Dr. Suzanne Johnson, Interim Superintendent

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Principal of Willard Elementary School Honored in State's 'Those Who Excel' Program

ELGIN - Dustin Covarrubias, Principal of Willard Elementary School in South Elgin, has received a Meritorious Service Award in the Illinois State Board of Education's Those Who Excel program. He will be honored Monday by the U-46 Board of Education with an Accent on Achievement.

The annual Those Who Excel and Teacher of the Year Awards celebrate classroom teachers, administrators, teams, volunteers, and school support personnel who have made lasting impacts on the students, families, and fellow educators in their school communities. ISBE will celebrate the awardees at a banquet on April 29.

"Dustin's enthusiasm for the Willard community, his passion for education, and his dedication to improving teaching and learning are admirable," said Dr. Michelle Thompson, Executive Director of U-46's South Elgin Network. "He works hard every day for the teachers and students so they can thrive. We're fortunate to have him leading Willard Elementary School."

Covarrubias has worked in U-46 for 16 years, beginning at Tefft Middle School, where he taught social studies, health, and physical education.

Before being named to lead Willard at the start of the 2018-19 school year, he served as Assistant Principal of Huff Elementary School. He has also coached football, boys and girls basketball, baseball, track and field, and girls and boys volleyball during his tenure in School District U-46.

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Covarrubias said when he learned about the honor from ISBE, which came in the administrator category, "I immediately thought how blessed I was to have the opportunity to serve Willard and U-46 for the last 16 years."

He credits a high school football coach for helping guide him and inspiring him to pursue a career in education.

"I enjoy getting to see students learn! If you have a passion for working with kids, I tell young people that you can't find a more rewarding career than education," Covarrubias said.

Willard was one of five elementary schools designated as "Schools for Rigor and Equity" when the District launched U-46 Rising at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. U-46 Rising focuses on the interaction and relationship between teachers, content, and students demonstrating how standards-based curriculum and assessments, coupled with best instructional practices, result in students having more agency in the classroom and demonstrating mastery of standards.

Covarrubias has been a champion of this work, recently telling the U-46 Board of Education that U-46 Rising has "changed the dynamics of the classrooms" by "letting students take ownership of their work."

The Board of Education will recognize Covarrubias with an "Accent on Achievement" certificate at 7 p.m. Monday, March 13, in room 140 at the Educational Services Center. The U-46 Board of Education meeting will also be streamed live on the District's YouTube channel.

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School District U-46 serves families in 11 communities: Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood and Wayne, as well as portions of Carol Stream, Hoffman Estates, St. Charles, Schaumburg, and West Chicago. In total, the District encompasses 90 square miles within the Fox River Valley, approximately 45 minutes west of downtown Chicago, and

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includes communities within Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. More than 35,000 preschoolers through 12th graders attend the 57 District schools and programs. To learn more, visit the U-46 <u>website</u>, or like us on <u>Facebook</u> and follow us on <u>Twitter</u>.