

WINTER 2023

District 38 Strategic Plan Update

SETTING A ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE

CALENDAR

February 2, 2023

No School
Junior Kindergarten

February 3, 2023

Scamper Performance
7:00 p.m.

February 10, 2023

Drop-In (Grades 7-8)
7:00 p.m.

February 20, 2023

President's Day
No School (JK-8)

February 21, 2023

Board of Education
Regular Meeting
7:30 p.m.

February 28, 2023

Community Engagement
Digital Citizenship
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.



In recent years The Joseph Sears School (District 38) has seen many changes toward the goal of continuous improvement. We are excited to formalize these ongoing initiatives, plans, and programming in a five-year strategic plan that we will soon share with the community.

The plan is specifically designed to provide a clear, realistic, and cogent roadmap for all parties. The District's Board is responsible for actualizing this living document, staying true to its timeline, and ensuring that the strategic plan supports our student's ability to meet a central vision as delineated in our *Portrait of a Sears Graduate*.

A working draft of the strategic plan was created in tandem with select board members and the administrative team of The Joseph Sears School. This draft incorporates data and research from various sources, including studies, audits, and workshops. The full Board of Education, as well as faculty and staff committees and other stakeholder groups, provided feedback throughout the process. An online working draft is available to the public. There is the expectation that the final version will be approved at the February 2023 Board of Education regular meeting.

This strategic plan will feature many similarities to its predecessors, with emphasis on such themes

as student growth and facilities. However, this document provides a channeled focus on our *Portrait of a Sears Graduate* with five distinct strategic pillars that support this effort.

Importantly, we can now leverage a more stable school administrative structure in order to effect change. This is achieved through better systems and processes and accompanying measurements and metrics to benchmark progress. Curriculum review cycles, enhanced professional development for staff, emphasis on teaching to standards, and technology utilization, are just a few of the focal points toward creating a better and kinder culture focused on the whole child.

"We are excited to formalize the five-year strategic vision for The Joseph Sears School. There is hope that a concise, results-driven roadmap will be a means to rally all stakeholders toward the common cause of academic excellence," said Board of Education President Bill Graham. "*The Portrait of a Sears Graduate* is the hub of our wheel. Moreover, all we do daily should reinforce the Four Cornerstones of *Responsibility, Kindness, Honesty, and Respect*. We are grateful to everybody that participated in this important effort. As a Board, we believe this project to be a core responsibility of our District leadership."

Budget and Tax Levy Update

At the Kenilworth Board of Education's regular meeting on September 19, 2022, a public hearing was held for the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) annual budget. Discussions centered on the overall budget as well as key District initiatives that require financial resources. The Board of Education approved the FY23 budget with a vote of six in the affirmative, with one member being absent.

The FY23 budget continues to fund District 38's visionary Master Facilities Plan (MFP). In addition to financing the MFP, the FY23 budget commits significant District 38 resources to various curricular and professional growth initiatives, including technology upgrades, programmatic enhancements, and professional growth opportunities for staff. These efforts will leverage the new and renovated schoolhouse instructional spaces at The Joseph Sears School.

According to the FY23 budget, revenues for District 38 are projected to increase at a capped rate of five percent due to historically high inflation for the tax year 2022 that exceeds seven percent. As a result, revenues are expected to increase from \$15,204,143 to \$15,600,881.

Relative to FY23 projected expenditures, the Operating Funds (Education Fund 10, Operation and Maintenance Fund 20, Transportation Fund 40, Working Cash Fund 70) will increase from \$12,233,110.14 to \$13,650,199.21. Including the Capital Improvement Fund non-recurring expenditures to fund Phase II of the MFP, the overall budget increase year over year is projected to increase from \$16,200,544 to \$30,588,599.

Per the Illinois School Code and State Law, the Board of Education approved a General Tax Levy of six percent at its December 12, 2022, regular meeting. As the approved levy was above the capped rate of five percent, District 38 followed Illinois School Code guidance by publishing a timely notice of its Levy Hearing. The levy was approved by a vote of six in the affirmative, with one member absent.



State Report Card Results Released

THE JOSEPH SEARS SCHOOL RECEIVES SECOND-HIGHEST DESIGNATION

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) released the annual Illinois Report Card on October 27, 2022. The Illinois Report Card benchmarks how schools across the state are progressing on a wide range of educational goals and provides a summative designation based on the ISBE's indicators of student success, as required by the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act*.

This year, The Joseph Sears School received an annual summative designation of Commendable, the same as in 2019. This designation is the second-highest of the four markers that the ISBE awards schools.

Despite the past three unique and challenging years for students, educators, and families, students at The Joseph Sears School have still achieved at a high level in math and English language arts. From the pandemic's start, academic achievement and social-emotional well-being have been prioritized at Sears. As a result, while academic growth slowed considerably during the pandemic across the state, in line with nationwide trends, Sears students persevered. Furthermore, Sears students' English language arts and math achievement and growth reflect pre-pandemic levels. This is a tremendous accomplishment and is a testament to our students, teachers, and the learning environment cultivated at The Joseph Sears School.

Moving forward and using our strong performance as a starting point, The Joseph Sears School is well-positioned to pursue the highest state designation of Exemplary, given to the top 10% of schools in the state. In consultation with the ISBE, there are two

areas of focus to achieve the highest summative designation: increasing student growth in English language arts and math as measured by the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) and improving chronic student absenteeism rates.

Student Growth

Compared to pre-pandemic performance, Sears' student growth in English language arts went from 52% in 2019 to 49% in 2022. In math, Sears' student growth went from 58% in 2019 to 57% in 2022. While the decrease in growth rates is minimal, a growth rate of 60% or more is needed to be consistent with schools receiving an Exemplary designation.

A closer look at growth data showed Sears students having high achievement yet inconsistent growth varying by grade. Since growth is averaged across all grades, the inconsistency impacted the overall growth performance of The Joseph Sears School. For the grades where achievement is high and growth is below 60%, curricular alignment is needed. A new strategic plan and dedicated efforts to implement a curriculum evaluation framework in all content areas will achieve this. This school year, the math curriculum is being evaluated and aligned for implementation in 2023-2024; and next school year, the same process will be applied to the English language arts curriculum for the 2024-2025 school year.

While a fully aligned curriculum implementation may feel prolonged, a thorough and effective JK-8th grade evaluation is

essential to success, and Sears is committed to completing the process with integrity. In the interim, staff will continue to focus on meeting each student's academic needs by collaborating within the school community, engaging in comprehensive professional development, and conducting further curriculum analysis through Tuesday in-service days. During this time, the school's Curriculum Committees will identify near-term changes in programming that support student mastery of state standards.

Illinois Assessment of Readiness

The Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) is a statewide assessment that is administered to students in grades 3-8 to evaluate their mastery of learning standards in English language arts and mathematics. The IAR assessment was designed to test student knowledge of key concepts, critical thinking, reasoning, research, communication, and problem-solving skills.

IAR uses a five-level system for breaking down student performance toward grade-specific standards:

- Level 1: Did not meet expectations
- Level 2: Partially met expectations
- Level 3: Approaching expectations
- Level 4: Met expectations
- Level 5: Exceeded expectations

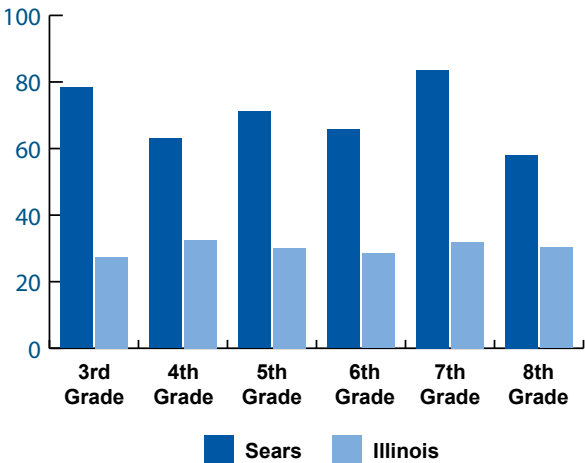
Chronic Absenteeism

Throughout the pandemic, chronic absenteeism rates went from 5% in 2019 to 18% in 2022. Students are considered chronically absent upon missing 18 to 20 days of the school year, both excused and unexcused. COVID-19 sick days were not included in this data. As such, attendance procedures are being reviewed to ensure chronically absent students are being supported effectively and have their needs responded to and met. Daily school attendance will also be a point of emphasis as an essential component of student success, and our Culture of Care will continue to be a focus for students to feel welcome, safe, and ready to learn.

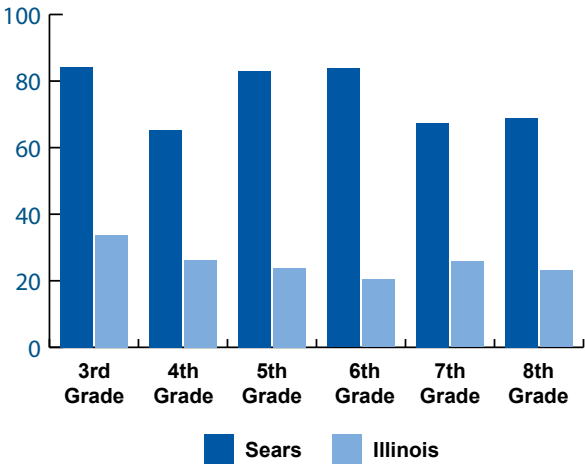
In addition to measuring our success as compared to other schools in the state by the ISBE Report Card, our strategic plan will include metrics specific to our school and the outcomes we desire for all students. These metrics will reflect student success related to all elements of our *Portrait of Sears Graduate*. These metrics will be publicly available on our website once approved by the Board of Education.



Percentage of Students Who Met or Exceeded State Standards (Levels 4 and 5) in ELA

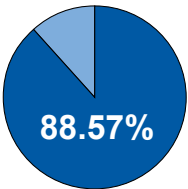


Percentage of Students Who Met or Exceeded State Standards (Levels 4 and 5) in Math

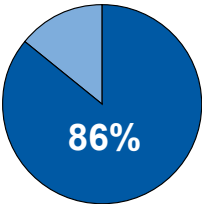


Growth and Achievement through MAP Testing

Student growth and achievement is paramount to District 38. Through the administration of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test to students in grades 2-8, District 38 is able to measure student growth and achievement, as well as learning, in reading and math.



88.57% of students achieved at average or above levels nationally in Math from Fall 2021 to Spring 2022



86% of students achieved at average or above levels nationally in Reading from Fall 2021 to Spring 2022



THE JOSEPH SEARS SCHOOL

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One School, One Book

RE-DEFINING COMMUNITY THROUGH THE POWER OF READING

The *One School, One Book* initiative was reintroduced to The Joseph Sears School this year to connect students with teachers, families, and community leaders across the schoolhouse. This initiative harnesses the power of reading to foster student growth and further highlight the tenets of the *Portrait of a Sears Graduate*. *One School, One Book* had students across The Joseph Sears School participate in many different activities that brought our local school community together and reinforced themes of courage, leadership, creativity, and compassion.

This concept began during the pandemic in the spring of 2020, with the administrative team recognizing a need for opportunities for school-wide events and celebrations that would be similar to a typical school year. For the start of the 2022-2023 school year, the concept of *One School, One Book* was reintroduced as a much larger program and more focused on the characteristics of the *Portrait of a Sears Graduate* as well as the newly implemented Caring School Community (CSC) curriculum.

Choosing a book that would be appropriate for all grade levels and that aligned with our *Portrait of a Sears Graduate* characteristics was paramount. The Principal's Advisory Board's Special Events Committee chose *perseverance* as the year's theme. In explaining their reasoning, the students said:

"We chose perseverance as our overall topic because perseverance is universally important for people of all ages. This makes perseverance an important skill to teach early on and ingrain further in older students. Especially in today's world, with the challenges of COVID-19 and the perils of the Ukraine/Russia conflict, learning perseverance couldn't be more necessary. As a school, community, and individuals, the past two years have given Kenilworth some difficult challenges to overcome. We have all persevered, and it is still necessary to continue to do so."

Our book, *Little Dog, Lost*, is a novel in verse about a dog named Buddy who is searching for a forever home, while a boy named



Mark is looking for a dog companion. During the story, Buddy and Mark, along with their fellow citizens in the town of Erthly, learn important lessons about perseverance, empathy, and the importance of community. School Librarian Lynette Bromiel notes that these lessons tie directly to *Portrait of a Sears Graduate* tenets:

"It spoke to many of the *Portrait of a Sears Graduate* pieces," Bromiel said. "I especially think the piece about being a Courageous Advocate is in the novel. Students in the book advocate for a dog park in their community. They all get involved that way," she said.

One School, One Book encouraged more than just individual reading. Various activities included video readings by students and student-led video interviews with Kenilworth community leaders to highlight the novel's themes. Additionally, older mentor students helped younger students engage. In short, it offers a multi-generational book discussion where parents and other special adults can participate and discuss themes and other significant ideas within the novel.