

FALL 2022

A Culture of Care

ALL STUDENTS. OUR STUDENTS.

CALENDAR

November 2

Junior Kindergarten
Open House
7:00 p.m.

November 3–18

Junior Kindergarten
Pre-Registration

November 8

Election Day
No School

November 11

Veterans Day

November 17

Fall Band Concert
(Grades 4–8)
7:00–7:45 p.m.

November 21

Regular Board of
Education Meeting
7:00 p.m.

November 23–25

Thanksgiving Break
No School

At The Joseph Sears School, we understand that now more than ever, our students need a sense of belonging and connection. The past few years have been tumultuous for students nationwide. Since the pandemic, student behavior development opportunities have been atypical, resulting in inconsistent social-emotional skills instruction, practice, and mastery.

The Whole Child committee, focused on Social and Emotional Learning, is responding to this reality and aims to build a Culture of Care by establishing a safe, healthy, and inclusive community and learning environment. Through our Culture of Care, we will empower all students to develop the skills that encompass the *Portrait of a Sears Graduate*—becoming a Courageous Advocate and a Compassionate Citizen.

Our new Social Emotional Learning curriculum, Caring Schools Community (CSC), is a comprehensive, research-based social and emotional learning program that builds a school-wide community, develops students' social skills, and enables a transformative stance on discipline.

This program promotes positive behavior through the direct teaching of responsibility, empathy, and cooperation and by creating settings where students feel heard, known, and cared for in their school community. Students become intrinsically motivated to contribute productively to a school community where they feel invested in and know they matter.

The CSC program is built around the following pillars:

- A focus on the whole school community
- Relationships matter
- Comprehensive leadership guidance
- A unique stance on discipline
- Creating calm, orderly learning environments
- Addressing inequitable discipline practices

"The vision of the Whole Child effort recognizes that we have done well in supporting our students' academics, but students are more



than their academic achievement. We have a vision of the whole human being we want to help nurture," Sears Social-Emotional Learning Facilitator Hilary Harvey said. "Kids have a lot of different parts. They have an academic part; they also have a part that is a friend, a part that is a child, a part that is a child of a bigger community," Harvey said.

The Whole Child Initiative aims to help those students be the best version of themselves, contributing to the Culture of Care and achieving the *Portrait of a Sears Graduate*, Harvey added. She describes the curriculum as a "... comprehensive program designed to help students become caring and responsible members of their school community."

The CSC program does this by building caring relationships with and amongst students, directly teaching social skills, and creating calm, orderly learning environments. Additional tenants of the CSC program include the direct teaching of social and emotional skills and helping students acquire self-discipline.

See CULTURE OF CARE, page 4

Construction Update

NEW SPACES FOR THE FUTURE OF SEARS



The start of the 2022–2023 school year welcomed students into the renovated Baker Building and its transformative learning spaces. The updates in the Baker Building include new junior high classrooms on the upper floor, shared collaboration areas for junior high and specials, as well as new practical arts and art rooms. This work is just one piece of Joseph Sears School's Master Facilities Plan (MFP), which is an overall framework and guide for our school's facilities moving forward. This plan will help support Sears' goal of all students achieving the *Portrait of a Sears Graduate*.

As you can see, if you have visited the back of the school, renovations are still ongoing. Through the

summer of 2023, renovations will continue within the schoolhouse and the Baker Building. By the end of summer 2023, Phase II of the MFP, which includes the addition and HVAC improvements in all areas of the schoolhouse, will be completed.

Phase III has yet to be scheduled. This effort will include finishes and additional emergency and security upgrades to the original building. Examples of finishes include flooring, ceilings, and lighting.

"The purpose of the MFP is to provide updated learning environments and instructional spaces that allow students and staff to implement best practices that are centered around teaching and learning," Superintendent Kate Donegan explained. "Furthermore, a key tenant of the MFP is to provide flexible spaces for students to collaborate, create, and critically think," Donegan added.

"The flexible seating allows students to work independently, with partners, and in small groups all in the same lesson. The openness of having bigger hallways, more windows, and comfortable furniture within the classrooms creates a warm and inviting atmosphere for our students," Junior High Social Studies Teacher Jeff Rosen said.

"The new space allows for easy transitions between group instruction and collaborative work with the students. Its openness also helps build classroom culture because kids feel more comfortable in the classroom. This also leads to more engagement from the students because they feel like the classroom is theirs now," Rosen added.



Junior High Math Teacher Cathy Quigley explained that the large size of her new classroom includes the latest technology, a variety of storage, furniture, and a versatile set of tables that provide diverse seating arrangements. These new additions have created flexible and adaptive teaching and learning spaces for her classes.

"The new spaces offer students more opportunities for collaboration," Junior High English Language Arts Teacher Anne Trueman said. "The students really enjoy getting into groups and sitting in the couch area and at the high-top tables. They have learned how to move the furniture from individual seating to whole classroom discussion in a big circle. The students feel very comfortable and are enjoying the new furniture," Trueman said.

Since moving into her new space, Trueman added that she has seen increased collaboration and communication between her students. This has helped make classroom discussions and group work easy and fun.

Welcome Back To School!

2022–2023 SCHOOL YEAR INTRODUCES NEW FACES TO SEARS

The Joseph Sears School welcome new faculty this school year. We are thrilled to add these professionals to our talented team of teachers and administrators to ensure all students achieve the *Portrait of a Sears Graduate*. Welcome to Sears!

Mx. Sophie Leventhal - Dean of Students

Dean Leventhal comes to Sears with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary and Special Education from Arizona State University. They also earned their Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Arizona State University. Dean Leventhal was a former educator, behavior interventionist, and principal in Evanston/Skokie District 65.

Ms. Emily Macklin - 5th Grade Teacher

Ms. Macklin completed her Bachelor's Degree in Education from the University of Arizona in 2014 and her Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction with a math focus from National Louis University in 2017. Before joining Sears, she taught 5th-8th grade math in Northbrook schools. Ms. Macklin is also a certified yoga teacher and loves bringing mindfulness and yoga practices to her classroom.

Ms. Annie Wood - 5th Grade Teacher

Ms. Wood earned her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts from Miami of Ohio University, initially leading her into advertising before shifting careers to pursue education. She earned her Master's Degree in Elementary Education from National Louis University. She began her teaching career as a 2nd grade assistant teacher at Francis W. Parker. She most recently taught 4th grade at St. Clement School in Chicago.

Mrs. Kerry Santefort - Physical Education Teacher

Mrs. Santefort earned her Bachelor's Degree in Physical Education and minored in Health Education at Northeastern Illinois University; she also earned her Master's Degree in Educational Technology and Leadership from Concordia University. Before teaching at Sears, she taught physical education for 13 years in Skokie, Park Ridge, and Chicago Public Schools. She was also chosen as the 2019 Northeastern District Elementary P.E. Teacher of the Year through the Illinois Association for Health, PE, Recreation & Dance.

Mrs. Kristie Cerniglia - 3rd Grade Teacher

Mrs. Cerniglia received her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and a Master's Degree in Reading from Illinois State University. She also has a library endorsement from Northern Illinois University. Before arriving at Sears, she taught middle school and elementary school library at Northbrook School District 31 for Field Middle School and Winkelman Elementary School. She has also served as a 3rd grade teacher, multi-age 4th and 5th grade teacher, and as a reading specialist.

Mrs. Sarah Knoeckl - Special Education Teacher in the TrueNorth Supported Classroom

Mrs. Knoeckl completed her Bachelor's Degree in Special Education at Illinois State University and is working on her Master's Degree in Literacy Education. Before joining Sears, she worked as a special education teacher for 13 years, supporting students with various needs.



Bottom row, from left to right: Sophie Leventhal, Erica Garcia, Kristie Cerniglia, Liz Jakus, Kerry Santefort
Top row from left to right: Sarah Knoeckl, Annie Wood, Emily Macklin. (Not pictured: Bea McManus)

Mrs. Erica Garcia - English Learner Teacher/ Junior High Interventionist

Mrs. Garcia earned her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts and Psychology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and earned two Masters' Degrees from DePaul University in Bilingual Bicultural Education and Teaching and Learning. She also completed the Reading Specialist Program at DePaul University. Before arriving at Sears, Mrs. Garcia was an ESL Teacher and Coordinator at Emerson Elementary School in Berwyn, IL.

Mrs. Liz Jakus - School Nurse

Mrs. Jakus received her Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from North Park University and is currently attending Illinois State University for her School Nurse Certification. Before joining Sears, she worked in the Emergency Department at Lake Forest Hospital and as a substitute school nurse at New Trier High School.

Ms. Bea McManus - Instructional Assistant

Ms. McManus received her Bachelor's Degree from Lawrence University in Music, pursuing a self-designed major, Music within Social Advocacy. Before arriving at Sears, Bea worked for the Kenilworth Park District and as an Assistant Director to Mr. Bill Gordon for the 8th grade play.



THE JOSEPH SEARS SCHOOL

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Back to School Changes

EARLY RELEASE EVERY TUESDAY FOR IMMERSIVE STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Starting with the 2022-2023 school year, students are dismissed from school at 2:00 p.m. every Tuesday to allow teachers and staff to participate in substantive, dedicated professional development. This format is utilized in many school districts with great success towards the goal of educational excellence.

The Kenilworth Park District and the JSSPVA offer student programming from 2:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. in areas such as yoga, STEM exploration, and cheerleading/pep squad. A Homework Club for grades K-8 is also available for students.

"The administration identified this early release initiative as a critical component toward providing our exemplary staff with all the requisite tools for success and continuous improvement. We are thankful for the parent community's cooperation and for the staff's engagement on these topics," Bill Graham, President of the District 38 Board of Education, said of the new Tuesday schedule.

CULTURE OF CARE (CONTINUED)

"As far as practices, community building is very intentional in this program. We have things like our morning circles, where students share experiences with one another daily," Harvey said.

To start the 2022-2023 school year, teachers, staff, and students wore name tags to help each other familiarize themselves with each other and the school community; this was all part of the CSC program.

"Another element focuses on ever-growing circles of community. You have your classroom, and you know those people, but then you look a little outside of your classroom, and you have a buddy from another grade level," Harvey said.

The Home Connection resources are meant to foster conversations around social and emotional topics at home. When parents learn their child is focused on taking responsibility for jobs in their classroom (supply helper, paper passer, chair helper, etc.), they can make a direct connection by having their child take responsibility for jobs at home (feeding a pet, setting the table, putting away laundry, etc.), offering real-world application and practice of important life skills.

This initiative recognizes that equal weight must be given to all facets of the students we support, the whole child. For more information, please view the community presentation given on August 30, 2022. The recording can be found on our website: www.kenilworth38.org/news/story-details/~board/migrated-news/post/caring-school-community-presentation