MIRACLES in Action

HIGHLIGHTS from the 2020-2021 School Year

Evanston/Skokie School District 65
Dr. Devon Horton, Superintendent
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Overview

In the 2020-2021 school year, Evanston/Skokie School District 65 implemented a set of bold strategies to increase student achievement. This work takes a robust, collective approach across the entire district, all schools, and throughout the city. The MIRACLES framework creates a pathway to truly live out the District’s mission and values.

By using the word MIRACLES as an acronym, the District is able to seamlessly align priorities with the values important to our community. Each letter represents a principle or belief in the form of a tenet. Each tenet has a minimum of 5-7 indicators that are research-based strategies for school improvement in the areas of equity, the instructional core, rigorous materials, learning targets, accountability structures, and sound financial planning.

MIRACLES represents the District’s commitment to continuous improvement through a formal plan which incorporates district-wide priorities established in the 2019-2020 school year as well as other data sources.
Reflection from the Superintendent

To the Evanston/Skokie Community -

What a year it has been! I could not be more proud of our team of students, staff, and families for all that has been accomplished. Filled with ups and downs, I know we all breathed a little sigh of relief on that last day of school. We also lifted our heads high in triumph. What we did as a community, reimagining education in a pandemic and reopening school with no cases of COVID-19 spread among students, was unprecedented. I cannot thank our team enough for their truly tireless work that went into successfully navigating this past school year.

As the new superintendent of this remarkable school district, it was incredibly important for me, and our team, to reflect on our work beyond the pandemic. While remote and hybrid learning, building preparation and planning undoubtedly dominated our time, this was not the end of our work days. You all have heard me say this but our students do not fail, our systems fail our students! We know we have students, mostly students of color, who are not achieving to their full potential. And, we know they are more than capable of doing so. It is our responsibility as educators and administrators to meet students where they are and to move them along. This is our “why” behind what we do.

We need continuous improvement in our systems across the district. The ways in which we support our educators in propelling student growth; aligning what is written, taught, and assessed to ensure rigorous, consistent instruction across classrooms; building more authentic partnerships with families; focusing on mental health and the whole child; and all while ensuring the long term financial sustainability of our school district. This is all a result of everyday work AND focused, intentional systems planning. This work is foundational to the success of our students and our schools and is at the core of our MIRACLES district continuous improvement system.

This document is meant to serve as a reflection on the bold and incredible work that happened this school year, largely beyond pandemic response efforts. I believe this is a testament to our leadership, the strengths and talents of our educators and staff, vision of the School Board, and community commitment to achieving our goals of racial and educational equity, improving outcomes for all students, specifically Black and Latinx students, and advancing our overall mission and goals.

We will only go harder and more determined. We recognize the urgency of this work and I believe we have laid a solid foundation for greater impact in the coming year. I look forward to increased collaboration with our community in the 2021-2022 school year.

Wishing you a great summer,

Dr. Devon Horton
Superintendent
Motion Towards Equity

Supporting Student Engagement
FACE has utilized extensive outreach to families as a way to stay connected and support student academic engagement throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. From socially-distanced home visits with families, school focused outreach, and collaboration with the City of Evanston, to unique partnerships with community groups such as Evanston Latinos and Northwestern University to address food insecurity, the FACE team took a multi-faceted, data-driven approach to help meet the needs of students and families during a very challenging time.

Student Assignment: Creating a Better and More Equitable District 65
Despite changes to enrollment, student demographics, and academic services and programs, District 65 has not reviewed boundaries holistically or recommended changes in over 25 years. This spring, the district embarked on a multi-year process to develop a comprehensive Student Assignment Plan in order to modernize our district structure and address historic inequities that continue to most significantly impact students of color. This may include changes to school attendance areas, reconsideration of a more equitable selection process for magnet schools and programs, and establishing a local school in the Fifth Ward. A diverse committee of staff representing all employee groups, parents/caregivers, and community members has formed to lead this process and help set direction for this mission-critical work!

Improving Language Access: Breaking Down Barriers to Create More Equitable Communications
This school year, the Communications Department in collaboration with the Multilingual Services and Family and Community Engagement teams, worked towards the goal of improving student outcomes through language access. This work included establishing protocol and increasing support services for bilingual translation that will go into effect in the 2021-22 school year. In addition, additional capacity will be added through the hiring of a Bilingual Support Specialist. Efforts this year also resulted in an increased amount of information being made available in Spanish to our community which included email, website, newsletters, videos, and social media posts were available in Spanish.

Launch of Special Education Parent Advisory Council Communications
This school year saw an increase in collaboration between families and the Student Services Department! District 65 introduced the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). SEPAC is designed to facilitate partnerships and collaboration between families and the district in order to promote inclusion and improved outcomes for students with disabilities within the D65 community. With presentations on inclusive education and practices, co-teaching, and specialized educational frameworks, SEPAC was designed to be an inclusive space for parents, guardians, and caregivers to partner with the district in the mission to advocate for our students with disabilities.

Streamlining and Creating a More Equitable Student Registration Experience
The Communications team supported Student Registration in revamping the overall student registration experience! This included a complete overhaul of the online registration system and access through our district website. Anecdotally, parents and caregivers have expressed their pleasure with the user-friendly format and that the registration process is much easier to navigate than in years past!

In an effort to create more equitable practices for magnet schools, programs, and the permissive transfer process, our team carefully reviewed board policy and updated practices and protocols to ensure more consistent implementation and alignment with the admissions process.
Using Text to Meet Families Where they Are

This school year, our Communications Department capitalized on previous success and expanded the use of text messaging as a tool to reach families and staff in communicating important information and updates. While balancing the need to use the tool sparingly, messages increased to 2-3 per month and demonstrated greater access and response among families. From texts centered around vaccination opportunities, student registration, and free meals, to those reminding our community of important updates and snow days, our team realizes that they must reach our community where they are - on their mobile devices!

Celebrating Equity Weeks

While work is underway to improve social studies curriculum, the district continued its tradition of hosting equity weeks including Latinx Heritage Equity Week, Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action, and LGBTQ+ Equity Week. Lessons and activities are created by D65 educators in alignment to learning standards and designed to be developmentally and age appropriate. Equity week lessons center both the academic and social-emotional needs of children, help build community, and are vital to supporting our district mission of preparing students to contribute positively to a global and diverse society.

Building Strong School-Family Partnerships with Dr. Karen Mapp

As a District, we are committed to strengthening family engagement in a focused way to improve student outcomes. In weekly two-hour sessions, the FACE team along with various district and school leaders took a deep dive into Dr. Karen Mapp’s, Senior Lecturer on Education and Faculty Director Education Policy and Management, at Harvard Graduate School of Education, Dual Capacity Framework for Family-School Partnerships (pictured below).

Strengthening of the Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee

The Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) engaged with multilingual families throughout the school year to build bridges of connection between home and school. District leaders reported increased interest and record levels of engagement which was due to responsive programming to meet families’ needs and, in part, due to the pandemic and the shift to virtual meetings. Attendees reported being able to tune in and engage while still being able to tend to the needs of their families. In September, 70 Emerging Bilingual families participated in a workshop on technology platforms and resources. The team is looking forward to finding a nice balance this fall in support of families!
Letting our Students Lead – Superintendent Student Advisory Committee
Fifth and eighth grade students from D65 middle, magnet, and elementary schools served on the inaugural Superintendent Student Advisory Committee. This committee was formed to help instill equity and increase student voice on matters that impact their schools and the district. A representative from each school met monthly with Superintendent Horton and the Deans of Culture and Climate to discuss important topics such as remote learning experience, middle school schedules and career electives, social studies curriculum, and more. This feedback continues to be incorporated into planning for the 2021-22 school year.

Launch of Conversations with the Superintendent Video Series
This school year, the Communications Team in partnership with Superintendent Horton, launched the Conversations with the Superintendent - student support video series. This series highlighted some of the ways in which District 65 worked to positively impact students and families during the pandemic, while also connecting families with many resources that exist within D65 and in our community. The videos, which are available to view in both English and Spanish, serve as a resource for parents, caregivers, and staff and cover a variety of topics, including special education supports, remote learning resources, technology tips and tricks, and access to free meals!

Continuation of Parent Interpreters Program
Members in our community hold vast cultural backgrounds and FACE has worked to ensure that a variety of languages are represented in their programming and support. In partnership with Midwest Language Network, FACE continued to host classes for parents and caregivers to earn their certified interpreter certificate and to support the district’s goal of improving language access by earning volunteer hours interpreting at school and district virtual events. The interpreter group has been spearheaded by 10 parents/caregivers and more individuals are welcome to join as the group continues to grow!

Remote Learning Tutoring Program + Learning Camps
While the COVID-19 pandemic required the district to pivot in the ways in which we support students, commitment among educators, staff, and the community has been unwavering. This past fall, the Family and Community Engagement team worked with community partners to provide remote learning and childcare support to our families who needed this resource the most. These camps, hosted in alignment with our School Aged Child Care team, were at no cost to families and followed all IDPH/CDC guidelines, allowing our team to more actively support our community at a crucial time.
Improved Instructional Core

Launch of the Six Spotlight Systems
Systems in District 65 are rooted in equity, collaborative partnerships, and establishing academic rigor and restorative practices for all students. With six interconnected systems focused on aligning learning and teaching with rigorous standards for all students, effectively using data, ensuring effective instructional planning, progress monitoring student work and performance, a commitment to academic and behavioral support, and continuous instructional improvement, the Six Spotlight Systems work to establish a common instructional language across our 18 schools. The Six Spotlight Systems also provide a blueprint of the effective practices implemented by other high-achieving schools, one used to inform district-level support strategies.

SY22 Professional Learning Proposal
In an effort to provide more robust, targeted, and responsive professional learning opportunities for educators and staff, the district’s Director of Professional Learning developed a catalogue with a wide and diverse array of learning opportunities organized by discipline and grade-specific activities. The efficiencies created by the catalogue and user-friendly layout streamlined access to professional learning opportunities. Our staff is truly some of the best and brightest and we take our responsibility seriously to help ensure their professional growth as we seek to better meet the diverse needs of our students.

Piloting a New Curriculum and Expanding Learning Opportunities for Emerging Bilingual Students
This year, our team piloted a new Spanish Language Arts curriculum, mVision Lectura, which was developed specifically for dual-language learners and aligned to state standards. Learning can be tailored to the needs of students in foundational areas, reading comprehension, and writing. We are excited to expand the pilot by rolling it out in all K-5 TWI schools next year in an effort to deepen learning for Emerging Bilingual students. To further meet the diverse learning needs of our students, we are expanding our Emerging Bilingual programming to 14 D65 schools to help ensure students have access to having their learning needs met within their neighborhood school!

Building Capacity for Strong Instructional Leadership
This June, District 65 principals gathered for the 2nd annual Principal Leadership Retreat with the theme of “Assuming Responsibility for Educational Racial Inequity.” Knowing the significant role that principals play in school improvement, sessions were centered on strengthening knowledge and practice to improve academic outcomes for Black and Brown students. The retreat builds on knowledge and implementation of the Six Spotlight Systems which are designed to improve instruction and climate. Principals took a hands-on approach and “learned by doing”, with guidance from district leaders and outside instructional experts. Sessions focused on building capacity and aligning instruction to standards to create accessible, rigorous learning opportunities for every student.
Aligning to Standards: Establishing a New Report Card
Throughout the school year, a team of educators and administrators spent time evaluating how learning is assessed and reported in an effort to reshape and refine the way student grades are reported for kindergarten through eighth grade students. More work, including a potential pilot, to better align the reporting of student academic progress with learning standards will be forthcoming in the 2021-22 school year. Communication and engagement with families will be critical in this work to ensure understanding and a strong connection between home and school.

Co-teaching in District 65!
To create a more inclusive environment for students, the district continued its implementation of co-teaching this school year! Co-teaching is two teachers working together with groups of students - sharing the planning, organization, delivery and assessment of instruction as well as the physical space. Designed to support an inclusive environment, build teacher capacity, and support high quality instruction, this year’s work focused on:

- Student centered scheduling to promote inclusive scheduling and built in collaboration time for co-teachers
- Multiple co-teaching trainings and workshops for educators and Assistant Principals
- Development of Co-Teaching Quality Indicator Look-For Observation tool
- Buildings completed Co-Teaching Team assessment to help assess strengths and areas to develop

Aligning to Standards: Updated K-5 Math Curriculum
After more than two decades teaching from Everyday Math, the district moved this year to Eureka Math as a set of materials to drive its new standards-aligned K-5 Math curriculum. While challenging to make this adjustment during the pandemic, the district is now about to ensure the use of materials that align with expectations of the Common Core Standards for all grades K-5. Educators worked tireley the entire year to learn the new curriculum and ensure students were able to explore the rich and complex mathematical understandings expected by the standards. Eureka Math has exceptionally high ratings from Ed Reports.

An Instructional Coach for Every Building
The District implemented a new coaching model in 2020-2021 to build stronger relationships within school communities, more effectively support Tier I instruction, and accelerate outcomes for Black and Latinx students - all while doing this in a more measurable way! All schools now have a dedicated instructional coach and access to a district-wide team of instructional content facilitators by discipline (Math/STEM, Literacy/Humanities, Special Education, Technology, Restorative, Emergent Bilingual - all supported by an Instructional Coaching Specialist).

A Focus on Literacy: Strengthening Resources for Middle School Language Arts
To better serve our middle school students, focus was given to increase rigor and capacity for the language arts (ELA) curriculum. Chief among these changes includes the shift to a comprehensive online platform to support ELA instruction for grades 6-8 entitled StudySync. Through the use of this award-winning platform, students and educators have access to greater amounts of fictional and nonfictional works, along with intervention tools to assess student performance.

Centering Racial Equity in Special Education
District 65 educators, staff, and school leaders had the opportunity to engage with renowned anti-racism and racial equity consultant Dr. Deborah McKnight, through a series of workshops designed to help the district move from compliance to equity and excellence. Sessions focused on strategies to accelerate coherence and alignment of general and special education for improved student outcomes.
Pursuing National Certification for D65 Magnet Schools
This school year, District 65 enrolled Dr. Bessie Rhodes School of Global Studies and the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Literary and Fine Arts School in the national certification process through the Magnet Schools of America (MSA). This certification process guides schools in examining their program according to five pillars of excellence. 1. Diversity; 2. Innovative Curriculum and Professional Development; 3. Academic Excellence; 4. Leadership; and, 5. Family and Community Partnerships. The MSA certification process defines and ensures these standards as consistent, essential elements and characteristics of high-quality magnet programs.

Science Curriculum Embraces the Times
In spite of the pandemic and many students learning at home, middle school educators across District 65 were able to more engage students in their science learning with better and more consistent alignment to middle school standards. In partnership with Northwestern University, D65 administrators and educators developed and implemented nationally-recognized units of study to deepen learning and create hands-on, fascinating science experiments that could be conducted in the unique remote setting of this past school year. Meanwhile, all students K-5 engaged in a cross-disciplinary unit this year, with the support of Northwestern SESP, that combined science and social studies standards to understand the origins and impacts of COVID-19.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model
Our Multilingual Services Department introduced SIOP, a research-based instructional model for addressing the academic needs of English Language Learners, to the district. This model helps to ensure that Emerging Bilingual students have their content and language needs met within their general education classroom. A cohort of Orrington educators attended a full year of professional learning. The district plans to expand this model in other schools across the district in an effort to better meet the needs of Emerging Bilingual students.

College and Career Exploration in Middle Schools
This school year, our team has initiated a redesign of our middle school structure and programs. Through a three-phased approach sustained all the way through School Year 2024, middle school students can expect new courses embedded into their middle school experience, including STEM-focused classes through FUSE and college and career readiness models through the AVID program. As part of the last phase of the redesign, students will experience a capstone class project. Pending Board and leadership approval, this educational opportunity will fully encapsulate a refined experience for our middle school students.

A More Accurate Account: Social Studies Curriculum Work
Our goal in revitalizing our social studies curriculum entails helping our students become responsible global citizens who view the world through a culturally responsive lens. As part of a multi-year process, the District is making steady progress to incorporate new social studies units into every day classroom instruction with a commitment to teaching accurate and affirming historical content that elevates marginalized people and includes the interrogation of events from multiple perspectives.

Accelerating Math Learning for All Students
Our STEM team is guided by the belief that all students should have access to rigorous, high quality learning and academic opportunities and that student voice and agency are at the core of successful learning. This school year, all 7th and 8th grade students utilized “Desbook”, a highly regarded curriculum from Desmos. In addition, our educators worked to create a catalog of enrichment tasks to provide students with the opportunity to more deeply engage in mathematical learning beyond the core lessons. The results this past year have been promising, with students reporting a sense of challenge and meaningful engagement with rich mathematical tasks. Meanwhile, we are working to increase access to the highest level high school coursework. Creating additional opportunities for acceleration has allowed greater choice and opportunity for all students, ensuring that the highest levels of mathematics learning is accessible to all.

More Robust Support for Middle Schoolers
The middle school redesign includes a new career exploration course for incoming sixth grade students and ensures that students are supported with new middle school counselors who can guide them through the college and career planning process. With the launch of SchoolLinks, a software specifically designed to prepare middle school students for college and career readiness, students will be able to proactively prepare for adulthood through the use of technology and one-on-one educator support.
Attract and Retain High Quality Staff

Setting our Direction
The Office of the Superintendent works hard to guide our district leaders and provide them with the organization and structure that they need to effectively lead their respective departments. Both our Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent champion for and empower our department leaders to accomplish vast district goals and work to coach staff to align them with the district’s continuous improvement plan. This school year the District began using compression planning as a more effective and efficient way to conduct meetings and engage in planning. Designed for visual thinkers, compression planning helps take big ideas and compress them into manageable tasks and was used for remote and hybrid learning, summer programming, human resource support, professional learning and more!

Leadership at the Forefront
This school year, we supported the transition of several school leaders including the onboarding and first year support for three new leaders at King Arts, Haven, and Nichols. In addition, the District facilitated extensive hiring processes to identify outstanding leaders to fill positions at Dewey, Washington, and Willard. The searches were inclusive of community feedback through surveys, focus groups, and interview panels. The district looks forward to welcoming its new leaders this summer - their combined understanding of the student experiences within our community, along with their focus on instruction and breadth of curriculum knowledge, allows the district to accelerate its agenda to provide educational equity to all students.

Launch of the CREATE Teacher Residency Program
This winter, in partnership with Northwestern University and National Louis University, District 65 launched the CREATE Teacher Residency program. CREATE is a sustainable residency that prepares highly effective, diverse, and long-term teachers to serve D65 students. The program includes an intensive, one-year teacher preparation program that puts resident teachers in classrooms with students for four-days a week to learn the craft of instruction under the guidance of an experienced educator. Simultaneously, residents were able to complete their Master’s level coursework at a partnering university. After completing the residency, teachers are ready to teach immediately once they graduate and become educators.

Revitalizing HR Access for Employees
In partnership with the Communications Department, the Human Resources team responded to needs indicated by staff in revitalizing the HR website to create more streamlined access to information and more inclusive of all employee groups. Additionally, through their partnership with Business Services, a new enterprise resource planning system (ERP), Infinite Visions, is in the implementation stages and will impact employees district-wide. This will allow staff to more effectively manage their employee information and preferences and create operational efficiencies in our business and human resource department. Through this work, our team can worry less about district policies, procedures, and paperwork, and focus more on important things - our students!

Using Data to Serve Others – Domo Usage
This school year, HR worked with our Research, Accountability, and Data (RAD) department to utilize Domo, a data visualization tool, to more effectively advance their work. Through Domo, HR was able to provide district and school leaders greater access to various, real time data streams to inform their decision making as it related to staffing and equitable decision-making in order to best serve students and families. Use of DOMO will continue to be expanded to inform summer and fall planning.
Let’s Take This Show on the Road – Kindergarten Roadshow 2021
In collaboration the Registration and Communications Departments, along with magnet school leaders, took a comprehensive approach to welcome incoming kindergarten students and families into District 65 through the Kindergarten Roadshow. This event provided families with a more informed look at how kindergarten classes operate within the district. The roadshow was conducted virtually and at least five other community meetings were held for our community to discuss kindergarten registration, along with selective enrollment and programs.

Creating Inclusive Spaces: LGBTQ+ Staff Workshops
In partnership with the Chicago Therapy Collective, the District 65 team hosted a series of workshops, trainings, and produced content to foster more inclusive and welcoming spaces, ways to support trans, non-binary, and gender expansive staff who experience higher rates of stigma and determination, strategies for addressing harm in the workplace, and being an effective ally in real life situations.

Honoring Our Staff – High Five! Celebrating Excellence in District 65
Collaborating with our Communications Department, HR was able to identify a range of diverse employees to honor through this school year’s High Five! Celebrating Excellence in District 65 staff recognition program. Their active participation in this program helped garner over 125 responses from our community, showcasing their support for the hard work our staff undertake daily. This year’s responses represent the highest that D65 has ever received through the program.

Supporting Our Schools – Hiring In-Person Supervisors
The launch of our hybrid learning model was an exciting and challenging journey for our district and received recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education as an exemplary model! To ensure a successful launch and adequate levels of support, HR along with the Equity and Family and Community Engagement Team, hired and successfully on-boarded more than 80 supervisors to support in-person learning for D65 students in all grade levels.
Commitment to Accountability

Fostering Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
In District 65 school leaders are developing schools based systems to analyze the results/impact of student progress monitoring and student work analysis. These Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) use protocols to analyze student work in order to identify trends and needs and determine effective, equitable, and varied instructional practices. The PLCs intentionally focus on performance trends and instructional needs with a focus on racial inequities as they analyze student work and progress data.

Holding Ourselves Accountable
Leading the charge, the District’s Communications Specialist gathered over 400 districtwide documents, policies, and procedures as part of our internal work with LocalGovernmentFrameworks.com to modernize and streamline work across departments, centralizing information in one location, and holding staff accountable to the projects and goals that they accomplish throughout the year.
Learning Environments that Support Student Success

Elevation of Social Emotional Learning in Academic Spaces
A key priority for our Curriculum and Instruction team, in collaboration with Student Services and the Deans of Culture and Climate, was ensuring that the social and emotional needs of students across the district were consistently met. Establishing classroom morning meetings, check-ins, and the creation of social-emotional toolkits to support educators, were just some of the ways that our team acknowledged the importance that social-emotional learning (SEL) has for our students and families across the district, especially with the challenges of living through a pandemic. In recognizing the significance of this educational tool, these SEL practices have been included in instructional minutes for educators and will be a standard practice across the district for years to come.

Expansion of District 65 Student Breakfast Program
In the 2020-2021 school year, the Nutrition Services Department expanded the breakfast program to all students across the district - making sure every child had access to the first and most important meal of the day. This initiative will continue to be available in all D65 schools post-pandemic as an additional support to ensure students are ready to engage in learning at the start of the school day!

Non-Violent Communication Practices
Thanks to the planning and preparation of the Deans of Climate, the groundwork has been laid to hit the ground running this August in training for D65 staff on non-violent communication practices. The goal is to increase effective and harmonious interaction throughout the district. Staff will be trained on de-escalating high emotional situations, supporting calm and peaceful interactions in their learning communities, and placing district core values into practice through use of language and relationship building among peers, as well as with students and parents/caregivers.

Let’s Get it Right Teams
Led by the Deans of Culture and Climate, Let’s Get it Right teams worked to ensure that every building was fully ready to receive students and staff according to Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) guidelines. While establishing consistent procedures and expectations is important, these teams honored the fact that all buildings are unique and that school communities had the collective expertise to put district guidance into action. Teams consisted of school leaders and 5-10 additional staff members representing all collective bargaining units. Let’s Get it Right teams focused on building layout, design, and procedures to most safely accommodate the in-person return of staff and students.

Enhancing our Bullying Prevention Program
As we strive to foster an inclusive, welcoming environment for all members of our community, the District invested in the implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Designed to address current incidents of bullying and proactively reduce the number of incidents, staff were trained to identify the signs of bullying, learn strategies to improve school climate, and enhance student well-being. The training was designed to help students develop a greater sense of security while at school in an effort to decrease truancy, academic disconnect, and increase belonging within their school community.

A Meal for Every Student
Our Nutrition Services team has been able to navigate the pandemic by providing meals, free of charge, to every student in the district through the launch of the curbside meal pick up program! Through a waiver made possible by the USDA, meals were available to all students during the 2020-21 school year at no cost. During hybrid learning, meals were served on-site to students participating in in-person learning while curbside pick up continued to be available to students in remote learning. All in all, the Nutrition Services Department provided children with nearly 500,000 meals this year!
Learning Environments that Support Student Success

Prioritizing Student and Staff Health – Launch of CrisisGo App
Placing high emphasis on creating a safe in-person learning experience, our Human Resource Department launched a district-wide web-based system to manage our health self-certification process called CrisisGo Safety iPass. This tool was utilized by approximately 5,000 students and staff on a daily basis and created efficiencies for our staff in monitoring symptoms of illness and potential exposure to COVID-19. This effort played a significant role in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 within our schools.

Improving Air Quality
In continued efforts to promote health and safety for students and staff, the Buildings and Grounds team did extensive work to recalibrate ventilation systems across the district to improve air quality. This included upgrading air filters in all HVAC systems and bringing in more fresh outside air, producing a 33% increase in external air ventilation across all of our buildings.

1:1 Technology for Every Student
To increase access and break down barriers to learning in the pandemic, the Technology Services Department ensured that every student had access to their own technology device, either an iPad or Chromebook depending on grade level, as well as internet access. In the 2021-2022 school year, the district issued over 4,000 new devices on top of the 1:1 technology program previously established in sixth through eighth grade. In addition, 1,000 hot spots were distributed. While the pandemic was a catalyst for this accomplishment, 1:1 technology will continue to be a practice in District 65.
Establish Expected Targets driven by Results

Letting Data Guide our Strategy
The RAD team was instrumental in the launch of Domo, the district’s new data visualization tool, which has since been used in a variety of ways to enhance support for district departments and schools. The RAD team led multiple training opportunities to support staff in using the tool to monitor student outcome data, grades, academic progress, staffing needs, and more all in an effort to allow our school leaders to more effectively respond to the needs of all of their students.

Uplifting Student Voices – Panorama Survey
District 65 partnered with Panorama Education to administer a short online survey to gain insight from students regarding their experiences of equity, inclusion, and social and emotional learning. The survey responses, yielded from fifth through eighth grade students across the district, provided valuable information and will further guide school improvement efforts and the work of refining the district’s educational equity professional practice. This survey will be distributed again in the fall to more fully capture and reflect on students’ social and emotional experiences within the district.

Reality Checks to Monitor our Progress
The RAD Department successfully implemented school-based “Reality Checks,” a series of facilitated sessions with school leaders and district leaders to discuss and reflect on student and school data. The facilitated sessions created collaborative opportunities that included representatives from different departments, fostered connections between schools for shared learning of effective strategies, supported the development of action steps, and created opportunities for dialogue about how we can better support our schools and better address the needs of students and school communities. Three rounds of reality checks were conducted throughout the school year and more are being planned for the upcoming year.

Listening to Perspectives from our Community – Survey Usage
In our virtual world, it was necessary to continue to reflect and improve upon our collective efforts. Surveys were in an instrumental tool this school year to better incorporate real-time feedback from our community in our remote learning programming. You may have taken several of these surveys to share your experiences with remote learning and the support provided during the pandemic conditions. These perspectives were invaluable in our district planning and in organizing our supports. Our RAD team helped in the construction and data analysis of these tools to ensure community feedback was accurately and efficiently captured to drive and guide decision-making.
Sound Fiscal Stewardship

Addressing our Structural Deficit
District leadership and the School Board made a resounding commitment to tackling the district’s decades-old structural deficit and to align expenses to revenues. Through a proactive, data-driven three-phased approach, the district has a clear plan in place to reduce expenses, manage referendum reserves, gather creative solutions to identify new ways to bring in money, and address budget shortfalls through an equity lens. Largely through operational and administrative efficiencies, District leadership made over $2.9 in reductions - well surpassing the targeted amount for FY21.

A Greater Vision for Technology
Our Technology team is in the process of implementing their three-year technology plan, beginning this summer! This plan is inclusive of all district students and families and will work to provide our students with the technology they need to enhance their everyday learning. With an anticipated completion in the 2021-22 school year, the district’s technology plan will include goals and action steps guiding the integration of technology into the curriculum, professional development for staff, guidance around infrastructure, hardware, technical support and software, funding sources, and evaluation.

Setting Direction: Master Facilities Planning
As part of the district’s plan to address its structural deficit, the district is leading in the creation of a master facilities plan that will examine our building footprint, operational efficiencies, transportation costs, and the structural needs of our aging buildings. With stakeholder input from the Student Assignment Project Committee, the district selected Cordogan Clark & Associates to lead this planning which will conclude in the 2021-22 school year. This plan will provide critical information to the Student Assignment Project to modernize our district structure and address historic inequities that continue to most significantly impact students of color.

Using Technology to Crowdsource Community Feedback
This winter, the Communications Team launched the district’s first ever ThoughtExchange as a way to gather community input on financial planning in an effort to address the longstanding structural deficit. Nearly 1,400 community members actively participated in the online conversation - sharing over 57,000 ratings on the ideas shared! Top themes from the report were related to administrative spending, COVID-19, curriculum learning, and district-wide spending. District 65 leadership carefully reviewed the feedback gathered to reduce $2.9 million from the budget which included over $1 million in administrative and operational reductions.

A Well-Rounded Approach: CMSI Curriculum Audit
A curriculum audit is currently underway in partnership with Curriculum Management Solutions, Inc. (CMSI) to help guide the work of strategic planning and the evaluation of academic programs across the district. With educator and community input on ease of accessing curriculum, how often school communication occurs, and the availability of student technology, the audit will transcend single occurrences and a report with findings will be complete by the summer. In addition, 36 educators were trained this year by the CMSI team in curriculum writing. Ultimately the goal of the audit is to increase alignment with standards and ensure consistency in teaching so that every student has similar access to rigor regardless of their school or educator.

Going Green: Fostering Sustainability in District 65
This fiscal year District 65 was awarded a $35K grant from the State of Illinois and Verde Energy Efficient Experts, to retrofit our district warehouse and convert all lighting to be 100% LED and energy efficient. In addition, the team replaced over 25 water fountains across the district with environmentally-friendly bottle fillers, encouraging the use of reusable containers.

Increasing the Power at our Fingertips
During the 2020-21 school year, the District 65 Technology Services Department with support from the Professional Learning Team, laid the important groundwork to implement PowerSchool, the district’s new Student Information System in June 2021. The system will replace SISK12 and will provide a significantly improved user experience for district educators and staff and will include a new parent portal for families to be able to access and update their child’s personal information, access grades, attendance, and more!