



Building a Positive School Climate to Support Student Behavior

Knowing that positive school culture and climate is necessary to achieve high quality instruction and learning, Skokie-Morton Grove School District 69 is focusing on new approaches to support positive student behavior. Last spring, building-based "Foundations" teams were formed to learn about a comprehensive plan for behavior support based on research from the Safe and Civil Schools organization. The Foundations approach is focused on the instruction of appropriate behaviors. Corrective procedures or "consequences" are just one part of the extensive plan for addressing student behavior, and are built upon proactive universal prevention. Additionally, chronic misbehavior requires individualized support plans.

As part of the District 69 Strategic Plan, a group of parents, board members, administrators and teachers met this fall as a learning team to set the vision, guiding principles, and recommendations for behavior support. The learning team recommendations were presented to the Board of Education in late winter and the Foundations Team was charged with aligning its work to these guiding principles and recommendations.

Superintendent Dr. Margaret Clauson shares that the district and schools are collecting and analyzing data related to office referrals and student behavior more frequently as part of this new approach. "Despite the fact that this



Posters at the schools help remind students about the expected behaviors.

is the first year, we have already experienced a positive impact on the culture and climate of our schools," she says. "Through improved data collection and analysis, the building teams can more effectively monitor specific concern areas and respond."

The work of the Foundations Team is complex and built on a premise of continuous improvement. The initial work requires at least 2-3 years of focused attention. "The entire program rests upon a system of proactive universal prevention," Edison Elementary Principal Andy Carpenter says. "This includes developing consistent expectations that are taught to all students using a common language, as well as building a positive school culture. Much of our work in the first year is focused on developing schoolwide practices, common area expectations, active supervision,

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Several learning spaces have opened at Edison School as part of the new construction. Two classrooms and the gymnasium are being used by students. The new cafeteria, fine arts classrooms, and main office reconfiguration will be ready for the start of school in the fall.



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Major Focus on Early Childhood Education

Research study after research study has shown the incredible impact early childhood programs can have on student learning; however, funding for such programs can be scarce. Skokie-Morton Grove School District 69 is doing all it can to invest in learning for children before kindergarten by partnering with community organizations and applying for grant funds.

"There is an identified need in the community for early childhood learning experiences and we know that the district cannot do it alone," Superintendent Margaret Clauson says. "We need to work collaboratively to meet the needs of all of our early childhood aged students. The research supports the long term return on investing in early learning experiences. Not only does it result in improved educational outcomes, but it impacts a student's overall health and well being throughout their lifetime."

In order to address some of the need, District 69 has applied for funding from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) in two grant categories: students 3-5 years old and students 0-3 years old. The District hopes to be able to continue to offer and expand its school based programming for



children 3-5 years old through the grant funds. The District also plans to collaboratively create a 0-3 year old home visit program with the funds. ISBE will notify schools about the funding decisions in late April or early May.

The District currently provides early childhood supports through its Teaching Our Preschoolers (TOPS) program that is funded through Preschool For All. TOPS serves primarily 4-5-year-old children. The program currently serves 80 students

Register Today for Preschool or Kindergarten

For information about enrollment in Teaching Our Preschoolers (TOPS) and kindergarten registration information, please visit the district website at <http://sd69.org/district-info/about-d69/registration/>

Since TOPS is a needs-based program, completing pre-registration does not guarantee enrollment into the program. However, once documents and a screening have been completed,

parents are contacted as spaces in the program become available. Contact Rosa Tosado at 847-675-7666 or tosador@skokie69.net with any questions.

Kindergarten registration is underway. To register your kindergarten student, parents will need:

- an original birth certificate
- 2018-2019 Kindergarten Enrollment Form

- proof of residency documents
- home language survey
- a kindergarten health packet

Copies of all required forms are available at the Madison School office or may be downloaded from the District 69 website. To be eligible for kindergarten, children must be five years old by September 1, 2018. Please contact the Madison School office at 847-675-3048 with any questions.

in a half-day format. The District hopes to maintain the existing program and expand to serve 160 students 3-5 years old with the ISBE funding.

Additionally, the District has partnered with the Infant Welfare Society of Evanston (IWSE) to develop a 0-3 year old home visit program. The



program emphasizes the parent as a child's first teacher and includes regular home visits and monthly socialization groups that include the parent and their infants. If funded, the program will serve 57 infants and toddlers.

"Early childhood education is critical to the success of all students," says Niles Township District for Special Education Executive Director Tarin Kendrick. "Capitalizing on the early years of children's lives is the best investment we can make as a society in ensuring their future success."

Kendrick shares that District 69 has always been strong supporters of early childhood education

and their latest initiative reinforces that commitment and demonstrates the district's strong belief that the early years are critical to the success of our students.

"Our goal is to give every child access to early learning opportunities that will prepare them for school and support all areas of their development," says Madison Assistant Principal and ELL Coordinator Sarah Aseltine. "Students who do not have access to early learning opportunities are at a disadvantage when they start school. Preschool also provides support for language development among English Learners."

Francesca Ramirez, speech/language pathologist for the Preschool for All program, believes the supports will provide a major benefit for students. "Children who participate in quality early childhood experiences are better prepared for kindergarten," she says. "This is particularly true for our most at-risk students."

"Over the years, our families have consistently complimented the preschool staff and program for supporting their child's growth and development during this crucial time period," Ramirez says. "These early childhood learning experiences provide the framework for success in school and life."

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and establishing positive interactions with all students."

In an effort to use common language and promote positive behavior, all three schools developed catchy phrases called "one-liners." Students were taught the expected behaviors and posters were created and displayed at each school. Examples of the age appropriate phrases are "Be Right ... Walk on the Right Side of the Hall" and

"Habla ... Be Language Appropriate."

"Students are using our one-liners and reminding each other of the expectations at Edison," Carpenter says. "Students are excited when someone is recognized for their positive behavior. The biggest positive is they encourage and support one another."

Director of Special Services Kristine Joaquin Schubert shares that the plan is not just a list of rules, consequences and "dos" and "don'ts." Foundations is based on a broad view of behavior and discipline. The approach includes establishing an improvement cycle that uses data to address school climate, safety,

discipline, behavior support plans and student connectedness to school.

Schubert notes that one goal of the program is for all staff to react to misbehavior in ways that have the greatest chance of making things better. "This helps staff to view behavior management as a collective responsibility," she says. "The school needs to have a game plan where each staff member knows his/her own role and the roles of others. The most important thing is for students and staff to build positive relationships, a positive school climate, and to engage in a frequent positive interactions."



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Lincoln Robotics Team an Elite Squad

Lincoln Junior High School is leading the way at the middle school level with its Robotics Team. The team was launched last school year through the support of the District's partnership titled Classrooms First (CFC) with District 219. Despite its infancy, the team has twice advanced to the state tournament that is open to both high school and middle school teams. This year, the Lincoln team was the ONLY middle school team in a field of high school teams to advance to the state tournament.

In March, Lincoln hosted the first ever township-wide middle school robotics competition. Five township elementary districts sent a total of 23 student teams. Each team participated in three rounds of competition with the top four teams competing for the championship.

This year, 54 Lincoln students are participating on the after school robotics team. Due to the large number of interested students, the team has two levels: experienced and first year. The goal of the robotics program is to provide students with exposure to using engineering skills to create a physical object and to learn collaboration and teamwork skills.

"They are a dedicated group of kids," says Therese Block one of the team's coaches along with Enisa Akgul. "Success in robotics is directly proportional to the amount of time dedicated by the students and this group worked on their robot over the summer and almost every weekend ... in addition to our regular meeting times."

In addition to giving the students much of the credit for the success of the team, the coaches are ecstatic about the impact of two volunteers, Mike Horowitz and Ralph Kiernicki, who are grandparents of two students on the team. In addition, she shared that the robotics coaches at West and Niles North have been instrumental in helping get the program started.



Lincoln students participate in a recent competition.



MISSION STATEMENT

Engage each child's passions to achieve educational excellence and foster positive character development.
Excellence, Passion, Character

VISION STATEMENT

Engaging students to be successful lifelong learners within a vibrant and thriving community.

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