activities were the following: Pull ups for muscular strength, and sprint activities for cardiovascular endurance. The Marines provided some teambuilding initiatives, that coincides with Illinois State Standards for Physical Education in the State of Illinois. Looking to connect with the Marines in the future, this was a great day for our East students and teachers.

Life Ready

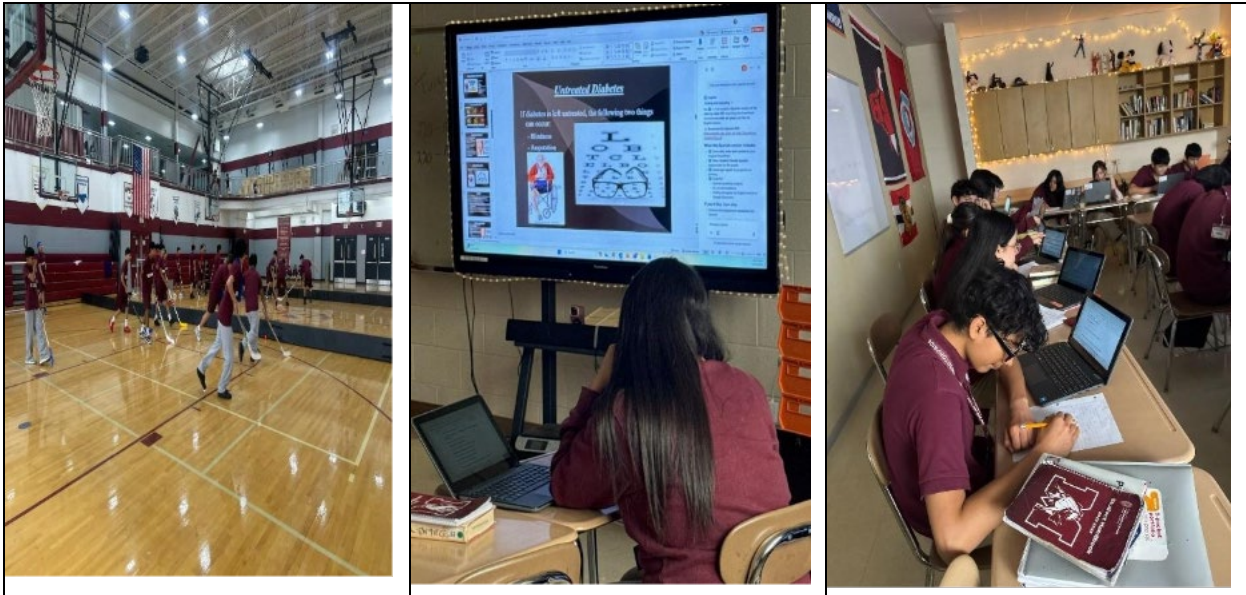
The Driver Education team has added its newest member to the DE team: Mr. Gordon Dezotell. Mr. Dezotell is a teacher at the Freshmen Center and has just completed his Driver Education Endorsement through the University of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois. Currently, Mr. Dezotell has been connecting with our students in Behind-The-Wheel at East Campus. Also, Mr. Dezotell will be working with West Students this Summer for the classroom portion of Driver Education. Mr. Dezotell is extremely excited to be taking on this new endeavor and looking forward to connecting with more students in District 201.

Freshmen Center

ASI students have really fallen into their routine with Ms. Gary. ASI students have begun dressing for class, following a routine of cardio and light fitness to start, and then structured walking, or game play. This will help greatly with their successful transition to Morton East. In Physical Education we have begun our third unit, Hockey. Students are engaging in workouts to start class each day. These workouts are formulated to increase FitnessGram scores and to work on overall wellness. Students will run a mid-term/practice round of fitness testing next week to see if they have improved since taking their pre-test in August, and to run through the tests again as practice. Health classes are currently in Unit 3, Nutrition and Lifestyle Diseases. Students will be able to decipher between healthy and non-healthy food choices, identify ways in which to manage weight, and recognize how lifestyle choices can create illness and disease.



Work by Ms. Duré's Student of the Month, Mason Dominguez.



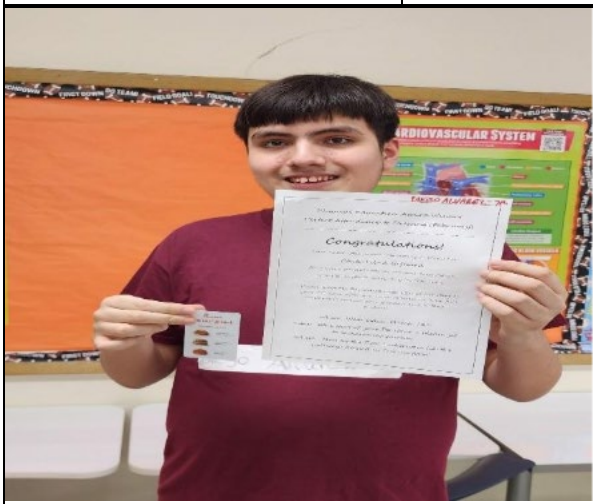
West Campus

Students have finished up their Unit 3 activities and have just started Unit 4. Activities include floor hockey, basketball, swimming, badminton & ultimate Frisbee. The PE Department successfully completed their February attendance/no dress initiative and 50 students will be receiving their gift cards tomorrow. PLTs met and discussed ideas to successfully help to prepare our students for the ACT test coming in April.





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Multi-Tiered System of Supports Department – Gloria Ramirez-Solis, Director

College Ready

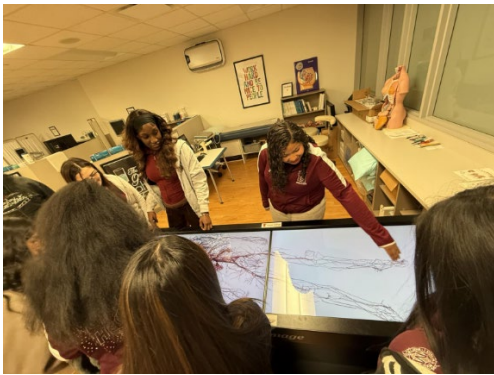
Career-ready efforts this month focused on expanding student exposure to workforce pathways, hands-on career experiences, and skill development. At Morton West, students participated in a field trip to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) to learn about electrician apprenticeship opportunities, while additional industry partners visited campus including Pipefitters Local 597, Auto Mechanics Local 701, the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, and a current Doctor of Physical Therapy student who shared pathways in sports medicine and physical therapy. Students also engaged with How To Fade Beauty & Barber, where they learned about program opportunities and received hands-on experiences.

The College and Career Center (CCC) hosted resume-building and interview preparation workshops, a pop-up job fair connecting students to summer employment opportunities, and military visits from the Army, National Guard, and Navy. At Morton East, all junior students participated in a developmental counseling lesson using SchooLinks to further explore and solidify post-secondary goals, with 96% of juniors identifying a major or training pathway. Counselors also met with students selected for next year's Work-Based Learning internships. At the Freshman Campus and MAS, counselors continued attendance intervention meetings, working with students with high absence rates to identify barriers and implement attendance agreements. MAS launched a partnership with Lumity to support 5th-year and at-risk students with career pathways, including stipends and transportation, and hosted Goodwill Industries to promote summer employment opportunities.





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Students visit Triton College to learn about Sonography Program



Students visiting with the Army during Career Month



Students visit the IBEW-NECA Technical Institute to learn more about what IBEW Local 134 can offer them as electricians and their apprenticeship programs.

Career Ready

College-ready efforts centered on strengthening post-secondary planning, access, and exposure across grade levels. At the Freshman Campus, counselors held academic meetings with off-track students, planned the April Summer Involvement Fair, and are organizing a May Day event focused on college and post-secondary awareness. Blue 1 students participated in a field trip to Morton College, and counselors met with Dayanara Diaz, Dual Enrollment and Dual Credit Coordinator, to expand access to dual credit opportunities beginning in 10th grade and increase summer dual enrollment options.

At Morton East, junior students continued post-secondary planning through SchoolLinks, with 96% identifying a clear pathway, and participated in College Week (March 9–13), which included a college fair and a field trip to Morton College. Counselors also presented to families during Coffee with the Principal on the One-Click Admit process. At Morton West, students expanded their exposure through a field trip to Triton College focused on sonography, as well as visits from Roosevelt University highlighting



cybersecurity and computer science pathways and Morton College's welding program. Additionally, approximately 75 students applied for local scholarships, demonstrating increased engagement in post-secondary opportunities.

Life Ready

Life-ready supports this month emphasized student wellness, decision-making, and proactive intervention. At Morton East, counselors partnered with the Assistant Principal of Activities to meet with students and reinforce the importance of attendance and maintaining on-track status toward graduation. At the Freshman Campus, social workers and psychologists hosted "March into Wellness" each Friday, providing structured opportunities for students to engage in art therapy in partnership with Cicero Family Services, yoga sessions led by staff, vision board creation, and Wellness Bingo activities. Staff also partnered with physical education classes to reinforce safe decision-making and awareness through "see something, say something" messaging. At Morton West, Student Services completed implementation of the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program with all sophomore students, including both instruction and screening for suicide risk, resulting in 72 follow-up student interviews to ensure appropriate supports were in place. Additional targeted groups were facilitated, including re-entry groups for students returning from hospitalization, relationship groups, and emotional regulation groups to support students' social-emotional development.



Cicero Family Services Art Therapy session for first Friday in March into Wellness



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Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs



March into Wellness with yoga lead by Ms. Vaughn.



March into Wellness Spring vision boards



Curriculum Review and Updates

Curriculum review and refinement efforts continue to focus on strengthening systems and responsiveness to student needs. The district is actively planning how to respond to Panorama survey results to inform next steps in student supports and programming. As of the April 24 training, all counselors, social workers, and psychologists at Morton East have completed the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) PREPaRE training, further strengthening the district's capacity to respond to student mental health needs through evidence-based crisis prevention and intervention practices.



Our East counselors highlight where staff members attended college.