



NEWS

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District 64 to Focus on Improving Reading Achievement in 2008-09

Improving the achievement levels of the “whole child,” particularly in reading, will drive the efforts of District 64 schools this year, according to Assistant Superintendent Diane Betts, who reported to the Board of Education at its September 8 meeting. Ms. Betts shared the District’s goals for student learning during the 2008-09 school year, which include improvements in instruction, updates of literacy-related parts of the curriculum, and comprehensive reviews of two programs.

Improvements in instruction will be focused on implementing the Early Intervening Services/Response to Intervention (EIS/RtI) initiative over the next several years in all District 64 schools. Initially, the focus will be on supporting students’ core skills in reading, and later will be expanded to student social/behavioral skills and math.

According to Ms. Betts, staff development for District 64 teachers this year will help them interpret and use data on student learning and growth. “Teachers this year will collaborate extensively on an ongoing basis to analyze data and plan differentiated instruction for small groups of students to give them the support they need, when they need it,” Ms. Betts said.

Updating curriculum is another means for improving student learning, Ms. Betts told the Board. This year, District 64 will focus on reviews of reading, language arts, and technology. “We carefully analyze data on how successfully our students are learning and combine this with a review of current research to determine what adjustments we should recommend to make sure our students reach our local and State learning standards,” she explained.

Two major programs also are under review this year. A comprehensive review of the District’s Middle School Program is on track for completion this fall. The committee’s recommendations will be brought to the Board in December in time to implement changes in the 2009-10 school year. “The purpose is to determine what is the best educational program for meeting the needs of the whole child within a middle school setting,” Ms. Betts reaffirmed.

Finally, a review of the Foreign Language Elementary Program (FLES) also will be completed. This fall, all District 64 elementary schools began teaching Spanish exclusively. The committee will recommend that the goal of the program should be “communication” with a secondary goal of “cultural awareness,” Ms. Betts reported. To that end, she announced that new instructional materials are being piloted at Carpenter and Washington schools in all grade levels this year; those schools previously taught French.

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