SUPERINTENDENT’S COMMENTS
Dr. Lynda C. Andre
September 14, 2018

- New K-12 Math Instructional Materials Including Textbooks
- Implementation of Digital Initiatives at EHS

At the September 10 Board of Education meeting, the administration presented to the board and the community the first of many educational improvements for District 7 students that have been made possible by the generosity of the community’s residents who supported Prop E in April 2017. Without these critical funds, curriculum, technology, and school security improvements would not have been possible. Just as importantly, this district is now on a path to financial stability as we prepare to pay down a significant portion of the Education Fund debt – debt which has caused District 7 to be on the Illinois Financial Watch List for 10 years.

The administration will provide regular updates to the public on the District’s progress to implement the promises that were made in the Prop E campaign through Blueprint for Excellence and Focus on Finance reports:
- Curriculum development and textbook updates
- Technology replacement
- School security enhancements
- Achieving financial stability

BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE REPORT:
UPDATE ON CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES

New K-12 Math Instructional Materials Including Textbooks
New math instructional materials were purchased for all K-8th grade students and core high school math courses this year. Textbooks, workbooks, classroom manipulatives and digital content materials were purchased for a cost of approximately $600,000.

Implementation of Digital Initiatives at EHS
Background Information: High school today vs. 10 years ago
Most of us remember that a majority of high school courses focused on a single textbook, worksheets, and the notes we took from teachers’ lectures. High school courses today, however, include a wide array of instructional resources that all contribute to a high quality and comprehensive educational experience. In 2018, a typical high school teacher may utilize:
- Textbooks
- Journal articles
- Primary source documents
- PowerPoint presentations
The challenge to a teacher is the organization of this material so that students have access to these supplemental resources in the classroom, at home, and from anywhere the student may be. District 7 studied the solution to the organization of an ever-growing list of instructional resources, and we found the solution at the college level — it is called a learning management system (LMS).

**How were the additions of a Learning Management System and a Bring Your Own Device program determined to be important for our high school students?**

During our research, we found that EHS graduates from the class of 2008 and beyond had positive experiences with a Learning Management System (LMS), which was the structure that housed their college course materials. At the same time, we also became increasingly aware that navigating an LMS became an expectation for entering college freshmen no matter where they enrolled in college, and Edwardsville High School was not preparing them with that skill.

In 2015, the curriculum and technology departments, in collaboration with the high school administration, began re-examining the feasibility of acquiring an LMS for EHS students. We learned that experience in navigating an LMS was critical for the 95% of EHS graduates who attend college or university after high school. Colleges, universities, and community colleges all rely on an LMS, and an increasing number of high quality high schools have implemented this technology as well.

The system selected by District 7 is **Schoology**, a cloud-based learning management system (LMS), which allows users to create, manage, and share content and resources. It is where course content, calendars, and homework, etc. are housed. **Schoology** is integrated with existing school reporting and information systems and provides added security and filters even beyond the District’s technology safety measures.

Because an LMS is an online resource, we also studied how students would access an LMS and found that students used a variety of methods, including home, school, or other computers and/or through a mobile device, such as a smart phone, tablet, or laptop. This led the District to complete a parallel study of implementing a **Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)** program at Edwardsville High School.

**Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)** refers to the practice of permitting students to bring personally owned technology such as laptops or tablets to school and to use those devices for instructional purposes during the school day, including accessing an LMS.
What preparations were made to implement the digital initiatives at EHS?
District 7 spent $505,000 to prepare for the implementation of Schoology and a BYOD program at Edwardsville High School, which included these improvements:

- Installation of WIFI at EHS and EHS South, serving all 357,500 square feet of 120 classrooms and other instructional spaces
- Increased network security
- Increased bandwidth to ensure that nearly 3,000 users would have access to video-rich content and the internet
- Installation of a firewall to protect our students from accessing inappropriate websites and social media during instruction

The two components of the plan – the implementation of Schoology and the BYOD program will enhance instructional opportunities but not limit a teacher or a student. It is a process that teachers and students will learn and fashion to make sense for individual courses and course content. Students will not be required to bring a device to school, but the EHS building, staff, and administration are well prepared for those who choose to do so.

One of the most important benefits of Schoology is the ability to access it at home. Even those students who do not have personal devices available to them during the school day will have complete access to Schoology at home – homework, presentations, PowerPoints, videos, tutorials, and when available, digital textbooks.

How will these two initiatives improve instruction at EHS?
Many classroom teachers use a “hybrid” approach to instruction, which includes using digital content in addition to a textbook. This year, digital content will be linked to Schoology for those who have access to a device in or out of school. Traditional textbooks will be available to all students, with new digital textbooks available for most math courses. As we move through the curriculum review cycle, more digital content and resources will be available to our students.

For teachers, Schoology allows them to create, manage, and share content and resources for each course they teach. For students, it is where their course content, calendars, homework, etc. are housed. Logging into their Schoology account gives them access to all of their courses in one location, as well as the ability to download and upload assignments.

By design, Schoology will also improve communication among teachers, students, and parents, as it allows them to post questions to one another through discussion boards and post and receive assignments. Teachers can organize requirements and outline the steps necessary to complete assignments.

For more information: