



Prospect Heights School District 23

Board Memorandum

Information Item

Date: September 17, 2026

Subject: Curriculum & Instruction Update

Prepared by: Craig M. Curtis, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

This informational item updates the district assessment schedule, curriculum investigation work, and professional development plan in the district.

Assessment

Each year, the district prepares an assessment schedule designed to measure student growth and aligned with district and Illinois Learning Standards. This information guides instruction and supports each student's academic and personal development. Here's a link to the [District 23 Assessment Schedule](#).

Committee Work & Curriculum Investigations:

The collaborative work of committees is essential to meeting the goals of our Strategic Plan. Each year, these working groups are utilized to help evaluate the needs of our curricula for readoption based on our 6-year adoption cycle. While 2026-27 is an off-year for our curriculum review, and there is no official curriculum up for review, two committees have been established to follow up on curricula in their first year of implementation following last year's adoption. These committees are:

- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Committee:** The SEL Curriculum Committee will ensure implementation of the Illinois Social-Emotional Learning Standards, update pacing guides, and update implementation plans that ensure student, staff, and family engagement in our Second Step SEL curriculum for the 2026-27 school year.
- **Specials/Exploratory Curriculum Committee:** The Specials/Exploratory Curriculum Committee will ensure implementation of their respective learning standards, discuss curricular needs, and ensure student engagement in the new curriculum for the 2026-27 school year. Areas for this committee include applied tech, art, career pathways, digital literacy, family and consumer science (F.A.C.S.), I.D.E.A.S., music, physical education, Robotics, Spanish, and S.T.E.A.M. programming.

Professional Development

Professional development in District 23 is designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that certified staff members and program assistants participate in substantial professional development to remain current in their profession. This cycle of improvement helps us prepare students to be well-rounded and emotionally and academically prepared for success. [Click here](#) to see a comprehensive view of the District 23 Professional Development Plan.

Coaching Partnerships: For the fifth consecutive year, coaches within District 23 have the opportunity to participate in the Coaching Connections Partnership with instructional coaches from nearby districts. The group began as a partnership between Prospect Heights School District 23 and Mount Prospect School District 57 that provided coaches with like-role partners to help them grow as educators. Over time, the partnership has grown to include River Trails School District 26. In addition, the coaches within District 23 regularly take advantage of opportunities to partner with other coaches around the region as well. Over the past two years, they have partnered with coaches from Big Hollow, Lake Forest, Libertyville, and NSSEO, among others. This initiative is aligned with our Strategic Plan in the area of supporting and enhancing teacher leadership skills and capacity.

Gamified PD: This year, we are continuing our goal of providing unique, engaging professional development and coaching opportunities to support adult learning and growth by designing and implementing “Gamified PD”. This newly engaging version of professional development within the district is intended to accomplish the following:

- Increase engagement around professional learning, which will ultimately lead to intrinsic motivation.
- Increase customization and personalization by allowing staff members to choose tasks that are most relevant to their roles and skill levels. This self-paced, individualized approach ensures that the learning is directly applicable and not a one-size-fits-all experience.
- Foster a growth mindset by creating a safe space for employees to experiment with new skills and make mistakes without fear. This encourages an environment where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning rather than failures.

Here’s a peek at this year’s [Gamified PD info flyer](#). Please take a look to see what all of the buzz is about!

Standards-Based Practices: We are continuing to focus on Standards-Based Practices throughout the district as we head into our third year of the initiative. Last year, we partnered with Tony Frontier and used his book, *Teaching with Clarity*, as we looked to remove some of the clutter that gets in the way of providing clear communication to students and families. This year, we will shift our focus to classroom practices and designing standards-based lessons to directly impact our feedback to students. While we still have a great deal of work to complete, we couldn’t be more excited to see the past few years of work come to fruition.

In summary, we work very hard to provide opportunities for staff to engage in meaningful and relevant topics that can positively impact the teaching and learning occurring in District 23.

Should you have any questions regarding professional development in our district, please contact Dr. Craig Curtis.