



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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District 64 Prepares to Introduce New Model for Meeting Student Needs

To introduce a new model of how teachers assess and respond to student learning and behavior this fall, District 64 is undertaking a wide range of activities to prepare staff and refocus its school improvement efforts, according to an update presented to the Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 Board of Education at its April 28 meeting. The new model, called Early Intervening Services/Response to Intervention (EIS/RtI), is mandated by both state and federal law.

“Although EIS/RtI is a new approach, we believe it aligns well with District 64’s goal of improving student achievement levels of the whole child and our increased focus on using assessment data to drive instructional decision-making,” Assistant Superintendent Diane Betts and Director of Pupil Services Kathy Nelson reported.

With the EIS/RtI approach, schools must use data on student learning to plan instruction, identify students in need of more support, collaboratively problem-solve how to provide this support, and then monitor whether the support is meeting the student’s needs. “EIS is a regular education initiative and will impact our regular education curriculum and all teachers,” they said. The approach is quite flexible as well, and can be used for an entire grade level, small groups of students, or individual students.

A District 64 leadership team of classroom teachers, special education teachers, support service personnel, administration, and Board of Education President Sue Runyon has met monthly through the year to coordinate the rollout. They have developed a three-year checklist of the critical components needed to fully implement the model at all schools, Ms. Betts and Dr. Nelson said.

“Because EIS/RtI typically concentrates on supporting students’ core skills in reading, math and behavior, District 64 has focused its efforts on these areas,” they noted. This spring, a Reading Curriculum Review Committee has been formed to review new programs and ideas for teaching reading that have been developed through recent research. It has been seven years since District 64 implemented new reading curriculum and materials.

The Board of Education also recently provided additional support for 2008-09 with the addition of five literacy teachers to work with students in grades 4-5 and a psychologist, who can help teachers better understand and use student assessment data.

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In addition, Ms. Betts and Dr. Nelson pointed out that staff development is a critical component. All District 64 staff already have attended two half-days of training, with more comprehensive and intensive sessions being planned for next year utilizing federal grant funding.

Looking ahead, Ms. Betts and Dr. Nelson noted that because implementation of EIS/RtI will have such a broad impact, "it will be one of the main District 64 goals for the next several years and also will supplant individual School Improvement Plans."

"Successfully implementing this initiative will require a great deal of leadership, coordination and ongoing staff development," they added. The Board also recently authorized the addition of a new District-level administrator for three years effective July 1 to provide a bridge during this critical time period to help EIS/RtI firmly take root in all schools. The director will assume leadership for moving EIS/RtI forward.

Ms. Betts and Dr. Nelson concluded by reporting that a required District Self-Assessment was underway and would be submitted to the State Board of Education by mid-May; the final plan must be submitted by January 2009.

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