



## **Information Memo: August 2019 Opening Day & Institutes**

**TO:** School Board

Dr. Trisha Kocanda, *Superintendent*

**FROM:** Kelly Tess

*Assistant Superintendent, Professional Learning & Human Resources*

**September 24, 2019**

Each August, we welcome back our staff using Teacher Institute Days as a means to kick off the school year, reacquaint ourselves as a professional community and highlight a focus for the year. Staff returned to work on Monday, August 26, participating in two Institute Days prior to students beginning on Wednesday, August 28.

Staff was welcomed back on that Monday beginning with a continental breakfast, followed by a presentation from 8:30-10:00 in the Washburne Little Theater. This year the district has committed to Social-Emotional Learning and the impact it has on a student's overall success and experience as a learner. In order to best meet the SEL needs of our students, we are first focusing on the alignment of the adults within our community (staff, parents, community members) on their shared understanding and dedication to supporting the social-emotional well-being of each other as well as our students. As such, the district invited Dr. Matt Dewar to be the key-note speaker on Monday, August 26. Dr. Dewar is "an educator interested in how mindfulness transforms *identity*. [He has] explored how mindfulness-based practices increase self-awareness, improve self-management, and empower [people] to take better care of [them]selves, others, and our world."<sup>\*</sup> Dr. Dewar's research not only aligns with our district-wide focus for the year, but his experience as a teacher on the north shore and intimate understanding what it means to be an educator in today's schools resonated deeply with our staff and administration.

<sup>\*</sup>"DR. MATT DEWAR." *Mattdewar.com*, <https://mattdewar.com/drmatthewdewar>.

Dr. Dewar's keynote was followed by a presentation given by Dr. Kocanda, Dawn Livingston, Barry Rodgers, Dr. Pfeffer, Kelly Tess. The presentation followed the agenda below:

- A tribute to Carleton Washburne and Winnetka's Progressive roots in anticipation of the 100th anniversary of Washburne's arrival in Winnetka
  - A video of students sharing their own definition of progressive and who they believe Washburne to have been
- An outline of the Board's commitment to being present in the buildings and classrooms to enhance their understanding of the work of our teachers and students, as well as a shared commitment to SEL
- An introduction of new administrators: Kelly Tess, Andrew Fenton, Betty Weir, Pat Kritzman
- A closing activity and inspirational message from Barry Rodgers and Trisha Kocanda

Building Level Faculty Meetings followed on the afternoon of August 26, as well as Tuesday, August 27 covering the following:

- Articulation Meetings: Continued faculty discourse between grade levels and within teams regarding student needs and preparation for the transition to a new school year
- Policy Discussions: Review of updated policies in the District for faculty awareness, including discussion of "DCFS Common Sense Guidelines."
- ReDistricting: Our schools benefited from a presentation given by Dr. Kocanda and Kelly Tess regarding redistricting and the timeline of dates related to this effort.
- Grade Level and Team Meetings: Time for teams to collaborate, discuss curricular work from the summer, goals for the year, integration and inquiry.

Feedback was collected from the staff following the opening day keynote speaker and presentation.

- 100% of respondents indicated that the presentation either aligned with their own/district professional development goals and/or engaged the audience at a level that promoted reflection, discovery and analysis.
- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (80% of respondents *strongly agreed*) that the presentation's themes had an impact on their social and emotional growth or will have on student social and emotional growth.

Feedback will be gathered from participants following all professional learning opportunities this year to gauge the relevance and impact of the instruction/training offered.