

## Press Clippings 11/2/2017

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### U-46 officials weigh in on report card data

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY



Elgin Area School District U-46 CEO Tony Sanders.

Despite standardized test scores declining at most suburban schools, Elgin Area School District U-46 officials say the picture is not so bleak.

Administrators this week presented highlights from the [2017 Illinois School Report Card](#) released Tuesday.

"We are on the right path," U-46 CEO Tony Sanders told the school board Monday night. "We are showing growth above the state in many areas."

U-46's expenditures per pupil is lower than the state average, its number of students enrolled in and passing Advanced Placement courses is increasing, and graduation rates are improving, officials said.

Yet in [U-46](#), 36 elementary and middle schools showed declines in the percentage of students meeting and exceeding proficiency standards, while 12 schools showed increases on the [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers](#) test, or PARCC, given to third- through eighth-graders. As a district, 27.9 percent of students are meeting and exceeding standards -- a 1.3-percentage-point dip.

U-46 educates 39,377 students -- 53 percent Hispanic, 27.7 percent white, 8 percent Asian, and 6 percent black -- and 61 percent come from low-income backgrounds.

On PARCC, 28.4 percent of students met or exceeded proficiency standards in math and 27.4 percent in English language arts (ELA), slightly below state averages, officials said.

"One thing that we noticed was on the ELA there were some sharp changes when we switched from primary paper to online. You can see a decrease anywhere from 11 to 13 percentage points," said Matthew Raimondi, U-46 coordinator of assessment and accountability.

At the high schools, 53 percent of students met the College Board's bench marks in evidence-based reading and writing on the SAT college entrance exam, compared to 56

percent of students nationwide. For SAT math, 31 percent of U-46 11th-graders met national bench marks compared to 35 percent of students nationwide, officials said.

U-46's average SAT composite score is 979 on a 1,600-point scale compared to the national average score of 992.

The state's minimum SAT composite score to meet college readiness is 1,080 -- higher than the College Board's 1,010 composite.

Riamondi said U-46's average composite score was 30 points higher than expected compared to other Illinois districts with similarly high percentages of low-income students.

U-46's five-year and four-year graduation rates have increased from the year before to 88.7 percent and 85.6 percent, respectively -- the state's five-year rate is 88.4 percent and four-year rate is 87 percent.

According to the National Student Clearing House, 68.4 percent of U-46 students from the 2015 graduating class immediately enrolled in a college or university compared to previous classes.

"When we look at the assessment results from PARCC or the SAT, they might only predict 30 percent of the students to be college and career ready, when we are seeing the majority of our students actually are successful in college," Raimondi said.

Sanders said ultimately local assessment data from classroom tests is much more meaningful for teachers and principals, than PARCC.

"Having one assessment given to every student in every subject in English only, when we have a student population of 28.7 percent LEP (Limited English Proficient), is problematic to draw any conclusions from that on an annual basis," Sanders said. "Especially when you get the results 6 months after you have given the test."

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## **Reflejos honors groups, students for contributions to Latino communities**

**BY LAUREN ROHR**

Six suburban Latino students and more than 30 community organizations, businesses and individuals were honored Wednesday night during Reflejos' sixth annual Reflecting Excellence Awards.

Hundreds of guests filed into the Stonegate Conference and Banquet Centre in Hoffman Estates to recognize companies, nonprofits, students and residents for their contributions to Latino communities. Readers of Reflejos, a bilingual weekly newspaper, chose the scholarship recipients and award winners based on nominations.

"(Everyone) that is receiving an award has done something that has affected someone's life, has been uplifting, has made the community better," said Linda Siete, Reflejos

manager of sales and operations. "There's an amazing amount of talent and goodness within all of our communities, and hopefully these awards reflect that."

John Hersey High School senior Alexis Delgado was among the six outstanding high schoolers chosen to receive a \$1,000 scholarship based on their community involvement and leadership skills. The 17-year-old was nominated by his school counselor for his academic achievements and for serving as a role model for his younger brother in a single-parent household.

"Paying for college is a tough thing to do, and for me, every little bit helps," said Delgado, a Mount Prospect resident who plans to study accounting and economics at a college in Chicago. "I'm really honored to win this award."

The other recipients include Omar Roman of Elk Grove High School, and Wheeling High School students Stephanie Flores, Nancy Escobar, Jennifer Medina and Leslie Diaz. Each scholarship will be matched by Elgin Community College, National Louis University and Dominican University, should the student decide to enroll there.

In a surprise presentation, Reflejos honored its youngest award winner in the event's history: 8-year-old Galilea Gonzalez of Des Plaines, who sells bath salts and uses the money to buy plush unicorns for kids with cancer.

"When I heard my name called, I was so excited and proud of myself," she said. "I do it because I want kids to get better and feel a little better."

Reflejos, which is owned by Paddock Publications, has been serving suburban Latino communities for 27 years. Its Reflecting Excellence event, which has won national awards, aims to recognize outstanding groups, individuals and future leaders within the eight counties it serves.

State Sen. Cristina Castro, an Elgin native and a **Larkin High School graduate**, served as the event's keynote speaker. She shared her experiences of getting involved in her community at a young age, being the first in her family to graduate from college, and deciding to continue her public service career by running for the Kane County Board.

"I hope you are inspired today to be active, become engaged in your community, to speak for and represent those who are voiceless," she told the crowd. "It's time to be heard and not be ignored."

Winners of the Reflecting Excellence Awards included the **Elgin Area School District U-46** Parent Leadership Institute; the Algonquin-based Community Unit District 300 In-School Food Pantry; the Elgin Police Department's Citizens Police Academy; NorthWest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Harper College Promise Scholarship Program; Lake County Opioid Initiative; Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board of Aurora; Law Offices of Shirley Sadjadi; Greater Waukegan Development Coalition; Boys 2 Men; Visiting Nurses Association; Transformate Mujer; Mano a Mano Family Resource Center; Associated Bank; Schaumburg Toyota; the Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce's Hablamos Espanol event; the annual Day of the Immigrant event; Goya Foods' "Can Do" campaign; Joliet Junior College's Latinos Unidos; McHenry County College's Latino Empowerment Conference; Elgin Community College's LatinX Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month; Andrea Michel; Luz Canino-Baker; Muchacha Salsa; Rodriguez Home

Inspection; Ramos Tax Services; Dream Hub; Club Guadalupano; Centro de Informacion; and Mariachi Universal.

---Courier News--- 11/2/17

## **Super powered**

Elgin boy races through trick-or treating in custom Mario Kart costume

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



Students from DePaul University assemble the Mario Kart costume for Iker Lagunas, 13, of Elgin, on Tuesday. The kart is a replica of a golden go-kart vehicle found in one of the latest installments of the popular Mario Kart video game franchise. (LeAnne Wagner)

After weeks of anticipation, Iker Lagunas unlocked the most prized vehicle in Mario Kart 8 Deluxe.

On Halloween afternoon, a student group from DePaul University assembled and unveiled Lagunas' life-size Mario Kart costume, going over his wheelchair, complete with a custom license plate and LED wheels.

"I think when we finally put on the gold paint last weekend, you could finally see it come together," said LeAnne Wagner, team organizer and a DePaul faculty member. "Before, everyone just had pictures in their minds on how it would turn out."

It was a moment and unveiling that the 13-year-old and his family never will forget, said Lagunas' mother, Anallely Garcia. Lagunas, his parents, brothers, some extended family and neighbors waited outside his grandparents' home in Elgin to see the kart come together.

"This project was different for me, bringing students together for a common cause," Wagner said. "It was great using our design skills and building skills" to make Iker's Halloween complete, she said.

The group, made up of Wagner, her husband and seven DePaul students, spent weeks going through the process of making a replica of Mario Kart 8 Deluxe's golden kart — brainstorming, designing, cutting and testing materials and assembling.

The project was undertaken through Magic Wheelchair, a national organization that gets groups together to build elaborate costumes for children who use wheelchairs, many of which are built for Halloween.

Lagunas has been using his wheelchair the last three years as his muscular dystrophy has worsened.

Given the size of the project, it could not make its trek from Chicago to Elgin in one piece. Wagner said the team assembled the kart over Lagunas and his wheelchair for 45 minutes out in the cold.

Sunday, the team made a trip to his Elgin residence to get final measurements to ensure everything would fit.

Teammates painted the foam pieces over the weekend in gold paint, said Azka Asif, a graduate student at DePaul. She said it was when painting began that they finally saw Iker's dream become reality.

Among the many features of the vehicle costume, Asif said her favorites were the LED lights surrounding the wheels and the custom license plate with "Iker" on it.

"We wanted to give it that gaming, cartoony vibe," Asif said.

Everyone at Tuesday's unveiling was impressed with the Mario Kart costume, Lagunas' mother said. All of the Lagunas siblings are fans of Mario Kart, the long-running video game racing franchise. One of the brothers dressed as Yoshi, a green dinosaur and playable character in Mario Kart games.

The DePaul students also made a Yoshi costume for Lagunas, whose favorite character is the dinosaur. Lagunas wore the green hoodie with orange spikes as part of the Mario Kart costume.

The family and the DePaul group went door to door with Lagunas around the Elgin neighborhood, getting attention from other trick-or-treaters and neighbors.

"Everyone was taking so many photos of (Iker)," Garcia said in Spanish.

The team shared with the family instructions on how to assemble and disassemble the costume, in case Lagunas wanted to put it on again.

"We are all so thankful to have had them do this for my son," Garcia said. "What made me most happy was the look on my son, the happiness this Halloween."