

Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter



April 24, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Prior to Spring Recess, we hosted our 2025 Student Summit at Elgin Community College. This was an opportunity for approximately 250 high school students to convene to have conversations on the following topics:

- Student Identity and Connection
- Post Secondary Opportunity
- Student Safety and Well-Being
- Academic Opportunities

Additionally, the students received an update on our attendance campaign, Every Minute Matters, and provided feedback on a potential cell-phone policy. The Summit is completely student-led, with members of the Superintendent Advisory Council serving as facilitators of the discussions. Mahitha Ratakonda, the 2025 Student Advisor to the Board, established the vision and organized the day.

As always, there is so much to learn from our students. On Monday, April 28, the Superintendent Student Advisors will present a summary of the summit to the Board of Education, during the Open Session. Please watch the BOE meeting to see their presentation. Additionally, student participants are charged with returning to their schools to continue discussing with their building leaders how they might improve their own school environments. I am so proud of our student leaders and our leaders across U-46 who support our work to amplify student voices and take action to enhance our student experiences and outcomes.

This level of collaboration helps to make sure each day is a great day to learn in U-46!



Kudos

Note: We enjoy seeing the recognition and respect among our U-46 Team through the [Kudos submitted](#) in each issue of the Superintendent's Weekly. In an effort to further recognize our team members, we will be sharing select Kudos on social media each week under the hashtag #U46StaffKudos. When entering Kudos in Let's Talk, please note if you would prefer to not have your kudos shared on social media. We look forward to continuing to receive your kudos and celebrating them in this new way.

Remember, only Kudos with the sender's name will appear in the Weekly; no anonymous messages. Kudos are due by **5 p.m. each Tuesday**.

Kudos to Nick Corn, Dale McMahon, and Graham Nelson, all in Plant Operations, from Marty Angelo and the Rest of the Staff at Harriet Gifford Elementary School

As Harriet Gifford Elementary prepares for our 75th anniversary, we would like to send a shout out to Nick, Dale, and Graham for supporting Harriet Gifford with their help in cleaning up and mulching in our outdoor classroom. Dale and Graham showed the pride they take in their work, and did an amazing job. Thank you so much!

Kudos to Jim Karras, at the Welcome Center, from Casey Lauinger, Lead Occupational Therapist

I want to extend a big thank you to Jim, the Welcome Center custodian. Our department meets at the Welcome Center each month for collaborations, and Jim has consistently been incredibly helpful. This month, in particular, he went above and beyond! I had several items to bring in, and

Jim knew my needs. He greeted me at the door at 7:30 a.m. with his cart ready to assist. After our collaboration, he came to our room and helped me take everything back to my car. Jim always has a smile on his face and is eager to help everyone who utilizes the Welcome Center. Thank you, Jim!

Kudos to the Administrative Assistants Team at Dream Academy, from Rafael Jose Martinez at the Dream Academy

Dream Academy wants to recognize and celebrate our amazing team of administrative assistants who help us and support us each day to make sure that we can effectively serve and provide the best services to our staff and students. Thank you for all that you do each day! You are definitely the best.



Kudos to Keleigh Foreman, Tiffany Jourdan, Rafael Martinez, Joan Riedel, Tony Venetico, Aaron Wichman, and Diane O'Connell, all Associate Principals at our High Schools, from Michele Chapman, in Post Secondary Success

Congratulations for the successful ACT/PACT test administration this past week. Their careful planning, attention to detail, and professionalism played a key role in making everything run smoothly. Thanks to their dedication, the testing process was organized, efficient, and stress-free for everyone involved. I truly appreciate their hard work and commitment to maintaining high standards.

Kudos to Sam Colando, Brooke McGrath, Mary Abbott, Dove Holecek, Ryan Lemanski, Gladys Crespo, all in Specialized Student Services and Laura Smail, in Culture and Climate, from Jen Walker in Specialized Student Services.

Thank you for helping to plan and lead professional development for paraeducators across the High School Network. Your collaboration, creativity, and the expertise you brought from your respective fields made the presentations engaging, informative, and truly valuable.

Kudos to Griselda Guzman, from Eve Perdikaris, both at Kenyon Woods Middle School

I would like to shine a light on the incredible work of our exceptional social worker, Grisy Guzman. From launching new programs to supporting students and families in real, meaningful ways, she doesn't just talk about change, she makes it happen. Whether it's organizing MTSS support systems, coordinating with staff, or just making sure no one falls through the cracks, Grisy is always a few steps ahead — and somehow still finds time to be a calm, encouraging presence for everyone around her. Thank you, Grisy, for being a powerhouse of follow-through, heart and FUN. We see the work you put in, and we're so grateful for you!

Kudos to Lisa Hylla and Nico Sipiorski, from Marcella Sheler, all at Huff Elementary School

A huge kudos to Lisa and Nico, our incredible science teachers at Huff Elementary, for organizing our first annual STEAM Night! Thanks to their thoughtful planning and coordination, more than 75 families came together to build robots, create tornadoes, bring home science prizes, and share in the excitement of hands-on learning. The energy in the room was electric as students and families engaged in science and engineering activities while kicking off our One School, One Book event, featuring "The Wild Robot Escapes!" It was truly heartwarming to see the joy on our students' faces and the strong sense of community your hard work fostered. Thank you for creating such a memorable and inspiring evening.



Kudos to Melanie Rook and Yesenia Martinez, from Eve Perdikaris, all at Kenyon Woods Middle School

As we reach the final stretch of the year, I have to shout out the incredible counseling team at Kenyon Woods. Melanie and Yesenia were new to KWMS this year and their presence could not be replaced. Your tireless efforts, your deep compassion, and your unwavering commitment to every student here don't go unnoticed. You've not only supported students in their academic and emotional growth but have also shaped the culture of kindness, resilience, and empathy that we all

benefit from. You make a difference in more ways than you'll ever know, and we are so lucky to have you as part of our team. I couldn't have done any of this without you two!

Kudos to U-46's Occupational Therapists, from Patty Kenyon, in Health Services

April is National OT month. I want to thank all of our U-46 Occupational Therapists. Occupational Therapists work to promote health, well-being, and participation. We have 34 hard-working OTs in U-46. I would like to give a special shout out to Casey Lauinger, the lead OT. She works very hard to support all the OTs in our district, and her commitment does not go unnoticed. Please share a word of thanks with your OT when you see them this month. Thank you for all you do!



Kudos to the High Schools from the Assessment, Accountability, and Student Success Department

Kudos to our high school associate principals — Aaron Wichman, Anthony Venetico, Diane O'Connell, Joan Riedel, Keleigh Foreman, Rafael Jose Martinez Ortiz, Assistant Principal Tiffany Jourdan, and everyone involved in ACT and PreACT testing at the high schools from David Bell, Matt Raimondi, Michele Chapman and the Assessment, Accountability, and Student Success Department. We are grateful for all that you did to make this a smooth testing experience for our students and staff!

Kudos to our Elementary and Middle Schools Testing Coordinators, from David Bell and the Assessment, Accountability, and Student Success Department

Kudos for a very successful IAR administration. Despite switching to a brand new administration platform, we were still able to achieve a 99% completion rate in both IAR and Math, which is a testament to your hard work and dedication. Great job!

Kudos to Mrs. Sylvester, Mrs. Ahmedi 1, Mrs. Ahmedi 2, Mrs. Chavez, Mrs. Bravo, Mrs. Miki, Mrs. Wasti, Mrs. Rathod, and Mrs. Yi, from Karen Rottman, all at Hanover Countryside Elementary School

I would like to thank our noon hour supervisors at Hanover Countryside for all that they do to support our students. They go above and beyond for our students both at work and our after school activities. Thank you for coming and helping and sharing your culture with us as well at our multicultural night. Your support and dedication helps keep our students safe and well taken care of and I just wanted to let you know that you are appreciated.

Kudos to the Occupational Therapy Practitioners at U-46 from Casey Lauinger, Lead Occupational Therapist

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to the Occupational Therapy practitioners in U-46. Our dedicated occupational therapy practitioners support our diverse learners from before entering early childhood (age 2) through our transition program (age 22). They strive to enhance our students' independence and participation throughout the school day by providing essential services and collaborating closely with teachers and teams. As we celebrate Occupational Therapy Month this April, I want to highlight a photo of our team from our dynamic professional development held on Friday. (Plus a future OT in the making!) Thank you to OT practitioners for your hard work and commitment to our students!



School District U-46

