



CUSD 201 Newsletter

A District Update for Our Community | Spring 2024

SERVING FAMILIES AND STUDENTS FROM WESTMONT, CLARENDON HILLS AND DOWNERS GROVE

*Small Schools,
Large Opportunities.*





Superintendent's Message

Dear CUSD 201 Families and Community Members, CUSD 201's commitment to all our students is exceptional, and we are passionately focused on educating the whole child. From pre-kindergarten to our award-winning Westmont High School (one of the highest-rated high schools in Illinois and the nation—scan the QR code below), our students benefit from small class sizes, tremendously caring educators and a nurturing environment.

In my view, the best thing about our district is its intimate culture in which students are treated and known well as individuals. The entire team, from school board members to administrators to our entire staff, prides itself on consistently making student-centered decisions. The close-knit and cohesive character of CUSD 201 produces outstanding results, including some of the highest scores in Illinois for student-to-teacher trust, teacher-to-parent trust, parental involvement and academic engagement.

Compassion for all people is the driving force in CUSD 201 and is central to our students' growth and success. We maintain high expectations and genuine academic rigor. However, caring deeply for our students and teaching them to be thoughtful citizens who serve their community is at the center of what we do and who we are.

Examine the evidence, talk to our students and parents and visit our schools. You will find an outstanding school community fiercely dedicated to providing the very best for all our students, staff and families.

Jack Baldermann

Jack Baldermann, Superintendent CUSD 201

2022 Golden Apple Award for Leadership
2018 Runner-Up National Principal of the Year
2017 Illinois Principal of the Year



**SCAN
ME!**

[CUSD 201 ACCOLADES](#)



Our Mission and Vision

The Community Unit School District 201 mission is to educate and empower students to be academically prepared and socially responsible.

The Portrait of a Graduate and the working document of the Strategic Plan were crafted through input from stakeholders and collaborative efforts among administrators.

Visit www.cusd201.org/about/strategic-plan or scan this QR code for further details.



Portrait of a Graduate

The CUSD 201 Portrait of a Graduate is meant to guide students as they develop skills necessary for success in this rapidly changing, increasingly diverse and interconnected world. The three pillars of the CUSD 201 portrait are described below.



Student Agency

Engages in healthy and positive practices and relationships to promote overall physical and mental well-being.

Embodies a growth mindset to complete complex tasks and overcome academic and personal challenges to meet goals.

Engages in self-reflection for individual improvement and advocacy.

Demonstrates empathy, compassion and respect for others.



Academics

Applies effective reading skills to acquire knowledge and broaden perspectives.

Communicates effectively in speaking and writing for various purposes and audiences to convey understanding and concepts.

Uses technological skills and contemporary digital tools to explore and exchange ideas.

Acknowledges and understands diverse perspectives and cultures.



Higher-Order Thinking

Engages in problem solving, inquiry, and innovative solutions to overcome obstacles to improve outcomes.

Evaluate ideas and information sources for validity, relevance and impact.

Uses information in novel and creative ways to strengthen comprehension and deepen awareness.

Contributes to solutions that benefit the broader community.

Long-Range Strategic Plan Goals *(by the Year 2027)*



Student Achievement and Growth

100% of students will demonstrate adequate yearly growth in reading and math.

100% of students will engage in post-secondary exploration.

100% of students will engage in experiential and inquiry-based learning opportunities.

100% of students will demonstrate growth in student agency (Portrait of a Graduate).



High-Quality Teaching

100% of staff receiving staff development in aligned areas.

100% or more teachers annually engage in cycle of inquiry for instructional growth or improvement.

89% or higher of staff retained.

100% of teachers incorporating experiential and/or inquiry-based learning opportunities.



Student/Stakeholder Engagement

94% or higher attendance rate.

97% or higher graduation rate.

100% of schools will have the designation of "well-organized" according to the Illinois' 5Essentials Survey.

80% of students participating in service-learning opportunities and/or co-curriculars.



Alignment of Resources

Fund balances aligned with CUSD 201 Board Policy.

Complete projects on the capitol development plan.

Supported infrastructure and aligned instructional and technology resources for educating our students.

Personnel resources will be aligned to support the Portrait of a Graduate.



CUSD 201's Commitment to Excellence: Nurturing a Dynamic Professional Learning Community (PLC)

CUSD 201 PLC Life by Dr. Carla Braun—

One of CUSD 201's goals this school year is to continue strengthening our professional learning community. **Our district has adopted three big ideas that drive the work of the PLC:**

1 Focus on Student Learning

CUSD 201 staff members are fully committed to embracing high levels of learning for all students. This year, each grade level and content area collaborative learning team throughout the district worked to create high-quality assessments that match the rigor of the Illinois Learning Standards.

Additionally, our collaborative learning teams meet every Wednesday to clarify learning targets for our students, monitor their learning closely and provide students with additional time and support to ensure they're achieving the intended learning targets.

2 Focus on Collaboration

One of CUSD 201's greatest strengths is the collaborative nature of our staff, who work around the common goal of providing the best education for **all** our students. Our CUSD 201 staff consistently work together to plan and tailor their classroom practices to ensure every student achieves a high level.

3 Focus on Results

CUSD 201 staff members fully recognize that "their efforts must be assessed based on results rather than intentions" (DuFour et al., p. 13). We began the school year by reviewing our district-wide goals around student achievement and growth. Every Wednesday, our collaborative teams meet to review formative assessment data, identify areas of strength and growth and create data-based, tailored interventions to maximize students' success.

CUSD 201 is fully committed to the learning of all students and is proud of the work that our staff do every day to enrich our students' lives.





Celebrating Growth and Learning: Highlights from South School’s Dynamic First Semester

We will continue with our daily play-based learning activities at South, including kindergarten readiness. We will focus on foundational reading, writing, and math skills, with thematic units guiding our learning. We will also continue to prepare our oldest Pre-K learners for their transition to kindergarten in the coming fall.



South School had a busy and exciting first semester! As the year got underway, **South welcomed many new staff members:**

Rebecca Schmalkel, Classroom Teacher
Elyce Boonstra, Social Worker
Emilee Huntley, School Psychologist
Sophia Wakeland, Teaching Assistant
Hannah Ritz, Teaching Assistant

Christine Martin, School Psychologist (part-time)
Cristi Madlom, Student Teacher
Emilia Maslany, Speech & Language Intern
Cassandra Torrisi, Social Work Intern

South is so grateful to have these additional members join the team!



South also welcomed two other teachers, who have helped develop new specials rotations: John Baldwin (**Physical Education-P.E.**) and Rebecca Johnston (**STEM/ Library**), who have brought additional structured learning opportunities to our PreK students. In addition to these areas, our students also have the opportunity to **engage in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) lessons** led by Elyce Boonstra, to develop important skills further.



In October, South School had a **special visit from the Westmont Fire Department** and learned all about fire safety, including seeing a real fire truck! Throughout the first semester, students have continued to experience many new learning opportunities and even welcomed new friends starting in the program. With ongoing team collaboration across the building, staff are continuously working to provide students with individualized learning opportunities that foster school-readiness and pre-academic skills to prepare for their eventual transition to kindergarten.

South also had the opportunity to participate in the **Book Angels Program** sponsored by the Beta Phi Women in Education organization with Anderson’s Bookshop—where each student received a book of interest to bring home. As we head into the spring, the team is excited to have **Salt Creek Ballet** coming to South for another year.



Morning Magic: Building Community through Daily Greetings at Miller Elementary

At Miller, we believe that the start of each day sets the tone for a positive and enriching learning experience. That's why we've started a wonderful initiative this school year to brighten the mornings of our youngest learners—our daily morning greetings!

In our bustling halls and cheerful classrooms, something magical happens each morning. As our kindergarten and 1st-grade students arrive, they're greeted with smiles, cheers and a sense of belonging. Our dedicated team of teachers and staff has embarked on a mission to ensure that every student feels welcomed and valued when they enter our school doors.



Research shows that a positive morning greeting can have a profound impact on a student's day.

It sets a positive tone, fosters a sense of community and creates a welcoming environment for learning. Our morning greetings go beyond a simple "hello." They include high-fives, fist bumps, waves and even personalized greetings that cater to each student's unique personality.

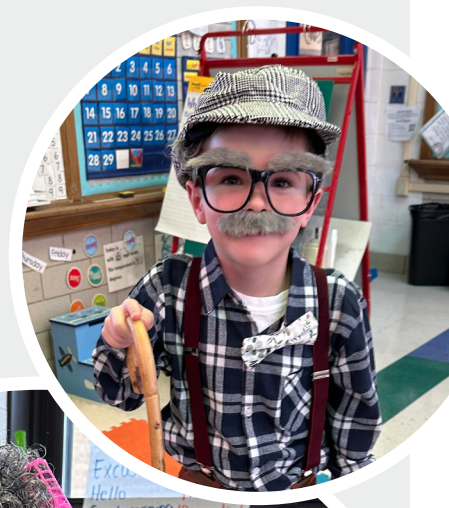
With enthusiasm and warmth, **our staff greet each student by name, offering encouraging words and gestures that instantly uplift spirits.** Our morning greetings aren't just a routine—they're a celebration of each student's presence and the promise of a day filled with learning, growth and fun.

We encourage parents to join in the excitement! If you drop off your child in the morning, feel free to share in the joy of these morning greetings. You'll witness firsthand

the positive energy that radiates through our school community. Beyond our school walls, we invite families to extend the spirit of morning greetings into your homes. Take a moment each morning to greet your child with a smile and a positive affirmation. It's a small yet powerful way to start the day on a bright note.

As we continue to **foster a nurturing environment at Miller**, we look forward to the many smiles and cheers that will fill our hallways each morning. Together, we can make every day a great day for our kindergarten and 1st-grade students!

Go Mustangs!



Happy 100th Day, Miller Mustangs! From silver wigs to walking canes, we're marking 100 days of laughter and learning. Here's to the next 100 days of growth and memories!



The Manning Magic: A Shift in Atmosphere at Manning Elementary

Manning Elementary is a great school filled with even greater students and staff! But there is something happening...a shift in the atmosphere.

While this change takes absolutely nothing away from the years past, it speaks volumes about the current climate that's felt when you enter the doors of this elementary school.

Students are working, people are smiling and if you stand still and listen closely... you might even hear the sound of laughter because at Manning School, people are happy, and it shows! The data reveals an **increase in student attendance and a decrease in tardiness**. This simply means that students want to be at school, and they want to be on time!

And it's no wonder; students are learning, earning and burning with excitement to be rewarded for their hard work! **Manning Moolah** is given to those students who display positive behavior consistently. There's a schoolwide push for everyone to see and acknowledge efforts with the **Manning Meteor Shout-Outs**, and there are a variety of **clubs and activities** for students to get involved in during and after school.

So believe it when we say there is indeed a climate change happening here at Manning Elementary! We're keeping true to our established **expectations of being respectful, responsible and safe—and now we've added kind to the list**. With the consistent teaching of these four concepts, visitors will feel this awesome change and hopefully spread the word about this school doing great things because of some even greater people!

Reading with Chickens!

Manning launched a reading initiative involving third-grade students in reading sessions with chickens. The students thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and their reading skills flourished!

Thanks to Colleen Alexander, Manning School Nurse, for spearheading an incredible initiative to combine the love for chickens with a passion for reading!





Rethinking School Lunches and Good Cafeteria Behavior

Elementary students eagerly await “Try It Tuesday” and “Never Repeat a Meal Menu” in their cafeterias. These initiatives stem from a dedicated committee and teacher’s mission to instill healthy eating habits from kindergarten to fifth grade. “Fun Fridays,” a student incentive program for good behavior during lunch, is also seeing notably improved cafeteria behavior.

A Tasty Journey Towards Healthy Eating

Manning and Miller students eagerly line up in the cafeteria every month, ready to embark on a delicious journey known as “Try It Tuesday.” But what’s the story behind this exciting initiative, and why do our elementary students believe they might get popcorn with their chicken? Let’s delve into this remarkable transformation.

The cafeteria underwent a significant overhaul, introducing nutritious changes like zero trans-fat products, low-fat cheese pizza with whole-grain crusts and a shift to serving white meat chicken. Fresh fruits and vegetables became more accessible, and even canned fruits received an upgrade to convenient, easy-to-open fruit cups.

These menu improvements were well-received, reflected in increased student participation compared to the previous year. The committee didn’t stop there, introducing “Try It Tuesday” as a **brilliant strategy to entice students with monthly samples of new dishes.**

The plan, executed with the support of three passionate moms and former chefs with students at Miller and Manning Schools, aimed to encourage healthier meal choices. The commitment of the committee and the expertise of the moms have **paved the way for a brighter, healthier future for these young food enthusiasts.**

“Try It Tuesday” brought joy and curiosity to elementary students, even creating amusing misconceptions like the possibility of receiving popcorn with their chicken.

Fun Friday with Mrs. Pool, Food Service Specialist

Mrs. Pool’s “Fun Friday” is Manning’s exciting new **incentive program for good behavior during lunch.** Students aim to meet three daily goals: responsibility, cafeteria cleanliness and maintaining noise level 1. Each grade level earns points, and the highest-scoring grade is chosen from rewards like chocolate milk or open seating. Since its launch last month, the program has **notably improved cafeteria behavior.** Fourth grade dominated until fifth grade recently clinched victory.

Additionally, Mrs. Pool introduced the **“Never Repeat a Meal Menu,” which was crafted with student input.** New menu items include grilled cheese with tomato soup, orange chicken with brown rice and build-your-own pizza. Breakfast offerings now feature strawberry yogurt parfaits and chocolate waffles, among others, along with expanded fruit and vegetable options.

We applaud Mrs. Pool for Fun Fridays and the innovative menu additions. **Manning is fortunate to have her culinary creativity and dedication!**





Reimagining Literacy: Inside the Vibrant Transformation of the Junior High Media Center

Westmont Junior High School's media center is buzzing with excitement and revitalization this year, and we're thrilled to share the remarkable activities that have transformed it into the heart of our learning community!

Our media center has evolved into a dynamic learning space where the love of reading thrives, new literary worlds are explored and students and staff alike are empowered to discover the magic of books.

With such a rich array of activities and engagement, our school community continues to flourish through the power of literature.

We launched the year with a grand reopening of our Media Center, sparking a year filled with literary adventures and reinforcing our commitment to a culture of literacy.

Each week, we **introduce students to captivating new books** by reading the first chapter aloud. This tradition fuels the excitement for reading and keeps our students eagerly awaiting their next literary journey.

Our dedicated librarians have worked tirelessly to share their love of books with our students, fostering a deep and lasting love for reading. We've broadened our students' horizons by exposing them to books they might not have discovered on their own. **Our diverse book collection encourages the exploration of new genres and authors.**

Every month, we proudly showcase our **"Top 5 Book Reads."** This selection is carefully curated to capture the attention of even the most reluctant readers, drawing them into the enchanting world of literature. In just the first two months of school, we experienced an astonishing **40% increase in the number of books checked out.** Our students are not only reading more but are also eager to explore the treasures our library holds.

Our **successful Book Fair initiative** has ensured that many books have found their way into classrooms, extending the love for reading beyond the library.

Thank you to everyone who contributed!

We invite you to join us on this literary journey as we explore the boundless possibilities our media center offers!





Westmont High School: At the Forefront of Education

“It’s truly an honor to lead such an extraordinary group of educators and students. These achievements are a testament to the hard work, dedication and passion of our entire school community.”

—DR. KEVIN WECK, PRINCIPAL OF WESTMONT HIGH SCHOOL, ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF WHS STUDENTS AND STAFF

Westmont High School has, once again, proven itself to be one of the best high schools in Illinois.

Numerous accolades and awards for our outstanding academic performance include:

2018-23 Consistently earned “Exemplary” (highest rating) by the IL State Board of Education

#14 Ranked “Best High Schools” by *US News and World Report* (2023-24)

#3 Ranked “Regular High School in Illinois” by *The Washington Post: Challenge Index* (2023)

Most Improved Advanced Placement (AP) program in the U.S. (2023)

Best “5Essentials Survey” results in Illinois (2018-2023)

10/10 “Great Schools” Zillow (2020-23)

DuFour Award Best Professional Learning Community (PLC) in the U.S. (\$25,000 prize) (2020)

National Blue Ribbon Award For Excellence (2021)

Academic and Personal Growth

Westmont High School is committed to a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum, coupled with an emphasis on extracurricular involvement. It has created a nurturing environment where students excel both academically and personally.

Care for Self and Others

Westmont High School has a strong tradition of giving back to its community. The school’s students regularly participate in volunteer activities and service projects with our local People’s Resource Center, making a positive impact across Westmont. Our students are exemplary and compassionate; their care for their community is genuine and their impact is invaluable.

Innovative and Critical Thinkers

While we’re certainly proud of the awards and accolades we’ve achieved, our school continues to value the holistic development of our students. It is this unwavering commitment to molding future leaders, thinkers and innovators that truly sets our school apart.

We are All in this Together!

With a legacy of excellence and a vision for the future, Westmont High School is a testament to what is achievable when a community comes together to prioritize quality education.

CAPAOW!

CAPAOW! (Club of Asian and Pacific Americans of Westmont) is in its inaugural year (2022-23) at Westmont High School. Initiated by a group of students of Asian descent, the club **focuses on fostering social interactions, unity and awareness of Asian American history and culture.**

Co-sponsored by Jeremy Bautista and Maria Schillinger, CAPAOW! meets during lunch, allowing students to discuss activities and topics of interest. The club has co-hosted events on AAPI representation in mass media, celebrated Lunar New Year through paper cuttings and visited H Mart in Naperville. AAPI Heritage Month in May is also on their agenda.

“To me, CAPAOW! isn’t just an extracurricular activity but rather a community of my peers that allows my school to welcome diverse experiences and meaningful representations of AAPI heritage.”

—CO-PRESIDENT AND SENIOR HAILEY BUTUSOV





A Look into CUSD 201's Committee Framework

Policy Committee

Responsible for reviewing PRESS Policy Services recommendations and presenting them to the School Board for approval. Meets twice each year.

Finance Committee

Meets quarterly to review district finances, including budget, levy, projections and audit. Focuses on providing transparency to the public. Learn about Illinois School District Budgets at: www.cusd201.org/departments/finance-operations

Facility Planning Committee

Established to assess multi-million dollar projects and determine the need for a referendum. This committee is temporary and meets as needed. Contact facilityplanning@cusd201.org for inquiries or to join.

Strategic Plan Committee

Oversees the advancement of the district's strategic plan and meets as needed. Available for review at: www.cusd201.org/about/strategic-plan

Public Relations Committee

Dedicated to fostering positive relationships and enhancing the district's image through targeted communication and community involvement. Monthly meetings take place at South School, located at 133 South Grant Street, Westmont, IL 60559 and are open to the public. Scan for additional details.



Celebrating Reading: CUSD 201 Hosts Illinois Reads Event

CUSD 201 recently hosted the Illinois Reads event, a statewide initiative by the Illinois Reading Council to **promote lifelong reading habits and spotlight works by Illinois authors.**

This year's event at CUSD 201 was a literary extravaganza, bringing together a vibrant community of readers and writers. **A stellar lineup of 18 authors graced the occasion,** reading aloud to families and generously dedicating time to sign copies of their cherished works. It was a unique opportunity for attendees to connect with the creative minds behind the stories that captivate their hearts.

As we look back on the recent festivities hosted by CUSD 201, we are reminded of the power of literature to unite communities and foster a lifelong love for reading. Illinois Reads continues to stand as a testament to the belief that **every page turned is a step towards a brighter, more enriched future for all.**

We thank volunteers, authors, vendors, sponsors and attendees for their vital support. Their enthusiasm contributes to the success of **initiatives like Illinois Reads, inspiring communities to embrace the magic of books.**



Hispanic Heritage Month

The Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) organized a fantastic kickoff event to celebrate the start of Hispanic Heritage Month. The event was filled with **delicious food and fun games,** making it a wonderful night for everyone.

The next event, International Night, is scheduled for April 5 from 6-8 p.m. at Westmont High School. We hope to see you there!



Community Unit School District 201

133 South Grant Street
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www.cusd201.org | (630) 468-8000

SOUTH EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER | J.T. MANNING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL |
C.E. MILLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | WESTMONT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL |
WESTMONT HIGH SCHOOL



CUSD 201 Board of Education



CUSD 201 Board of Education Members

From left: Whitney Rogers, Kevin Marren, Jessica Radogno, Adina Hoover (President), Angela Steketee (Secretary), Carlos Hevia, Leah Conover (Vice President)

Attention All Parents and Students

Don't miss out on important updates and upcoming events! Make sure to visit our district's website for all the latest registration details and information on exciting events happening soon. Stay connected and stay informed!

SchoolNow ensures families stay engaged with their child's school through customizable communication via text, email, calls or the mobile app available on Google Play or App store. Visit <https://www.schoolnow.com/get-started/cusd201> in any SchoolNow email or follow the link in a text message to update preferences.

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Dr. Carla Braun, Director of Continuous School Improvement and Professional Learning

Edith Rivera Courington, Bilingual Director/Personnel & Community Outreach Coordinator

Student Services & Early Childhood

Tiffanie Torrisi, Director of Student Services and Early Childhood

Director of Buildings & Grounds

Joseph Smith, Facilities Director

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