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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U-46 to Host Documentary Screening on Play-Based Kindergarten

Portion was filmed at District's Lincoln Elementary School

ELGIN - School District U-46 will host a free screening on Jan. 22 for "Kindergarten: Where Play and Learning Can Meet," a new documentary that was filmed partially at the District's Lincoln Elementary School in Hoffman Estates.

The 30-minute documentary explores the advantages associated with a play-based approach in kindergarten. U-46 leaders implemented this hands-on inquiry-based program in 2016 as the District launched full-day kindergarten for more than 2,500 students across its 40 elementary schools and two early childhood centers.

The documentary was produced by the Midwest Early Childhood Education Research Alliance at Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest in collaboration with WTTW Channel 11. In addition to U-46, it features footage from Romeoville-based Valley View School District 365U as well as scientific findings about the cognitive and social-emotional benefits of play from academic researchers.

The documentary crew spent a day in October at Lincoln Elementary School. They interviewed kindergarten teacher Kristin Bayer, Early Learners Initiatives Director Peggy Ondera, and kindergarten Teacher Leader Colleen Pecucci, and spent several hours in Bayer's kindergarten classroom, filming her interactions with her students and even interviewing a few excited kindergartners.

Ondera said District administrators were pleased when REL Midwest producers approached them about the project. Since 2016, Ondera and other District leaders have been invited to share the details about the U-46



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kindergarten program at state and national conferences. The documentary was one more way to spread the word about the important topic.

“As a District, we are very proud of our play-based approach to kindergarten because we know that young children learn best through an active exploration of their environment,” Ondera said. “Our kindergarten students are allowed the time to be young children and to develop their knowledge and physical, academic, and social skills through play and appropriate activities.”

Members of the U-46 community are invited to a free screening of the completed documentary Tuesday, Jan. 22 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the auditorium at Elgin High School, 1200 Maroon Drive, Elgin. Those attending should use door 7 for easy access to the auditorium. Light refreshments will be provided.

After the screening, there will be a panel discussion with documentary participants, including Ondera, Bayer, and Pecucci.

The documentary will also air on WTTW Prime on Tuesday, Jan. 15 at 6 p.m. and Friday, Jan. 18 at 10:30 p.m. An airing on WTTW Channel 11 in the spring or fall is still being determined.

Note: Those wishing to attend the free screening are asked to RSVP with the REL Midwest producers through the following link:

<https://relmidwestwttwu46.eventbrite.com>

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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 includes communities within Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. Nearly 39,000 pre-K through twelfth graders attend the 57 District schools and



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