WEST CHICAGO
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
DISTRICT 33
Together for Excellence ★ ¡Juntos por la Excelencia!

312 East Forest Avenue
West Chicago, IL 60185
630.293.6000
www.wego33.org

Board of Education

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Jenny Brunke, Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning
DATE: November 5th, 2026
RE: Veterans' Day

This memo is:

[x] Information only
[ ] Information with a recommendation and a request for Board approval by vote.

Date by which a Board decision is needed:

Previous memos on this topic can be found:
[ ] in previous Board packet(s) dated.
[ ] or attached to this memo

Basic Information:

This memo outlines the activities that students will engage with in honor of Veterans' Day, which takes place on November 11th, 2026.

Background/Historical Context:

Each year, on November 11th, schools across the country celebrate Veterans' Day in honor of those who have served and continue to serve in the U.S. military. The origin of this observance is as follows. In 1918, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, after four years of bitter war, an armistice was signed. The "war to end all wars" was over. November 11, 1919, was set aside as Armistice Day in the United States to remember the sacrifices men and women made during World War I and to ensure a lasting peace. On Armistice Day, soldiers who survived the war marched in a parade through their hometowns. Politicians and veteran officers gave speeches and held ceremonies of thanks for the peace they had won. Congress voted to make Armistice Day a federal holiday in 1938, 20 years after the war ended. However, Americans realized that the previous war would not be the last one. World War II began the following year, and nations, great and small, again participated. After the Second World War, Armistice Day continued to be observed on November 11. In 1953, townspeople in Emporia, Kansas, called the holiday Veterans' Day in gratitude to the veterans in their town. Soon after, Congress passed a bill introduced by a Kansas congressman, renaming the federal holiday to Veterans' Day.

Previous decisions, actions, or parameters that relate to this topic or issue:

The Illinois State Board of Education mandates that the persons honored by this holiday are recognized through instructional activities conducted on Veterans' Day or, if the day is not used for student attendance, on the first school day preceding or following that day. In addition, students and staff must engage in a moment of silence honoring those who have and those who currently serve.

Listed below are instructional activities District 33 students will engage with by grade level.

Preschool: Students will discuss how veterans follow PBIS pyramid expectations of being kind, safe, and working together. This will be included in classrooms and in the library.

Kindergarten - 5th grade: Kindergarten through 5th-grade classrooms across the district will be provided a choice board of activities to utilize with students in their classrooms. The purpose of the choice board is to offer autonomy for teachers in each classroom while still providing consistency in student experience across the district. The choice board includes a variety of options such as recommended texts to be read aloud to students by the classroom teacher or guest reader, videos providing information about Veterans' Day and the importance of those who serve in our armed forces, and various online activities aligned to the K-2 and 3-5 grade bands. The online activities provide information about the five branches of the U.S. military, the ways in which we can remember and honor those around us who have served and who continue to serve in our military, as well as discussion prompts regarding the various reasons so many people choose to join the military. The resources include primary source/image analysis and even math practice related to the topics mentioned above. Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures are used in conjunction with these activities to deepen understanding and improve student oracy skills, which is in alignment with our ACCESS and literacy goals.

6th grade: In 6th-grade classrooms, students will read and analyze a nonfiction article titled "The History of Veterans' Day." They will hold a discussion about what they learned. They will also draft letters to veterans thanking them for their service.

7th grade: In 7th-grade classrooms, students work in conjunction with the First Division Museum in creating "Thank You" cards to be sent to various veterans organizations such as One Savvy Veteran, Honor Flight Chicago, American Legion Cantigny Post 556, and local college veteran associations.

8th grade: During the week of Veterans' Day, students in 8th-grade classrooms are in the midst of their WWII Common Good unit. Highlighted in this unit are the contributions of our veterans, including the role and contributions of minorities and women in our military. An explanation, including the meaning and start of Veterans Day, is also shared with our students through the use of a knowledge-building activity. Students engage in learning activities using the online Discovery Education resource and meet veterans while on a virtual field trip titled, "Voices of U.S. Why We Serve".

Recommendations:

N/A