



## **Informational Memo: November 1, 2019 Institute Day**

TO: Dr. Trisha Kocanda, *Superintendent*

FROM: Kelly Tess  
*Assistant Superintendent of Professional Learning & Human Resources*

November 19, 2019

Given the District's commitment to SEL, and a goal specifically written to focus our efforts and energy on building a shared understanding of SEL amongst the adult members of our greater educational community, this school year's first Teacher Institute Day was similarly dedicated to a focus on social-emotional learning, balance and wellness. As is typical, the morning was dedicated to committee work-time. Committees are focused on curricular mapping and writing, and are made up of teachers, administrators and facilitators. This year's Institute Day included the work of fourteen committees (Math, ELA, Social Studies, Science, SEL, Tech/RC, ELL, Drama, Music, Dept. of Student Services, Kinetic Wellness, Art, World Language, and Classroom Associates); all of which dedicated the first two hours of the day to curricular planning, analysis, reflection, training, etc.

In the past, committees have utilized three hours on an Institute morning; however, this year, we elected to operate under a different format, reserving the third hour of the morning as an opportunity for staff to come together amongst their building, grade level, and/or subject area teams to collaborate on projects and initiatives underway within their teams. Teachers and principals reported that this time was greatly appreciated and well-utilized, allowing for additional progress during a time when they were not missing instruction with students.

Following lunch, the staff then moved into an afternoon dedicated to SEL. Given our District partnership with CASEL, the afternoon's format was inspired by the competencies that CASEL indicates are a necessary foundation in order for SEL to be successfully addressed in a school district. Our staff had the opportunity to select one learning session

from each of two competency strands: Self Management and Self-Awareness. The Self-Management strand included learning sessions along the lines of self-care, promoting the importance of taking time to care for your physical and mental well-being. The Self-Awareness strand included learning sessions exposing staff to topics like anxiety, emotional resilience, norms for collaboration, and more. All of the learning sessions were led by outside instructors, providing the opportunity for all staff and administration to be a participant in the day's learning.

Finally, our Institute day came to a close with a keynote speaker in the Little Theatre. Mike Leonard, former NBC Today Show Journalist and current documentarian, shared stories from his professional experience as a member of the media as well as his personal experience as a parent of four children on the North Shore. Mike's unique ability to find beauty in the every day occurrence, humor in life's challenges and opportunity in failure resonated with the audience and provided a positive closing to our day of learning and growth.

We will close each of our District's staff-wide learning opportunities this year with a feedback form in order to gauge the focus and success of the format. Feedback from 126 staff members on the November 1, 2019 Institute Day indicated the following:

- 96.8% of respondents indicated a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (absolutely) in response to the following statement: *"The November Institute Day agenda/outline aligned with the district's goal of creating a shared understanding and commitment to SEL amongst the adults in our professional community."*
- 0% of respondents indicated that they are *"hesitant to reflect on my social-emotional learning in the workplace;"* as opposed to 5% who indicated this on a similar survey in September 2019
- Open ended responses on this survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the quality and content of the learning sessions offered

Our next Institute Day will take place on Friday, January 17th. We are currently working with New Trier to explore the ways in which we can replicate each other's work, both for the benefit of our staff and students.