



2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

SKOKIE – MORTON GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT 69

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Ensuring the Best for Our Students



Dr. Margaret Clauson

As I enter my fifth year as Superintendent of Skokie - Morton Grove School District 69, I am constantly reminded of how incredible our district is and the 2018-2019 school year was no exception. Our Classrooms First (CFC) partnership, now in its sixth year with District 219, has already resulted in impressive academic growth, especially in the area of mathematics. The District continues to proudly build Community School partnerships that holistically support our students and engage their families, while building a strong sense of community and community pride. Our five-year Strategic Plan will enter the final year in 2019-20, having served as a successful road map, guiding decision-making and framing our continuous improvement. Most importantly our students are thriving within an engaging school community. As we look forward to 2019-20, I would like to highlight three main areas.

Early Childhood: In partnership with Infant Welfare Society of Evanston (IWSE), District 69 launched the Ready For Success network to support families with children aged birth to 5 years old by providing quality learning ex-

periences through a home-based program for 0-3 year olds and a play-based preK program for 3-5 year olds.

Lincoln Construction: We are excited to enter into the next phase of the District 69 Master Facility Plan and to continue to provide the very best for all students in our district. As part of our Master Facility Plan, the District has been engaged in discussions about how to address the major needs at Lincoln.

Strategic Plan 2020-2025: During the final year of our current Strategic Plan, one of the major focus areas is the development of a new five-year plan. The process will include a series of stakeholder focus groups during the early fall, which will include staff, parents, community members, community partners, and students. Additionally, a survey will be administered during the fall to augment the data gathered from the focus groups.

To stay connected with our district all year long, please follow us on twitter @SkokieSD69!

With Gratitude,
Dr. Margaret Clauson
Superintendent

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Meeting the Needs of Our Community



Steve Dembo

As Skokie - Morton Grove School District 69 parents and community members, we all feel a sense of pride and passion for our schools.

This past year reinforced what we already know, District 69 is truly a special place. From measurable student growth to an increased impact in the Community School Initiative, our district is thriving. The district has a strong financial footing and has passed a balanced budget for the 2019-2020 school year, but, most importantly, our district is continuing to meet the needs of our students and the community.

District 69's staff, teachers, and administrators work tirelessly to provide a high-quality education for our students. They are extremely dedicated and consistent in addressing the needs through initiatives and programs that benefit our community. Some of the highlights from the past year include the following.

Special Education: Our district is committed to supporting all students, including those with special education needs. This past year, a group of parents, teachers, and administrators formed the Special Education Learning Team (SELT) to provide recommenda-

tions to the district on how we can better support the needs of students with disabilities.

Community Schools: Research shows that community engagement can contribute to the success of students. Knowing this, District 69 continues to grow, innovate, and advance our Community Schools model. This past year, our team has provided incredible resources for our community.

Strategic Plan: Under our current plan, our students are scoring better, we have enhanced our learning environments, provided more resources to our community and we are communicating and engaging with our community more than ever. As we look ahead, we are excited to launch the process of a new, collaborative strategic plan for District 69. We hope that you will be an active participant and help us shape the future of our school district.

I am grateful for the leadership of our staff for all they do to educate our children and create opportunities that will sustain into the future. We hope you enjoy this snapshot of the 2018-2019 school year!

Sincerely,
Steve Dembo
President, District 69 Board of Education





Multiple Measures Show Student Success is High

In Skokie - Morton Grove School District 69 multiple measures and data sources are used to make sure the district stays on the path of academic success for all students. One of the important measures of success in District 69 is looking at student growth over time. Student growth measures like the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) identify where each student is at in the fall and then monitors their progress throughout the year with assessments in winter, and again in the spring. This information is used to differentiate the support that each child needs. In addition, this data allows teachers and administrators to look at cohorts of students over time and a lens to evaluate the curriculum and its effectiveness.

In Math in 2018-19, seven out of eight grade levels met or exceeded the national growth rate for their grade level. In Reading in 2018-19 all grade levels that implemented the revised literacy curriculum met or exceeded the national growth rate for their grade levels.

“While these results show students are receiving a high quality education, we operate from a continuous quality improvement framework to identify opportunities for growth,” Assistant Superintendent of Academics Dr. Megan Aseltine says. “Based on our detailed review of data, we focus on specific areas that we believe will have an impact on student growth.”

One of the high priority professional development focuses for teachers this past year was the implementation of new literacy materials. “Teachers in grades K-3 and 6-8 adopted new reading materials and this led to extensive training for our teachers during our early release and institute days,” Aseltine says.

One of the approaches to increase student achievement was an intentional focus at the middle school level to include more student discourse in the classroom throughout all subject areas. “Increasing the amount of student discussion is essential for comprehension

of the concepts being taught and naturally increases student engagement in the classroom,” Aseltine says.

In addition to typical learning areas, the District has a long history of integrating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standards into the school day. In fact, each grade level has dedicated SEL instructional time during the week. “Teachers use these blocks to kick off lessons that integrate SEL practices throughout the content and school day for students,” Aseltine says. “By focusing on SEL, teachers have been able to better support students, improve school climate, and holistically foster stronger classroom communities.”

The District is consistently evaluating curriculum and instruction to provide students with the opportunity to achieve high levels of success in school. Through professional development and collaboration teachers are supporting students in more ways than ever before.

Setting a Strategic Course for Student Achievement

Over the past four years, Skokie - Morton Grove School District 69 has implemented systems and programs to ensure success for students. New approaches to learning have been established, a host of partnerships with local organizations have provided students with additional support, and outreach to parents has improved.

A driving force in all of these improvements has been the district's five-year strategic plan that was established in 2015 as part of a collaborative process. That plan put the district on a course to increase support for students and set a new direction for partnerships and community outreach.

"Using the strategic plan as a guideline for setting and fulfilling goals has helped us to focus our collective efforts and had a huge impact on the student experience in District 69," Superintendent Dr. Margaret Clauson says. "The work we have done over the past five years forms a solid foundation from which to build our next strategic plan."

As the 2015 strategic plan concludes its final year, the district has embarked on another collaborative process to set the direction of the school system for the next five years. In July, the Board of Education discussed the mission, vision and guiding principles of the district and began to map out the process for the next strategic plan. To gather as much feedback as possible, the process will begin with a staff, parent and community survey later this fall. The district

invites all parents and community members to participate in this survey.

Throughout September and October, the district will conduct a series of focus groups with staff, parents, current and former students, and community members to help determine priorities for the next strategic plan. The administration will then draft a plan based on this input and present it for final approval by the Board. The goal is to finalize the new strategic plan and have the Board adopt it by March, in order to ensure that there is time to develop an implementation plan for the next year.

"We are excited to celebrate our accomplishments over the past five years, and to work on developing a plan reflecting stakeholder feedback that will guide our priorities for the next five years," Clauson says.



Strategic Plan Accomplishments

The 2015-2019 District 69 strategic plan has four major objective areas, and the District is proud to have reached major milestones in each area.

Student Achievement

- Students have met or exceeded the national growth rate in Math for their grade levels
- The district has significantly increased the early learning opportunities for students age 0-5
- The district established an inclusive Advanced Learning Program (ALP)

Learning Environment

- School-based behavior management teams have built common language and expectations for an improved learning culture and climate
- School Leadership Teams have received ongoing training in effective communications, collaborative goal setting and sharing/monitoring leadership

Resource Management

- The master facility plan was established and several building projects have been completed to improve learning conditions for students.
- The District continues to deliver a balanced budget resulting in a more stable financial position

Communications/Community Engagement

- Through state and federal grants, the District has built a Community Schools support staff team to holistically serve students and families in partnership with community-based resources
- Established regular communication channels including biweekly principal emails and regularly scheduled teacher emails



Supporting the Youngest Learners

Recognizing the importance of early childhood development, Skokie - Morton Grove School District 69 strategically partnered with the Infant Welfare Society of Evanston (IWSE) to establish Ready For Success (RFS), an innovative model for early childhood programming which offers families comprehensive support and resources prenatally through age 5, so children enter kindergarten ready to learn and experience a lifelong health and success.

“Early childhood education is the most important time to make an impact on a child’s educational journey, and Ready For Success ensures all of the children in our program have the right brain architecture to develop, learn, grow, and be successful,” says Stephen Vick, Executive Director of IWSE.

“Early childhood education is the most important time to make an impact on a child’s educational journey...”

– Stephen Vick, Executive Director, IWSE

Using a two-generation approach, Ready For Success provides a range of supports designed for both children and their families. Family Support Specialists

make weekly home visits and conduct monthly group programs for pregnant women, new parents and caregivers, and children ages 0-3. The program provides guidance in parenting education, child growth and development, and also gives caregivers opportunities to build skills through positive parenting interactions emphasized in the “Baby Talk” program.

At age 3, the children then transition to Madison Elementary School to attend TOPS (Teaching Our Preschoolers), a play-based, kindergarten-readiness program. The students and their families continue to receive the same broad range of support as in the 0-3 program, which includes medical, dental, mental health, vision, nutrition, social services, early intervention, special education services, educational supports, and networking opportunities. This July, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) awarded TOPS a Gold Circle of Quality, the state’s highest recognition for excellence based on 15 standards such as learning environment, instructional quality, family services, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, and professional development.

RFS is funded by a generous, five-year grant totaling \$4.31 million from the Illinois State Board of Education, and currently serves 60 families with children ages 0-3, and 220 students in preschool.

“I am proud of Ready For Success’ innovative education programs that are grounded in research-based best practices and will graduate young leaders poised



to thrive in school and far beyond, while also encouraging and equipping their caregivers to be their child’s first, engaged teacher,” says Superintendent Dr. Margaret Clauson.

The results of the program have been incredible. After this initial year, a parent comments, “I have learned many things, including new ideas on how to manage the problems that I face with my children. It also makes me feel that I am not alone and there are other people who face the same problems as me.”

Another parent states that the program has provided a support network that has led to better parenting strategies. “The parent meetings have strongly increased my knowledge on strategies that can be used to better understand and support my child. The methods I have learned are easy and can be used in everyday life, leading to a better relationship with my child.”



"In a short amount of time we've seen a significant increase in parenting interactions through our weekly home visits and group socializations," says Tiffany Culpepper, IWSE Program Director. "The eagerness from the parents to learn and understand child development, as well as practice these skills amongst a cohort of other parents, is simply amazing. Supporting families through this developmental journey is crucial to the success of our youngest learners, which is what Ready For Success is all about."

RFS understands that in the field of early childhood the demand is great for research to determine which strategies, models, and services best support young families. The IWSE-District 69 partnership is uniquely positioned to track children from birth through 12th grade by means of a single student information database, allowing for the study of the long-term impact of early support services on children during early childhood. To this end, research institutions and universities in Illinois

and California are collaborating on a multifaceted study to ascertain the impact of Ready For Success on a variety of areas of learning and development. As a result, in the years to come RFS will offer data and insights into how to best support our youngest children for a healthier life, success in school and beyond.

The Community Schools Approach: Improving Students' Success Through Family and Community Engagement

When you walk into a Skokie - Morton Grove School District 69 school you will see a variety of programs and opportunities provided by the Community Schools Initiative. From before and after school programs, on-site mental health and dental screenings, to Care Closets and Breakfast After the Bell, District 69 is working to support students in and out of school.

Due to strong evidence that shows the critical role families play in children's achievements, one key pillar of the Community Schools model is active family and community engagement. Knowing this, Community Schools foster intentional platforms and opportunities for schools, families, and community groups to work together to support student learning. Below are some highlights from the 2018-2019 school year outlining the unique strategies used to build these strong collaborative relationships.

Family and Community Engagement Work Group

Comprised of over 50 parents, staff, and community members, the Family and Community Engagement Work Group (FCE) sets annual goals and initiatives to enhance the impact of Community Schools. The mission of the work group is *"to bring together and empower families, schools, and community partners to build meaningful relationships that positively impact our students' lives."*

The FCE work group has worked to create a more social and welcoming approach to Family Nights that foster relationships and connections among District families. To do this, the committee provided guidance on several family events to create a warmer environment and allow for more socializing among families. In the coming year, the FCE Committee will offer additional opportunities, such as parent coffees on the first day of preschool and kindergarten.

Family Liaison Program

District 69 employs parents to serve as Family Liaisons who provide support for families speaking the top three district languages beyond English: Urdu, Spanish, and Assyrian. The Family Liaisons play a crucial role in building trusting relationships and engaging families within the District 69 school community. "Family Liaisons are the connective tissue between our families and schools. They share community resource information, inform families of school programs or events, provide translation services or simply support a family registering their child for school," Superintendent Dr. Margaret Clauson says.

To further engage families, the Family Liaisons facilitate Neighborhood Network meetings with parents who speak the same language. During the 2018-19 school year, topics such as Self Esteem and Resiliency,



Social Media 101 and a Community Resource Overview were covered.

The Family Liaison Program has captured national attention as the Community Schools team attended and presented at the 2019 National Family and Community Engagement Conference. The workshop entitled, "Family Liaison Program: From Translation to Building an ELL Family Engagement Foundation," taught participants how to build a structure to support family and community engagement through the Community Schools model.

The District 69 team has identified ways to support additional families, resulting in the expansion of the Family Liaison program for the 2019-2020 school year. District 69 has hired two part-time Affinity Family Liaisons to support African, Caribbean, and Black families, mirroring a successful program at District 219.



Community Education

District 69 hosts various cost-free educational opportunities for adults within the community. “Adult education courses engage parents and community members in their own learning, which then further supports their child’s education,” says Community Schools Resource Coordinator Sarah Rankin. Providing these classes and resources for parents within the school buildings decreases barriers to access, such as transportation and childcare. Additionally, hosting these sessions on-site fosters a sense of trust and connection among parents, school, and community partners.

English Language Classes

The Community Schools program partners with the ELL Parent Center to offer beginner and advanced ESL classes at the Maier Administration Center. These courses are open to all residents of the Village of Skokie and, last year, over 90 parents, caregivers, and community members participated.

South Asian Healthy Lifestyle Initiative (SAHELI)

To ensure students come to school healthy and ready to learn, the Community Schools model equips parents with the necessary tools and resources to support their own health and well-being. Through a partnership between the District 69’s Community School initiative, Skokie Health Department and Northwestern University, the district hosted SAHELI nutrition and exercise classes for 17 adult participants last year. The SAHELI study helps participants in the Desi community improve their diet, physical activity regimens, stress management, and weight to help people make long-term healthy changes.

TOPS Preschool Parent Group

The Preschool Parent Group is a monthly gathering developed “by parents, for parents” that provides opportunities for caregivers to find partners in parenting and to share their experiences. A monthly theme is chosen by parents and the District 69 and Skokie Public Library staff then provide resources and connections to the preschool curriculum so caregivers can support children’s learning at home.

“The library recognizes that our efforts will have a larger impact when we center them on the aspirations and lives of the people in our community,” says Nancy Kim Phillips with the Skokie Public Library and FCE member. “We are able to do that most effectively when we collaborate with others, and are happy to do so in partnership with the Community Schools effort, from participating in planning, to rolling up our sleeves at events, to jointly offering resources for the TOPs Preschool Parent Group.”

Looking Ahead: District 69 Family Ambassador Program

The Family and Community Engagement Work Group is working to foster one-to-one connections among families through a new Family Ambassador program. Parent and community volunteers will be trained to welcome new families to District 69 and connect them to pertinent information about District 69 and the Skokie – Morton Grove Community. “Starting in the district, my daughter and I were very shy, uncertain about what to expect, and struggled to make connections with other students and parents,” says Mandy Steegmueller, District 69 Parent and FCE work group member. “I am looking forward to building the Ambassador Program so new families have someone to reach out to and feel welcome, safe, and supported in the transition to school.”

Community Schools By the Numbers

23,191

after school snacks distributed

516

physicals, flu shots, dental and vision exams

230

holiday meals distributed to local families

125

Junior Achievement classroom volunteers

106

backpacks and winter coats distributed

92

parents enrolled in ESL classes

88

expanded learning opportunities for students

47

community partners

44

family events and information sharing opportunities

4

ongoing parent groups
connecting 125 caregivers

3

ongoing community school work groups
engaging over 80 stakeholders



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Meaningful Inclusion in District 69

The Skokie - Morton Grove School District 69 special education team focuses on ensuring that students with special education needs have the opportunity to thrive in a general education environment. The district's core belief is that all students benefit from an inclusive school and form meaningful relationships with their peers. "When all students are able to connect and learn with each other in the classroom, everyone has the chance to grow," says Kristine Joaquin-Schubert, District 69's Director of Special Services.

SELT VISION

Skokie – Morton Grove School District 69 believes students with disabilities are contributing members of our diverse community. In partnership with families, District 69 will provide meaningful inclusive educational experiences that promote student growth, independence, and attainment of individualized goals in their neighborhood schools.

Research shows having high expectations for students with disabilities and providing them access to the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible leads to improved outcomes. In order to accommodate all students, the District has provided a number of professional development opportunities to

enhance the inclusivity of the classroom. Professional development typically centers around academic content, however, a more recent focus has been to expand the expertise of special educators to address student needs in a variety of domains such as, communication, social-emotional functioning, and functional skills. Special educator professional development has focused on providing specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students and support students in more ways within the general education setting.

In addition to the professional development, the District continues to build out a holistic support system for students. "With a related services staff of Social-Emotional Learning Specialists, School Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, and Speech Pathologists, our schools can be more inclusive and supportive than ever before," says Joaquin-Schubert. "The district embraces its diversity and students are learning and growing in an inclusive way."

To sustain and evaluate the progress made with the special education population, the District formed a Special Education Learning Team (SELT) made up of teachers, related service providers, administrators, board members, parents and paraprofessionals. The team engaged in professional learning and was charged with developing a vision, guiding principles and recommendations for the special education department.

The SELT worked from last fall through January to evaluate existing services and supports. The team also

discussed philosophy, best practices and compliance with state and federal mandates. In addition, the group reviewed data from the school report card and learned about service delivery, inclusion, parent partnership and equity/bias as it relates to special education. In order to engage the larger community, the District held focus groups and sent surveys to parents and staff. The findings from the focus groups and surveys were positive and showed overall satisfaction with the special education program.

The District's Special Education Implementation Team will be developing a multi-year plan to guide the work in the SELT identified priority areas "We are fortunate to be able to offer such high-quality educational support to all of our students. This multi-year plan is critical to the sustainability of these resources and continues the quality improvement of our programs," says Joaquin-Schubert.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles were developed by the SELT to communicate the collective beliefs and values for future planning and decision-making.

- Individualization for Each Child
- Continuum of Service
- Equity
- Home, School, Community Relationships



Strong Financial Stewards

Each year, Skokie - Morton Grove School District 69 administrators thoroughly review and present a budget to the Board of Education. The goal of the budget is to strategically and responsibly allocate funds to support a high-quality education for all students. During a recent Skokie - Morton Grove Board of Education meeting, the budget was shared and two key messages were presented:

- The District's 2019-20 budget is balanced
- The District's financial position is stable and the district continues to spend responsibly

"Through careful planning and budgeting, the District has built its fund balance levels to ensure stable operations and support identified capital needs," Business Manager/CSBO Justin Attaway says. "We work diligently to remain prudent stewards of the community's dollars by living within our means and reallocating resources when necessary."

In order to monitor financial health, the district uses a number of indicators to determine effective financial management. Districts are required to track their Operating Expense Per Pupil (OEPP) which is the operating dollars the district spends divided by the number of students in the district. This is an indicator or measure of efficient spending practices. Of all the schools within the Niles Township, District 69 has the lowest OEPP, demonstrating an efficiency of monies.

The Illinois State Board of Education reviews all of the financial data for school districts across the state of Illinois and acknowledges high performing districts. This past year, District 69 earned "recognition" status

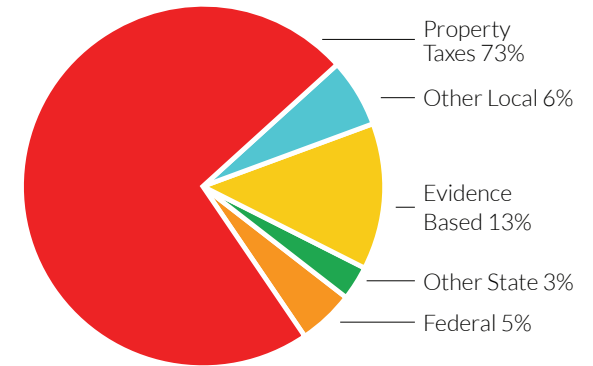
from the Illinois State Board of Education on its annual school district financial profile. This is the highest rating a school district can earn.

"We work hard to provide an excellent education to our students while maintaining fiscal responsibility for our community," Superintendent Margaret Clauson says. "Through cautious spending and strategic decision making, our fund-balance has grown incrementally allowing us to address our facility and programmatic needs today and in the future."

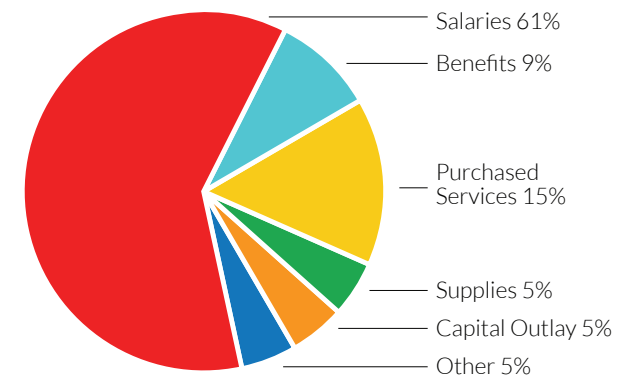
As part of the budgeting and planning process, the district looks at other factors that may impact the budget, such as property tax rates and village imposed Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs). The funding formula for schools in Illinois is heavily reliant upon local property taxes to support schools. This results in dramatic differences in tax rates and funding levels among school districts. The largest driver of property tax rates is the total property value (Equalized Assessed Valuation - EAV) within the school district, and a lower EAV directly results in higher tax rates assessed by the county.

In a comparison of EAV per pupil, District 69 has the lowest property wealth per student (EAV), in the township, resulting in a higher tax rate. There are several reasons for this including having a low number of large commercial properties within the District's boundaries. Most of the surrounding districts have large shopping areas that raise the total property value and shift a proportion of the property tax burden off of residential taxpayers. In addition, revenues are also impacted

Operating Revenue



Operating Expenses



by the Village of Skokie Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts as both reduce the available EAV to bring in funds for the schools.

"Considering all of these factors is critical to the financial health of our district," Attaway says. "Having a healthy fund balance and spending conservatively can help the district thrive and weather future financial uncertainty."



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Si desea esta información traducida en Español, porfavor comuníquese con Sandra Herrarte al Gracias

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إذا كنت ترغب في ترجمة المعلومات للعربية يرجى الاتصال ب: سوزان برخو على الرقم
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اگر آپ معلومات کا اردو میں ترجمہ چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی رابطہ کریں:
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