

# Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter

---



**May 1, 2025**

Dear Colleagues,

This time of year is filled with non-stop celebrations for educators and students. Proms, recognition dinners, celebrations, awards ceremonies, performances, the retirement dinner, and of course, the Kane County Educator of the Year event.

These events are great ways to celebrate our work and the achievements of our students. One event I always like to highlight is the Superintendent's Scholarship reception. Since 2012, the U-46 Foundation, with support from generous donors, has provided scholarships to U-46 students who are the first in their family to attend college. This would not be possible without the support of so many in our community who have contributed. I cannot thank our donors enough. I hope you take an opportunity to view [this video](#) celebrating our 2025 recipients.

All these events lead up to our most exciting day of the year, Graduation Day! This year, our high school graduations occur on Saturday, May 24, at the Now Arena (Elgin HS at 8 a.m., Bartlett HS at 11 a.m., Larkin HS at 2 p.m., Streamwood HS at 5 p.m., and South Elgin HS at 8 p.m.). I hope everyone has the opportunity to attend at least one U-46 graduation during their career in U-46!

It's a great day to learn in U-46!

Dr. Suzanne Johnson

---

**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 David Steuer in Information Services from Amy Durkalski in Specialized Student Services and Behavior Specialists Carolyn Flores, Allison Hale, Jessica Harrison, and Hannah Lehman**

Thank you, David, for your patience and teamwork in bringing our vision to life. You're officially part of the team! We're thrilled with our new Infinite Campus tab (coming Fall 2025) and appreciate your help making it happen.

**Kudos to Tina O'Farrell, in the Transportation Department, from Lisa Christner, at Kenyon Woods Middle School**

I am so grateful for Tina's assistance with securing a bus for our recent trip on such short notice. She is a miracle worker, and I could not thank her enough for her willingness to help!

**Kudos to the Laurel Hill Staff, from Crystal Kempf, at Laurel Hill Elementary School**

We are thrilled to celebrate the unwavering dedication and exceptional efforts of the entire Laurel Hill Staff. Over the past 12 years, they have embarked on an incredible Transformation Day journey. While this journey is coming to a close, their commitment to the students of Laurel Hill remains as strong as ever, continuing to inspire and support the success of every student. Congratulations to the entire team for their hard work and dedication!



**Kudos to the Following Streamwood Network Principals: Ridge Circle—Janelle Raine, Sunnydale—Andrea Gaitan, Oakhill—Laura Alegria, and Notable Applause to Principal Rajan Sharma—Glenbrook, from Executive Director Teresa Winters, for Being the Lead Facilitator of this Student Initiative.**

I would like to thank the participating principals of the 1st inaugural Streamwood Elementary Basketball Tournament, who are working together as a network to increase students' sense of belonging by participating in our district's first-ever Elementary basketball tournament! Principal Rajan Sharma is working alongside Streamwood High School Principal Paige Moran and Athletic Director Jason Ward to offer a round robin tournament at Streamwood High School on Saturday, May 3. Eligible student athletes can play if they participate in the after-school coed program at their respective school and are in good standing in the following areas: attendance, academics, and behavior. Huge shoutout to Principal of Ridge Circle Janelle Raine, Principal of Sunnydale Andrea Gaitan, and the Principal of Oakhill Laura Alegria for participating in this groundbreaking event in Streamwood! Principal Gaitan and Sunnydale will even have cheerleaders at the tournament, which is planned to be a yearly tradition with a trophy being passed along as the years continue! Many thanks to all the participating principals and leadership for the coaches! Significant and solid move for our students' sense of belonging!

**Kudos to Staff from Abbott Middle School, from Erin Bryant at Centennial Elementary School**

Thank you all for participating in our Autism Walk. We appreciate your support and hope to see you next year!



**Kudos to Brenda Morones, Lucy LeFever, William Doran, Nicole Bryan and all Centennial Staff from Erin Bryant, all at Centennial Elementary School**

Thank you for donating snacks, purchasing shirts, popping and selling popcorn, putting up signs around the community, and walking with us this past Saturday. Our annual Autism 5k was successful because of all your dedication and support. Ca-Caw!



**Kudos to Mike Miserendino, Eric Hollaway, Dave Goldman, Lisa Podraza, Alexa Mount, and the Entire Cast and Crew of "The Little Mermaid," from Mike Basich, at Bartlett High School**

Quite possibly, the finest high school performance I have ever seen! What an incredible Fine Arts team!

**Kudos to Gustavo Maldonado, at Creekside Elementary School, from Claudia Martinez-Carter, U-46 Parent**

As we are nearing the end of the school year, I want to thank Mr. Maldonado for his approach to teaching and student learning in his classroom. He shows my son tough love by making sure my son understands his potential, emotionally and academically. Mr. Maldonado does this through a student focused and student centered approach to teaching and mentoring that we are grateful for. He provides parents/guardians a snippet of their daily learning through Classdojo, provides students little gifts throughout the school year, and cultivates their interpersonal skills through their learning pods. Mr. Maldonado, we will miss you, but our son will miss you more. Thank you for your investment in our child's learning!

**Kudos to Art Villagomez, in Transportation, from Jodie Allton, at Lincoln Elementary School**

I would like to extend my gratitude for Art and how well he handles the students on his bus. Art is always arriving with a smile and welcomes the kids by name on to the bus. Even in the face of adversity, Art still continues to smile. Art takes his job and the safety of the students very seriously. Thank you, Art, for being the amazing bus driver that you are!

**Kudos to Patty Briones and the Project Access Team, from Ameri, a U-46 Student**

I am a student from Bartlett High School and had the chance to move to Dream Academy through Project Access. Ms. Patty and her team worked so hard to get me through everything. I am very thankful that they supported me through the end of my high school journey. They also supported me by putting me in programs, and now I am confident about my future. There is still a long way to

go, but Ms. Patty also helped me put everything and every piece together. I will surely never forget the kindness that they gave me.

### **Kudos to Dr. Jennifer Schwardt, from Tanya Casey and Darlynn Terry, all at Horizon Elementary School**

During National Principal Appreciation Week, we would like to honor and appreciate Dr. Schwardt for being an amazing and awesome principal at Horizon. The leadership and passion for creating a school climate and culture where every student has a sense of belonging and are excited to come to school every day to learn is like no other. Dr. Schwardt is a leader at heart and leads with love. She understands the importance of encouraging and supporting students and staff to reach their full potential in all they dare to dream and desire to accomplish. Thank you, Dr. Schwardt for your care, leadership, passion, and commitment to the Horizon Community! We are thankful to work with an amazing, awesome, and "Sunsational" Principal!



### **Kudos to Alison Karl, from Angie Peralez, both at Larsen Middle School**

I want to give a shout out to Mrs. Karl, one of our social workers at Larsen for always being available to support our students when needed. Thanks for all your help! The students are lucky to have someone advocate for them and have someone that meets with them regularly. You will be missed!

**Kudos to Mr. Zurko & Ms. Heatley at Wayne Elementary School, from Kaleen Martin, U-46 Parent**  
Wayne Elementary PTW hosted a "Wayne's Way Fun Run" to encourage students to be active and follow Wayne's Way (Respect, Responsibility, & Safe) all while raising money for the school to put

towards classroom materials, assemblies, playground equipment and more. Mr. Zurko and & Ms. Heatley agreed to become human ice cream sundaes if we reached the school goal. The top two students from every class were able to pour toppings on to Mr. Zurko and Ms. Heatley while all of their classmates watched. The kids loved it! Both Mr. Zurko and Ms. Heatley were great sports about this while supporting the school and having some fun with kids. As always they continue to help build this community and make it a fun and safe place for all!



**Kudos to Melissa Nytko and Laura Smail, in Department of Climate and Culture, from Mary Abbott in Specialized Student Services**

I want to sincerely thank Melissa and Laura, both school social workers, for the incredible training they provided on restorative practices. Their presentation was engaging, thoughtful, and full of practical strategies. The importance of restorative practices in a school setting cannot be overstated. The tools they shared are essential for creating safe, supportive, and inclusive environments where students and staff alike can thrive. Their ability to connect the philosophy with real-world applications made the training especially impactful, and I am grateful for their dedication to this vital work. I truly hope to see restorative practices continue to expand throughout our district—not just as a one-time initiative, but as a foundational approach to how we build relationships, resolve conflict, and support our school communities. Thank you again for your time, your passion, and your expertise. It was a privilege to learn from both of you, and I look forward to seeing the ripple effects of your work throughout our schools.

**Kudos to Eve Perdikaris, from Yesenia Martinez, both at Kenyon Woods Middle School**

I want to take a moment to recognize Eve Perdikaris for being an absolute rockstar of a school counselor and teammate. Since I joined the Kenyon Woods team this year, Eve has been nothing short of amazing. She had everything so well-organized, from master push-in lessons schedules to building-wide systems, that stepping into my new role felt seamless. I didn't have to start from scratch because Eve had already created a structure that made it easy to plug in and get going. She welcomed me with open arms and made sure I had everything I needed to succeed. But what really makes Eve the MVP is the way she leads with heart and purpose. She's incredibly responsive, understanding, and genuinely supportive, not just to students, but to her colleagues too. She consistently goes above and beyond to ensure students have equitable access to the resources and support they need to thrive. Whether it's walking me through unfamiliar processes, talking me through tough situations, or simply checking in to make sure I'm doing okay, Eve shows up every single day with compassion and professionalism. She's the kind of person who makes you feel seen, heard, and valued, and I'm so grateful to work alongside her. Kenyon Woods is lucky to have her, and so am I!



**School District U-46**

