



Township High School District 211

Community Connections: A Quarterly Update of the Strategic Plan

March 2017

Increasing Enrollment in Advanced Placement Courses



High School District 211 is committed to providing extraordinary opportunities to all students, including access to rigorous coursework aligned with each student's interest and readiness. In preparation for the 2017-2018 school year, teams of staff members throughout the District implemented efforts to increase student enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) coursework. AP coursework offers challenging, college-level curriculum, and the chance to earn college credit based on the result of an end-of-course exam.

Throughout the current school year, students participated in a survey to identify each student's individual areas of academic strength and their level of perseverance. Teachers who have had individual students in their classes provided recommendations describing each student's preparedness for AP coursework and level of persistence. Particular energy was directed to students who have not previously taken AP coursework, but who might be successful at this level. These prospective AP students participated in information sessions that helped them develop a deeper understanding of their strengths, the feedback they received from their teachers, and how teachers would be available to assist them in future AP coursework.

This process resulted in 550 additional students requesting AP courses for the coming school year. Many of the first-time AP course enrollees are from typically underrepresented groups. Participating in AP coursework will assist students in earning more college credit as they graduate from high school.

District 211 Now Offers Over 50 Dual Credit Courses

High School District 211, in partnership with Harper College, Triton College, College of DuPage and the University of Illinois, gives high school students over 50 opportunities to earn both high school and college credit simultaneously for courses they are taking at their high school in the Dual Credit program. Over 35 dual credit courses are taught in District 211 schools by high school teachers who have met the additional credentials to teach college-level courses, and students who meet all college course prerequisites are eligible for dual credit enrollment.

Among this year's graduating seniors, 57 percent have enrolled in at least one dual credit course. Currently, more than 2,200 District 211 students are earning early college credits through Harper College in the dual credit program. Dual credit coursework through Harper College includes courses in biology, English, French, math, Spanish and speech. Additional dual credit coursework through Harper College includes courses in the following areas: accounting,

anatomy and physiology, criminal justice, forensics, culinary arts, early childhood, electronics, fashion, fire science, health careers, maintenance, construction, manufacturing, networking, computer repair and Sign Language.

Transferring dual credit courses depends on the institution the student plans to attend. Some dual credit courses have

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an Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) designation. The IAI is a statewide transfer agreement, which is transferable among more than 100 participating college and universities in Illinois. Students can check transferability of a dual credit course online at <http://www.transferology.com> by typing in the college course code. Students should always check with their college of interest to investigate when earned college credits would transfer.

District 211 Implements Committed Budget Reductions

High School District 211 continuously assesses areas of operational efficiencies to reduce its budget and expenditures without impacting programs for students, including many reductions over the past 10 years. Since the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the District committed to further reduce expenditures by an additional \$2.7 million over a five-year time frame in areas that will not impact student opportunities. In the first two years alone, the District has implemented reductions totaling \$2.5 million and has identified another \$650,000 for the coming 2017-2018 school year. Staffing reductions, purchasing efficiencies, and other areas of operational efficiencies have been the primary sources of targeted reductions. Further reductions will be implemented during the next several years.

No More Bonded Debt

Through prudent planning and financial management, savings from the District's budget reductions will position District 211 to have no more bonded debt as of December 2017. We have accomplished this while continuing to pay for needed facility improvements totaling more than \$50 million through the use of our annual operating budgets and our planned savings. Savings achieved through budget reductions and the planned use of reserves will remain critical operational components of the District's ability to make necessary facility improvements without extending the cost of future bonded debt to taxpayers.

Research indicates that successfully completing 15 college credit hours increases the likelihood of not only completing college, but also completing college on time. “*The Power of 15*” initiative is aimed at students earning at least 15 early college credits while in high school, giving students a head start on their college education. The 15 early college credits include any combination of credits earned by achieving a score of “3” or higher on an Advanced Placement (AP) exam and/or by earning a passing



grade in a dual credit course. Twenty-five percent of District 211 graduating seniors in the Class of 2016 earned at least 15 early college credits. An additional direct impact of the Power of 15 to students and parents is the cost savings; there is no additional expense for students enrolled in a dual credit course, and the only expense for AP courses is the cost of the AP exam, which is significantly less than the cost of a college course.

College Majors & Career Clusters

A high school student typically takes a minimum of five academic courses each semester. Some of those courses are determined for the student. Others, however, fall into the category of electives and participation is determined completely by student choice. Selecting appropriate elective courses can be challenging as students identify the best options for themselves.

Ideally, students’ elective courses would align with each student’s individualized plan for the future including the student’s college major and desired occupation. To help students build a plan that connects high school coursework to real life interests, District 211 uses an online program called *Career Cruising*. *Career Cruising* allows students to explore their career interests and aspirations as they connect classroom experiences with potential career choices. Using surveys and other tools, students identify matches between their interests and future career paths. They can research employment trends, salary details, and requirements for specific occupations.

Exposure to *Career Cruising* begins when students are in eighth grade. Prior to selecting ninth grade electives, the students establish *Career Cruising* accounts and complete a career interest survey to gain deeper insights into their own areas of interest and occupations

that might align with their personal preferences.

Career Cruising classifies occupations into 16 nationally recognized groups called career clusters. Individual occupations within a career cluster share common connections and help students recognize multiple options related to a specific area of interest. District 211 has aligned its coursework to the full set of career clusters so that students’ can easily match elective course choices to a particular area of occupational interest.



School counselors continue to work with students throughout their four-year high school experience to assist with course selection and the development of students’ self-awareness. *Career Cruising* plays an important role in that process. Parents are encouraged to talk with their students about their Career Cruising accounts and the results the online program provides. Another great resource is the District 211 College Majors and Career Cluster website at <http://www.d211careercluster.org>.

Facility Improvements Continue in District 211

In order to meet academic and extracurricular needs of students, High School District 211 continuously assesses its facilities in order to prioritize areas of improvement based upon age, condition, and overall impact on students. Over the past four years, the District has been engaged in a five-year facility improvement plan. Improvements have included renovations to media centers, swimming pools, classrooms, auditorium lighting and sound, and outdoor athletic fields, among others.

Media centers have become the learning commons for students to facilitate collaborative learning and access to digital information. Improvements have included updates in media sources, renovated academic spaces, and learning environments that foster collaboration. The District’s swimming pools were original to its buildings and have been updated in size to allow greater access by multiple student groups and they now meet Illinois High School Association competitive size regulations. As the most used space in District 211 schools, renovations to the swimming pools have benefited programs for both students and the community that commonly uses them late into the evening.

All facility improvements have focused on the needs of students and optimized facility space. The District has funded 100% of its five-year capital improvement projects through existing resources without the need to issue debt. As plans continue for further facility improvement needs, the District will sustain prudent planning and intends to continue paying for necessary improvements through its yearly operating budget and use of reserve funds.

(At right, top: Schaumburg High School Media Center; bottom: Palatine High School pool)



Did you know ...

For the past 10 years, the District 211 Board of Education has reduced property taxes by more than \$33 million, using reserve funds to make a portion of its debt payments.

Community Education Update

As an extension of High School District 211's continued commitment to community outreach, the District is proud to offer Community Education sessions designed to aid school communities in understanding matters of student and community wellness.

Partnering with local agencies and organizations, sessions have already been conducted on Drug Use and Abuse Awareness, Transgender Awareness, Mental Health and Emotional Wellness, and SAT preparation for parents.

In April, an upcoming Community Education session will focus on the dangers of distracted driving and the promotion of mobile device healthy habits. Additional information, including session dates and times, will be available on the District and school websites.

District 211 continues to build upon community partnerships and is dedicated to providing valuable information and resources to parents, students, and the communities it serves.

Energy Conservation Program Leads to National Energy Star Awards

Over the past five years, energy efficiency initiatives implemented across District 211 have resulted in savings of more than \$7 million in energy-related costs.

Over the same five-year period, the District has decreased its energy consumption by 33%, allowing the District to redirect these resources into student programs. Energy efficiency initiatives include lighting upgrades, replacement of high consumption equipment with high-efficiency models, management of heating and cooling system controls during unoccupied hours, and continued training of staff members to limit



consumption during times of non-use.

As a result of the energy efficiencies that District 211 buildings have achieved, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) have recognized District 211 contributions toward conservation of energy by awarding all five high schools and the Administration Center with the *Energy Star Award*. Several schools received this recognition multiple times over the past seven years. District 211 continues to place a priority on energy efficiency and identifying new conservation efforts.

New Four-Year Plan Enhances Student Readiness

The Student Readiness Plan, designed to represent a comprehensive four-year plan that will help students navigate the route to their post high school endeavors, has five main components: academic readiness, college and career exploration, global competitive skills, student involvement, and wellness. Each component includes multiple goals and data points for students and their parents to track and monitor.

The Student Readiness Plan is currently in the final planning phases prior to website and app development. Groups of students, parents and faculty members have been involved in the multi-phase design process that has created one place for students and parents to access key resources and data regarding the individual four-year high school pathway. Student and parent focus groups across all schools continue to bring forth changes to the design through the end of this month with an initial small pilot group in place during the 2017-2018 school year. With increased availability during the 2018-2019 school year, students and parents will have easy access to four-year college major and career coursework, soft skill expectations, all school activities and teams, and resources surrounding physical and emotional wellness for teenagers.



Did you know ...

Over the past two years, the District 211 Board of Education has approved a flat levy and one that increased by 0.3%. Additionally, over the past four years, District 211's annual levy increase has averaged 0.9% per year.

Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting

For the 10th year in a row, High School District 211 was named a recipient of the *Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting Award* for its financial reporting and accountability. This award recognizes agencies that demonstrate outstanding financial reporting characterized by transparency and full disclosure. The award confirms the District's commitment to financial accountability and transparency through its financial reports and acknowledges the Board of Education and District's management for their commitment to continuously provide accurate and transparent financial information meeting national standards.

Certificate of Excellence

The District's business officials prepare financial statements and District 211 is proud to be one of a small number of school districts in the state with the expertise to prepare its own Comprehensive Annual Financial Statements. These financial statements are audited by an outside, accredited auditing firm on an annual basis. Upon review of the District's financial records, the auditors express their independent opinions and determinations. The District has once again received an unqualified audit opinion, with the auditors concluding that our financial statements are presented accurately in all material respects.

Alternative Learning Academy Opens for 2016 - 2017

High School District 211's Alternative Learning Academy (ALA), which newly opened for the 2016-2017 school year, is designed to provide an educational setting for students who have not found success at their home school and those whose needs may exceed the resources within their home schools. It is one of two alternative high school settings available for student placement in District 211.

Students who are referred to ALA participate in a comprehensive intake process in order to build a personalized plan for their education. This plan outlines the students' goals, areas of strength, and opportunities for growth. Input from the students, parents, teachers, and therapeutic staff are utilized in the development and implementation of each plan.

ALA provides students with a smaller, more supportive environment while delivering the same rigorous curriculum students would receive in their home school. ALA offers students multiple therapeutic supports in the form of group and individual counseling. These sessions are tailored to the students' individual needs and focus on providing them with decision-making skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Student progress is tracked extensively through the use of behavior analysis software. This allows staff to quickly document student performance, identify student needs,

and inform decision making to ensure that we are providing interventions that are best suited to each student.

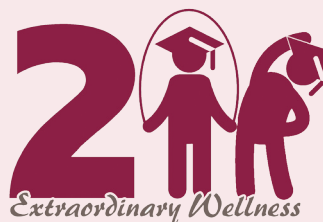
In order to ensure student success through graduation or integration back to their home schools, staff work with students to assist them to develop self-management skills, problem-solving techniques, de-escalation techniques, effective and healthy decision making, and self regulation techniques, and to improve interpersonal skills.

Students have access to the many resources and programs that the District offers all students. Eligible ALA students participate in Dual Credit and Advanced Placement coursework and students have the opportunity to participate in flag football, volleyball, basketball, bowling, and softball through the Chicago Area Alternative Education League. League activities emphasize sportsmanship, teamwork, and camaraderie through athletics and healthy competition.



High School District 211 Receives Healthiest Company in America Award through its Employee Wellness Program

District 211 highly values its employees and believes that their well-being has a direct, positive impact on students. Employee wellness is fostered through a number of initiatives, including a comprehensive screening program available to all employees. Over 90% of employees participate in the comprehensive wellness program that provides them with direct access to comprehensive health information. Over a one-year time period, 26% of employees



improved their overall health score and 78% of screened employees achieved a total health score indicating low health risk. District 211 received additional recognition for employees who improved blood pressure, cholesterol measures, and blood sugar indicators. Of more than 1,400 agencies eligible nationwide, District 211 was one of 154 companies to receive recognition as a *Healthiest Company in America* by Interactive Health Solutions.