

To: Board of Education
From: Dan Bridges, Superintendent
Date: February 18, 2025
RE: Innovative School Experience

Summary: *The Administration will not be asking for action by the Board of Education at the February 18, 2025 meeting. No action on the recommendation is scheduled on the agenda. The Administration is in the process of analyzing and reviewing feedback it has received from various stakeholders and planning to update its timeline for recommendations. On behalf of the leveled Design Teams, the Administration remains committed to the work of the Innovative School Experience and looks forward to bringing its updated recommendations soon.*

During the February 3, 2025, Board of Education meeting the Naperville 203 Administration presented its recommendations to the Board relative to the Innovative School Experience. The outcomes of the presentation made to the Board were:

Review Stakeholder Feedback and Insights

- Present key themes and takeaways from Focus 203 and community engagement efforts regarding innovative school experience and school start and end times.
- Demonstrate how stakeholder feedback informed the decision-making process and shaped the final recommendations.

Present Final Recommendations for Board Approval

- Provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the final proposal from the ISE Design teams and Operational team that includes proposed start and end times, instructional shifts, professional learning outcomes, and measurement of success.
- Outline the anticipated benefits and challenges.

The Administration indicated that it would seek board approval for its recommendations at the February 18, 2025 Board meeting. The Administration's recommendation included three components:

1. The approval of Innovative School Experience learning structures, including: the Early Childhood Plan; Elementary Plan; Middle School Plan; and High School Plan.
2. The approval of revised School Start and End Times.
3. The implementation of the Innovative School Experience learning structures and revised school start and end times to begin with the 2025-2026 school year.

After the Administration's presentation, public comment, and Board member questions and discussion, the Superintendent informed the Board that the Administration would not seek Board action at the February 18 meeting. Therefore, the Innovative School Experience proposal remains an item for discussion without action.

Background

Focus 203 Strategic Blueprint Commitment 1.3 calls for an analysis of innovative school day models to support effective multi-tiered systems of support and flexible use of time and space that responds to the student of the future. This blueprint commitment has served as the

backbone of the work of the Level Design Teams in their efforts to create flexible, student-centered learning environments that support effective individualized interventions and prepare every student for the future. The Design Teams have examined time, space, and the needs of today's learners.

Our commitment to innovating the school experience has been years in the making. This work has been guided by intentional efforts to analyze, learn, and design solutions that meet the needs of our students for the future. As you can see from this timeline, our process over the past six years has engaged many members of our staff, administration, parents, community partners, and students.

In 2018, teams analyzed surveys and existing school day structures to propose structural changes. While these proposals provided valuable insights, they were not implemented at the time due to various constraints.

From 2019 to 2022, the district made progress by expanding blended learning opportunities, revising high school schedules, developing a comprehensive strategic plan, and reviewing and updating junior high exploratory course offerings to better align with student interests and workforce needs.

In the summer of 2023, administrators across the district engaged in learning about emerging technologies & generative Artificial Intelligence, the transition from content to skills and the need for innovative school experiences during an Innovation Summit.

In the winter of 2023, as we shared earlier, a team of parents, students, staff, administrators, community members, and business leaders developed our Profile of a Learner, establishing the skills that would guide our work moving forward. The work of Profile of a Learner team ultimately resulted in the Board of Education approving a new Mission Statement for Naperville 203 that incorporates the Profile competencies.

Then, in the spring of 2024, leveled Design Teams, consisting of certified staff, administrators, and educational support professionals at each level began a deeper dive. They reviewed research, analyzed neighboring school structures, developed core beliefs, and designed innovative structures tailored to the needs of their students.

At the January 21, 2025 Board of Education meeting, Administration updated the Board and community on the work of the Innovative School Experience Teams and previewed the recommendations it planned to present to the Board, including:

We propose a staggered school day to make better use of time and resources. By also ensuring that students arrive at school as close to the start of the day as possible, we reduce unstructured time and maximize instructional opportunities.

At the elementary level, we plan to add 15 minutes to the school day to account for time for an intervention and extension block, daily morning meetings, and non-instructional

tasks, without stealing time from core instruction. At the same time, at the secondary level, we aim to reduce non-instructional time, like excessive passing periods or lengthy time before school even begins, to ensure that time is reallocated to meaningful learning opportunities.

For high school, we propose implementing a block schedule with an anchor day.

For middle school, we propose extending mathematics instructional time and creating opportunities for deeper learning in all subjects, including flexible blocks.

We also propose shifting the elementary start time earlier, while delaying start times for middle school and high school.

Finally, no school day will start before 7:30 a.m. or end later than 4:00 p.m.

Action Since February 3, 2025 and Next Steps

On Tuesday, February 11, 2025, the NUEA Executive Board and the Administrative Cabinet met for a regularly scheduled IPC collaboration meeting. Discussion items on the agenda included an overview of the NUEA survey results and to review and to seek to better understand recent communications, including comments made during public comment, regarding the Innovative School Experience. We are continuing to deeply analyze the feedback and the survey results that we are able to access, as our only available data is what was shared via the public link.

In addition to continuing to better understand the input from NUEA based on their survey, we are continuing to analyze the feedback we have received since the February 3 meeting via the Innovative School Experience Let's Talk inbox. Since January 24th, 302 unique stakeholders have submitted messages to Let's Talk expressing agreement, concerns, or posing questions regarding the proposal. Of the 302 submissions, 5 were students, 15 were staff and the rest were community members. Approximately 65% of the total number of submissions (including multiple submissions by several stakeholders) expressed concern or disagreement.

At the Board meeting, it was suggested that staff who raised concerns or emailed the Board were called in for discussions with principals, creating a "chilling effect" as it is "alarming behavior." This has led to the interpretation by many that the District has engaged in "retaliatory behavior" against members who have expressed opinions in public or through email.

In collaboration with the NUEA Executive Board, the district has reviewed these reports and has found no evidence of punitive actions or reprimands related to staff expressing concerns. We jointly and strongly encourage any staff who feel otherwise to contact Human Resources or their NUEA representatives.

It is important to address that some other public comments made on February 3, 2025, contain inaccuracies. We will update our FAQs to ensure accurate information is shared and respond to questions frequently submitted via Let's Talk.

There have been some questions about why all three parts of the Innovative School Experience recommendation have to come simultaneously. The recommendations from the Design Teams for both the elementary level and the high school level include changes to the length of the day. Therefore, the recommendations cannot be fully implemented without changing the start and end times across the entire system.

The Board of Education has requested that there be clear outcomes and metrics for implementation of the Innovative School Experience. An overview of outcomes, metrics, anticipated challenges, and anticipated benefits were provided in the February 3 presentation (slides 46-50). The Administration did prepare a more detailed document that included a three year implementation plan that it intended to share with the Board in BoardDocs. Unfortunately, that document was not loaded in BoardDocs for the February 3 meeting. As we work to review our recommendations and update our timeline, we will be sure to update that document and include it in future presentations and recommendations, as we agree that is an important part of this plan.

We expect to have an update at the March 10, 2025 Board of Education meeting.