

# Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter

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**Nov. 21, 2024**

*In honor of American Education Week and the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, the message from Dr. Johnson this week is all kudos. The next Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter will be shared on Thursday, Dec. 5.*

**Kudos to Aurora Lozano, Jennifer Simon, and Raquel Robelo in Assessment, from Natasha Giraldo, at Bartlett Elementary School**

Aurora, Jennifer, and Raquel have been so knowledgeable and have been so responsive regardless of the number of questions I send them. They have really been helpful as I assist my staff in navigating this new assessment. Thank you so much for all you are doing to help us navigate assessments throughout the year.

**Kudos to the Staff at Century Oaks Elementary School, from Ashley Talip, at Century Oaks**

I'd like to give a kudos to the amazing staff at Century Oaks who quickly recognized there was a problem with a bus following dismissal. Our PM dismissal staff paged admin for assistance and additional staff, immediately springing into action to support our students following a minor incident. Thank you to our front office staff who handled making phone calls, getting needed paperwork, and communicating to parents. Additional staff helped out long after hours to get students accounted for and moved safely to the next bus. Finally, to our amazing bus driver who stayed so calm and got our kids home after, thank you!

**Kudos to Linda Geller at Larsen Middle School from Katrina Neal, Districtwide Substitute Teacher**

Linda who works in the front office as a sub-para and secretary to the principal. I want to give you kudos for helping me develop my passion to teach by allowing me to come every week to work SPED and other classrooms as a substitute. These past few weeks working at Larsen, I've had the pleasure of getting to know the students by name while also connecting with them, and it has given me a new sense of purpose, knowing I made the right choice when I changed careers completely. I want you to know the impact you had on me in such a short time because you challenged me to be the best with the classes I'm assigned in. It feels really good when the kids

see me in the hallway and get excited to see if I will have their class for that day. A few students have told me I'm their favorite sub, and that means I'm modeling behaviors that create continued student success and are aligned with U-46 mission, values and goals. Thank you, Linda!

**Kudos to Maria DelPilar Garcia, in Early Learner Initiatives, from Sandra Hancock, at Huff Elementary School**

I want to thank Maria for being an amazing person with our staff and preschoolers! She is always so kind and willing to help in any way possible. Huff and our preschoolers are very blessed to have her with us this year!

**Kudos to Katie Cox, Pam Maxey, Cory Mehnert, Kelly O'Hara, Lynn Reuter, and Dennis Anderson, from Christina Bernardi, all in Early Learner Initiatives**

As a resident administrator, I am thankful to be learning and working with the best administrator team! Thank you for taking the time to teach me how to lead.

**Kudos to Rhonda Judd, from Jim Medcalf, both in Specialized Student Services**

Congratulations to Rhonda on her far too imminent retirement! Her dedication, knowledge, initiative, and empathy will be sorely missed by those of us who worked with her and the students and families she helped support.

**Kudos to Ruth De Jesus, Maria GarciaGarcia, Kate Burgess, Kristin DeSantis, and Jennifer Vallone, from Christina Bernardi, all in Early Learner Initiatives**

Thank you for all of your hard work in supporting our incoming preschool students. We appreciate all you do!

**Kudos to Nicholas Baird and Ziomara Gil, from Harry Santos, all at Ellis Middle School**

I would like to take a moment to recognize and express my gratitude to Mr. Baird and Mrs. Gil, for their exceptional leadership and support during this first semester in their new roles as principal and assistant principal. Starting a school year is never easy, but they have managed it with dedication, professionalism, and a clear vision for our school community. Their commitment to the well-being of everyone, both inside and outside the classroom, has been evident from day one.

On a personal note, I would like to extend a special thank you for the invaluable support they have offered me during challenging times. Their understanding, empathy, and willingness to help have been a source of strength and comfort, and I will never forget it. Thank you, Mr. Baird and Mrs. Gil, for being outstanding leaders and for making Ellis a place where we all can grow and thrive. We are truly grateful for everything you do, both professionally and personally.

**Kudos to Bradley Gordon, in Information Services, from Jen Pray, at Illinois Park Center for Early Learning**

Bradley is our building tech at Illinois Park. He is always immediately answering messages and very quick to respond and complete things when we need help. Thank you so much, Bradley, for all your hard work!

**Kudos to Maria Esposito, from Elizabeth Schimmel, both at Elgin High School**

As the school treasurer, you have been handed a huge undertaking by now needing to reconcile p-cards for the entire building, including the difficult task of the culinary department. You do it with

grace under pressure. We appreciate all that you do for us daily, including helping us keep track of it all. Thank you Maria!

**Kudos to Lizett Toledo, from Jim Medcalf, both in Specialized Student Services**

Thanks to Lizett, our department's I-Star secretary, for keeping up with the never-ending waves of FACTS forms that come her way, along with facilitating transportation changes for our students with special education busing needs. It can be a behind-the-scenes role, but your work is vital and appreciated.

**Kudos to Janelle Raine, Sarah Hansen, and the Ridge Circle Elementary School Staff, from Kelly Roback at Ridge Circle Elementary**

I wanted to express how thankful I am for the warm welcome I have received at Ridge Circle since joining the staff this year. I truly appreciate how you have all embraced me as part of the team, and I'm excited to be working alongside each of you. I look forward to continuing to support our students, and continuing to help make this school an even more amazing place for everyone. Thank you once again for making me feel so welcome!

**Kudos to Jenny Swan, from Jim Medcalf, both in Specialized Student Services**

Thanks to Jenny, secretary of student records, for bringing order to our records department. Since moving to primarily electronic records and enduring a couple rounds of staff turnover, our file room had needed some work, but things are starting to look up thanks to her attention to detail.

**Kudos to Jennifer Sulejmani, at Dream Academy, from Katrina Neal, Districtwide Substitute Teacher**

I want to give Jennifer kudos for creating a warm and friendly climate with a side of inspiration for not only the students but substitute newcomers like me. Today was my first day coming to sub at Dream Academy, and she welcomed me with open arms and a warm smile from the time we said hello. I left inspired and will be enrolling in school to get my teaching certificate after hearing about her experiences. Thank you, Jennifer, because kindness and care for others is so needed nowadays, especially with the students that love to see you daily. The one student said you were the reason she comes to school daily. That is such a rewarding feeling to know you make a huge difference here. You made my day and future with U-46 brighter. Thank you for being you.

**Kudos to Amanda Leatherby, Chris Sanzeri, and Amy Durkalski, from Jim Medcalf, all in Specialized Student Services**

Thanks to Amanda, Chris, and Amy for their leadership. In the last two years, our department has entirely turned over our top-level administration - an anxiety eliciting prospect that has been as seamless as possible thanks to their expertise, experience, and enthusiasm.

**Kudos to the Incredible Parkwood Elementary Staff, from Ana Arroyo, at Parkwood Elementary School**

Your unwavering kindness, dedication, and genuine support for one another and our community truly make Parkwood a special place. The love you show for our students, families, and each other does not go unnoticed. Your commitment to engaging in collaborative practices sets a powerful example of teamwork and unity, creating a nurturing environment where everyone can thrive. Thank you for continuously empowering and uplifting our students, turning dreams into reality through your tireless work and compassionate hearts. We are so fortunate to have each of you shaping the future and making a difference every day!



**Kudos to Amy Alviar, from Mike Huizar, both at Lords Park Elementary School**

Amy, thank you for doing everything you can to support our students at Lords Park in your role as a Student Success Advocate. We have needed more support during a difficult period for students, and you are always ready to help. I really appreciate your support and I know the students do, too!

**Kudos to Geoff Fleming and Shannon Henderson, from Lisa Olsem, all at Kenyon Woods Middle School**

Geoff and Shannon are the best APs around! We truly make an incredible team, and I'm so grateful for each of you. Your hard work, dedication, and caring nature are evident in everything you do. Whether it's supporting students, working with staff, or tackling challenges head-on, you consistently go above and beyond to make a positive impact on our students. It's not just about getting the job done; it's about doing it with heart. I'm proud to work alongside such a team. Keep up the fantastic work - we're stronger together!

**Kudos to the Members of the Social Emotional Response Team and Tactical Assessment Team, from Dr. Annette Acevedo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools**

Elisabeth Ferrill, Genevieve Lukes, Jessica Goldstein, Kelli Walsh, Laura Smail, Marisa Herrell, Melissa Nytko, Robert Kirch, Robert Luck, and Zehra Tahir - as members of our Social Emotional Response Team (SERTs) and Tactical Assessment Team (TAT) - I'd like to thank each of you for your teamwork and extraordinary contributions to our District.

Your commitment to ensuring the safety, well-being, and emotional health of our students and staff is unparalleled. The expertise, compassion, and collaboration you bring to every situation provide a



foundation of support that truly transforms lives. Thank you for all you do!

**Kudos to Trenie Gorak, from Alejandra Ganddin and Angela Rojas, all at Independence Center for Early Learners**

Thank you, Trenie, for all your dedication to our school as our school coach. Your leadership helps us so much in so many ways.

**Kudos to my Amazing Instructional Cabinet: Dr. Annette Acevedo, Dr. Leatrice Satterwhite, and Mr. Brian Tennison, from Lela Majstorovic, Deputy Superintendent of Instruction**

This team lives and breathes our moral imperative, and they have been working tirelessly to deeply reflect on our systems and how they work for our students. They are committed to working to create learning opportunities, provide feedback, reflect on practices, and make our overall system better for everyone. It is an honor to be able to work alongside you! Thank you!

**Kudos to Kelley Thomas, Carolina Lerner, Denise Halleran, Estela Vazquez, Julie Hill, Lindsay Taylor, Sarah Schrandt, Rosalia Cornejo, and Tracy Jorgenson, all in Early Learner Initiatives, from Michelle Sweeney, at Independence Center for Early Learning**

I just wanted to send a kudos to my fellow Early Childhood itinerants. We've had lots of changes and new teachers joining us. We couldn't do this job without each other, and I love that we support each other, even if we're often not together! Keep on going, team! You're amazing!

**Kudos to the Hilltop Elementary School MTSS 1, 2, and 3 Teams, from Erika Aoki, at Hilltop Elementary School**

Thank you for your collaboration, dedication and detailed feedback at our monthly meetings. You make a great team that helps support all our students and staff addressing socio-emotional and academic needs.

**Kudos to Krista Schifferer, at Clinton Elementary School, from Margarita Gomez, a U-46 Parent**

I would like to acknowledge Krista, a 1st grade teacher at Clinton. I do not know her, but she reached out to me to tell me about the holiday toy drive and also to ask me what my children need, if anything. She was so kind in asking me what my two children at Clinton would like, specifically. Her kindness really touched my heart. It is people like this that make school feel like a second home.

**Kudos to Karla Jiménez and Tara Burghart, in Communications & Community Relations, from Dr. Annette Acevedo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools**

Your support this year with the Office of Schools Newsletter has been invaluable. I can't thank you enough for agreeing to support this idea and then making it much better! I'm grateful for our collaboration - both present and future. You, and the Communications & Community Relations Team overall, are gems and rock stars in the Communications Universe!

**Kudos to Barbara Sleeman-Beckman, Norma Roman, Janette Marquez, and Elizabeth Velazquez, from Carrie Farmer, all at Larkin High School**

I would like to recognize the paraprofessionals in the EN2 classroom at Larkin. They work hard and always put the students' needs first. They are patient, kind, and responsive. These ladies come in every day and assist students to be successful with academic, functional, and daily living skills. Our program could not function without these wonderful people! I appreciate you!

**Kudos to Patty Briones, in Project Access, from Andrea Gaitan, at Sunnydale Elementary School**

I want to take a moment to thank Patty for the incredible dedication and care she shows to all our families. Your compassion and tireless efforts make a world of difference, especially for the family in Sunnydale who is navigating such difficult times. Patty, you go above and beyond to lift others up, and it's truly a blessing to have you as part of our community. Thank you for being the rock that so many can lean on. You are deeply appreciated!

**Kudos to the Staff at Sunnydale Elementary School, from Andrea Gaitan and Cody Papp, at Sunnydale Elementary School**

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to the amazing staff at Sunnydale for their unwavering support of our students and families. Your dedication and hard work do not go unnoticed. You continually go above and beyond to meet the needs of our families, especially those facing the greatest challenges. Your compassion, commitment, and willingness to step in whenever and wherever needed make a lasting impact on our community. Thank you for being a source of strength and hope for so many. Your efforts are a true testament to the heart and soul of Sunnydale!

**Kudos to Aurora Lozano and the Entire Assessment Team, from Jovita Villanueva, in Specialized Student Services**

Thank you for always being so quick to answer a chat and assist teachers as we are trying to navigate implementing the new i-Read Diagnostic. I appreciate you all and want to send you a huge thank you!

**Kudos to Melissa Harris and Marci Gutierrez, Middle School Network, from Melissa Carroll and Jennifer Schultz, at Eastview Middle School**

Melissa and Marci have gone above and beyond their duties as instructional coaches. We are extremely thankful for all of their hard work, input, and guidance in helping us implement the new ELA middle school curriculum. We are so thankful!

**Kudos to Amber Russell, Amanda Dulaney, Lori Hahn, Jessa Heydt, Carolyn Schwellenbach, and John Signatur, from Natasha Giraldo, all at Bartlett Elementary School**

Thank you to the BES Crisis Team. You are all simply amazing. Whether it is break support that you are stepping in to assist with or a crisis code that has been called, you are flexible, responsive, caring, and work seamlessly to help students towards therapeutic rapport so that their learning can continue. I am so lucky to be able to work beside you as team members and colleagues. You are simply the best!

**Kudos to Cecilia Rodriguez, from Tara Burghart, both in Communications & Community Relations**

Cecila, thank you for all the work, thought, and care you put each week in compiling the Kudos section for the Superintendent's Weekly Message. Even during extremely busy weeks for our department, you manage to handle your other tasks while also finding time to handle Kudos. I could not do it without you!

**Kudos to the Bartlett Elementary School Staff, from John Signatur, at Bartlett Elementary School**

U.S. News recently did a ranking of the best elementary schools in the state of Illinois, and we're excited that Bartlett Elementary was one of the schools recognized in U-46 for schools in the top 40% statewide. Thank you to our caring and dedicated BES teachers and staff members who create a safe and engaging learning environment for our students every day.

**Kudos to Gilda Estevez, Angie Kobylinski, and Brenda Quintanilla, from Elizabeth Ma, Jonathan Bacheller, and Colleen Spencer, all at Ontarioville Elementary School**

The three of you are the heart of our school and the first impression for all who walk through our doors. You greet each person with a smile and treat everyone with respect, adults and children alike. You are a big part of why the culture in our school is so positive. Thank you for all you do for our staff, students, and families!

**Kudos to our School Staff and Administrators Districtwide from Dr. Annette Acevedo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools**

As school leaders and ambassadors of education, you are at the heart of everything we do!

This year, you have embraced opportunities with enthusiasm, you have faced challenges with resilience, and you have worked tirelessly to make our schools places of learning, growth, and belonging. Whether in the classroom, the office, or behind the scenes, your efforts make a profound difference in the lives of our students every single day.

Thank you for your passion, your perseverance, and your partnership. I am truly honored to work alongside such an exceptional team of educators and leaders. Kudos to you all!

**Kudos to Lydia Toledo, from Elizabeth Ma, Jonathan Bacheller, and Colleen Spencer, all at Ontarioville Elementary School**

Lydia, you go above and beyond to not only support the needs of our physical building but also support the needs of the community within the building. Your cheerful demeanor and willingness to jump in and help when needed are second to none. You are a true part of why the culture in our building is so positive and supportive. Thank you for all you do for our staff, students, and families!

**Kudos to the Ontarioville Elementary School Teachers, from Elizabeth Ma, Jonathan Bacheller, and Colleen Spencer, all at Ontarioville Elementary School**

Thank you, O-ville teachers, for your dedication to meeting the needs of all students and your motivation to continue learning about your practice along the way. Your willingness to be flexible in times of need is greatly appreciated. Your competitive spirit is evident in all the academic and conditions initiatives we have building-wide. You make it a fun place to learn and work. Thank you for all you do for our staff, students, and families!

**Kudos to Paul Pennington, from Avelira Rodriguez Gonzalez, both at Elgin High School**

The National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) is pleased to announce that Paul Pennington has been recognized by the NIAAA as a Certified Athletic Administrator.

To earn this distinction, Paul has demonstrated the highest level of knowledge and expertise in the field of interscholastic athletic administration. The voluntary certification process included a thorough evaluation of the candidate's educational background, experience, and professional contributions, as well as a rigorous, comprehensive written examination.

Paul is one of an elite group of interscholastic athletic administrators nationwide to attain this level of professionalism.

**Kudos to the Ontarioville Elementary School Paraprofessionals, from Elizabeth Ma, Jonathan Bacheller, and Colleen Spencer, all at Ontarioville Elementary School**

Thank you, O-ville paraprofessionals, for your hard work and dedication to supporting students in their classrooms. You work tirelessly to make connections with students and provide a safe and nurturing environment. We appreciate all you do for our staff, students, and families!

**Kudos to all the Members of the District's Instructional Leadership Team: Annette Acevedo, Celia Banks, Kyle Bunker, Michele Chapman, Katie Cox, Heather Fellows, Mark Gonnella, Yvette Gonzalez-Collins, Lisa Jackson, Bill Johnson, Amanda Leatherby, Griselda Pirtle, Sarah Rabe, Matt Raimondi, Leatrice Satterwhite, Julie Shumaker, Mary Sturgill, Brian Tennison, and Teresa Winters, from Deputy Superintendent of Instruction Lela Majstorovic**

Our work to build instructional coherence across our district has been tireless, and I appreciate each and every one of you because you bring such great expertise and ideas to the table. You have made a significant impact on our district, and I am so grateful to be a partner in our collective work! Thank you!

**Kudos Angelica Kobylinski from Elizabeth Ma, Jonathan Bacheller, and Colleen Spencer, all at Ontarioville Elementary School**

Angie, you will be missed by not only the staff here at O-ville but the surrounding communities you have served for more than 24 years with the district. You have such compassion for others and a tender heart, providing a soft place for students to land when they are in a time of need. You are a dependable partner in the day-to-day building operations, a community connection that is unmatched, and a source of joy for all around you. Thank you for all you have done to serve the staff, students, families, and community members of U-46 for over 24 years. You will be missed! Congratulations and enjoy your retirement, Angie!

**Kudos to ETA Leadership, President Barb Bettis, Vice President Scott Sternal, and IEA Uniserv Director Jack Janezic, from Deputy Superintendent of Instruction Lela Majstorovic**

I appreciate your thought partnership, your willingness to provide candid feedback, and your ongoing commitment to fostering a positive and productive relationship between our district and our educators. Your dedication to supporting our teachers and staff helps create an environment where students and educators alike can thrive. Thank you for being steadfast advocates for our schools and for working collaboratively to advance our shared mission of excellence in education.

**Kudos to the Communications Team, from Karla Jimenez, in Communications & Community Relations**

I want to take a moment to recognize the incredible work of our Communications & Community Relations Team. Thanks to their dedication and creativity, we were recently honored with 10 INSPRA awards - a testament to their talent and commitment. I'm so proud of everything we've accomplished together, and I can't wait to see what we continue to achieve this school year.

Our team's goal is to serve our schools, colleagues, and community, helping to make our district an exceptional place to learn, work, and grow. Thank you for all you do to keep our district shining!

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

I am so thankful to all of you because, in the face of adversity, we band together to make our Eagles Community the best it can be. Have a relaxing Thanksgiving break!



**Kudos to Sara Henry, at Willard Elementary School, from Jennifer Simon in Information Services**

Thank you for all your assistance with i-Ready testing, Sara. Your knowledge of Securly saved me tons of research time. You saved my day! I appreciate you!

**Kudos to Beth Lucarelli, from Chrisie Brennan and Reva Huebner, all at Eastview Middle School**

Beth's tireless efforts ensure our building operates smoothly and remains in excellent condition. With her pleasant demeanor, she is committed to helping the staff and students with any needs that arise. She does her work without complaint and always with a smile. Eastview is very lucky to have Beth here!

**Kudos to the Early Learner Coaches from Cindy Salas, in Early Learner Initiatives**

I am thankful to be a part of this incredible team of coaches. I appreciate your willingness to help me learn from you as a new member of the team. You are all so hard-working, knowledgeable, and supportive. Truly the best!

**Kudos to the Office of Schools Team, from Dr. Annette Acevedo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools**

During this season of gratitude, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt thanks to our Office of Schools team. Your dedication and commitment to supporting our schools and fostering a positive environment are truly remarkable. Every detail you manage, every challenge you navigate, and every effort you make ensures our students, administrators, staff, and community thrive.

Bill Johnson, Julie Shumaker, Kyle Bunker, Mary Sturgill, Sarah Rabe, Teresa Winters, and Yvette González-Collins, thank you for your leadership and vision in guiding our schools toward excellence. You support our leaders unconditionally, without expecting anything in return.

Janet Greshock, Ruby Marrufo, Sara Rodríguez-Horn, and Adriana Raya-Villagomez, your efficiency, attention to detail, unwavering support - anytime and with everything, and your kindness keep us all moving forward seamlessly! What would we do without you?!

Mark Gonnella, your passion for creating an inclusive, safe, and nurturing culture and climate across all of our sites inspires us daily. We're fortunate to have you!

This Thanksgiving, I am especially grateful for the incredible teamwork and resilience you all demonstrate, making our mission not just possible but impactful.

**Kudos to Ana Poljak, from Jeron Shelton, both at McKinley Elementary School**

I would like to thank Ana for being a great teammate! I was out sick last week, and she held down the fort at McKinley. In addition to responding to challenging situations throughout the day, she was still able to maintain our routines and a semblance of normalcy (including sending the parent newsletter home on time). I am so appreciative to have a colleague I can count on.

**Kudos to the Instructional and Executive Cabinet, from Dr. Annette Acevedo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools**

It is truly an honor to serve alongside such talented, visionary, and dedicated Instructional and Executive Cabinet team members. Dr. Suzanne Johnson, Lela Majstorovic, Brian Tennison, Dr. Leatrice Satterwhite, Dr. Ann Williams, Trisha Olson, Brian Lindholm, Dr. Frank Williams, and Mark Moore, your leadership, passion, and unwavering commitment to ensuring every student receives

the best possible education are nothing short of inspiring. I am incredibly thankful to be part of this Cabinet—a team that exemplifies collaboration, integrity, and a shared commitment to excellence. As we celebrate this season of gratitude, please know how much I value and admire each of you, both as colleagues and as leaders.

To the instructional team:

Lela, thank you for your steady guidance and strategic vision that keeps us focused on what matters most. I'm forever grateful for your unwavering support.

Brian, thank you for your friendship. Your expertise, big ideas, and innovative approach to advancing instruction are exactly what we need and will have a profound impact on both staff and students.

Leatrice, your relentless pursuit of equity and inclusivity will continue to transform our schools into places where every child belongs and can succeed. We are so thankful for you joining our team!

### **Kudos to Rich Bosh in School Safety, from Karla Jimenez in Communications & Community Relations**

In some of the most complex and high-emotion situations, Rich's thoughtfulness, patience, and deep commitment to the safety and well-being of our students and staff stand out. His steady presence not only helps me remain calm and focused but also ensures that everyone feels supported. His check-ins after a crisis make a big difference. It's a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated and compassionate colleague. Thank you for all you do, Rich!

### **Kudos to Katie Lauesen, from Krystal Bush, both at Larkin High School**

Katie made buttons for Larkin staff members who are or were 1st generation college students. All are pictured here. It's been great to hear our students ask their teachers and staff to tell them their stories.



