

Press Clippings - 2-2-2023

– **Kappon** –

A leader's equity journey

January 30, 2023

By Joshua P. Starr

On Leadership

In the world of the superintendency, a lot of time and attention is rightfully paid to a smooth transition, a first-100 days plan, and a listening and learning tour. All of these are essential to getting started on a successful footing. But smart leaders know that they better have an exit strategy, too.

Implementing an equity agenda creates significant discomfort, and some people in power who gave lip-service support to changing the status quo may change their tune when things get rough. Kenny Rogers' words ring true; "you gotta know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em." For **Teresa A. Lance**, knowing when to fold 'em and walk away from her role as superintendent gave her a new leadership opportunity that she's been getting the most out of. And all the hands she's been dealt on her journey made her more effective in her current role as the assistant superintendent for equity and innovation in **School District U-46** in Elgin, Illinois.

Recognizing inequities

When **Teresa** started her journey in public education more than 27 years ago, positions like her current role focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) didn't exist. Such jobs have become more widespread in the past few years, perhaps as a response to increased public attention to issues of systemic racism. But in the mid-1990s, when **Teresa** was getting her start teaching in Baltimore City Public Schools, equity was only being talked about in a few circles, and DEI was not a well-known term.

Teresa's journey mirrors that of many system leaders whose consciousness grew as they became increasingly aware of the inequities that plague our public school systems and ascended to positions where they could do something about it. As a teacher in Baltimore

in the 1990s and early 2000s, she saw poverty, unequal distribution of resources, and multiple disjointed efforts to address issues of teaching and learning — none of which were unusual in urban districts at the time. Her eyes were opened more when she became the leader of a Baltimore City school for the visual arts that had no arts program. She realized that the school's magnet designation, which may have garnered the district additional resources, was purely symbolic and that no one had fought to establish arts programs at the school.

Learning while leading

After a few years leading an alternative high school in Houston, **Teresa** jumped at the chance to move to Colorado and try her hand at leading at the system level. It was in Colorado that **Teresa** learned one of the most important tenets of being a systems-level leader of equity work: Find your people. It's well-known that leadership is lonely. As the adage says, "Leaders eat lunch alone." System leaders need to make unpopular decisions and expose difficult truths, especially when enacting an equity agenda. Not everyone welcomes that, and leaders can find themselves struggling in a void where they feel like the only one who gets it. But when leaders can establish a team of folks who understand the needs, great things can happen. For **Teresa**, going to Colorado and working for a superintendent who knew how to create such a team was an eye-opening and foundational experience.

Teresa's superintendent, Andre Spencer, mentored, supported, and pushed her to develop leadership skills that she's been using ever since. As one of only two Black school district leaders in Colorado, he knew he had to be careful in how he pushed an equity agenda. But he also knew that sometimes you don't need to say the words explicitly to do the work. Andre surrounded himself with a diverse team of like-minded people he helped shape and grow so they could do the work with him. Under his leadership, **Teresa** went from leading secondary schools to overseeing all schools, as well as the gifted, special education, and English learner programs. Although **Teresa** did not have formal experience in all these areas, Andre believed in her and provided the right level of pressure and support. He also made sure she had a network of supporters who

could sustain her personally and professionally. This has been a crucial part of Teresa's success.

Andre began pushing her to become a superintendent, so when a position at Thornton Fractional High School District 215 in Lansing, Illinois, opened up, she took the chance. A district of only about 3,500 students, it seemed like the right place for Teresa's first superintendency. The board of education appeared to share Teresa's values and understand that their approach to teaching and learning needed to be overhauled. Given her background and experience with secondary schools, Teresa knew she could help.

The underlying equity issues in District 215 were evident from the start. At first glance, one saw high graduation rates. However, a closer look revealed that although Black students were graduating at similar rates compared to non-Black peers, they were stuck in college remedial courses or low-entry jobs. Yet, after a year of making strong equity moves, such as opening access to high-level classes and supporting kids of color, specifically Black students, Teresa began to hear rumblings from the powers that be who were comfortable with the status quo. Some adults don't want to change, and when they're connected to board members, the writing for a new superintendent can be on the wall. So, after two years, Teresa decided it was indeed time to walk away. U46 proved to be the right landing spot.

Finding a place to make change

U46 is the second-largest district in Illinois, with almost 36,000 students, more than half of whom are Hispanic and about 40% of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The position of assistant superintendent of equity and innovation had been open for a year and a half, following the sudden death of the highly respected person who had previously held it. Like in many districts around the country, this leadership position hadn't been clearly defined. As I wrote in my April 2020 column, too many boards and superintendents have created a lead DEI position without establishing responsibilities and commensurate resources (see also Rice-Boothe & Marshall, 2022). Leaders like Teresa have found that blank slate to be an opportunity.

In U46, Teresa has found that the key to moving an equity agenda forward has been finding allies and co-conspirators. Her position was initially in the superintendent's

executive cabinet, but then got moved to the instructional cabinet. **Teresa** reports up to the deputy superintendent, who's been a champion of her work, and she has three directors working alongside her, so she has some resources. Yet, **Teresa** has had to find different entry points to get an equity agenda moving.

The first entry point came from her partnership with the head of human resources, who was Asian American. This leader recognized a need and saw that **Teresa's** leadership could be a great benefit, so she asked **Teresa** for help in recruiting and retaining teachers of color. Together, they enacted a strategy to first understand the lived experiences of teachers of color in **U46** and then start changing the situation. **Teresa** started informal focus groups with Black teachers and learned they felt disenfranchised, isolated, and unappreciated, and bore more burdens than white teachers. This echoes the experiences of teachers in other districts (Santoro, Hazel, & Morales, 2022; Stovall & Sullivan, 2022). Alongside the external strategy to recruit more teachers of color, **Teresa** also started affinity groups so that different groups of employees could find strength and sustenance through relationships. Leaders help others find their people.

Offering support to move forward

By creating affinity groups for African American, Latinx, LGBTQIA+, and Asian American teachers, and for white allies, **U46** is being explicit about the need for educators to support each other as they promote an equity agenda. When people are behind any new policies and programs, they need support from each other to do the hard work of enacting and implementing those practices. Affinity groups provide both an organizational structure and the foundation for what John Kotter (2012) calls a "volunteer army." These are the people who raise their hands when asked to help drive change. Leaders may eat lunch alone, but they need followers to help do the work.

Teresa realized that leaders of color in particular need white allies.

Writing about the need for white allies can run the risk of yet again centering the actions of white people as critical to the success of equity initiatives, especially when a white man is the author. Yet, as **Teresa** describes and as I've heard from every leader of color who's implemented an equity agenda, support from white people is crucial. An affinity group for white allies can create an opportunity for well-meaning people to learn how they can support their colleagues and play an appropriate role. Sometimes, white

leaders need to step out in front and speak truth and show others the urgency of DEI work. Other times, white leaders need to take a back seat and support their colleagues of color. **Teresa** benefited from having a white principal call her when she first arrived in **U46** to tell her that he was there to help. He has now taken a leadership role among his colleagues, and **Teresa** has been able to leverage his and others' commitment in a larger community-wide equity initiative.

Post-pandemic, **Teresa** has been ramping up the equity work in **U46**. She has an equity committee of about 70 members; there's an annual equity symposium that engages the community and educators over multiple days in exploring issues of equity; she publishes a regular newsletter to highlight both the good work that folks are doing and the need to do more.

Teresa Lance has learned from her trials. Like most good leaders, she knows that success isn't linear; it comes in fits and starts. But being honest about the realities of your situation and knowing how to surround yourself with the right people are good places to begin.

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– Daily Herald – Scout from Bartlett received Eagle Scout Award on January 29th

Jan. 31, 2023
By Ralph Grieco



Joshua K. Grieco from Troop 26 at his Eagle Ceremony on Jan. 29, at the Bartlett Fireman's Barn, in Bartlett. *Courtesy of Ralph Grieco*

Since an early age, Joshua Grieco has had two wishes - to become an Eagle Scout like his dad, deceased SSG Kevin Grieco (IL ARNG) and to serve his country in some capacity. On Jan. 29, he got his first wish.

Joshua, 18, of Boy Scout Troop 26, was honored at a special Eagle Scout ceremony on Sunday, Jan. 29, at the Bartlett Fireman's Barn.

Joshua's scouting trail began in October 2011, as a Cub Scout in Pack 231, Bartlett, Illinois, where he participated in many adventures and outings. He earned his Arrow of Light and crossed over to Boy Scouts in March 2016, joining Troop 26 in Bartlett, sponsored by Immanuel United Church of Christ.

Overall, Joshua earned a total of 23 merit badges, attended four summer camps, and served in many different leadership positions such as: Historian, librarian, troop scribe, troop guide, assistant patrol leader and patrol leader.

For his Eagle project, Joshua designed and led the building of six activity kits to help young children learn to cope with sensory feelings, fidgety activities and skills of daily living. These activity kits assisted the pediatric occupational therapy staff at St. Alexis Hospital in Hoffman Estates.

Joshua is a senior at South Elgin High School and will graduate in May. He is planning on attending Elgin Community College next fall. He has a strong interest in military history, museum career fields and a desire to serve his country.

– Kane County Connects – U-46 Leader Named New State Superintendent of Education

Jan. 31, 2023

By Kane County Connects Staff



Dr. Sanders to Leave U-46

After more than eight years as the Superintendent of School District U-46, Dr. Tony Sanders has been named to serve as the next State Superintendent of Education, effective late February. Dr. Sanders joined U-46 in 2007, serving as the District's chief of communications officer and then chief of staff before being appointed to lead the District in 2014.

A message from U-46 Board of Education Board President Sue Kerr:

"The U-46 School Board is sad to see Superintendent Sanders leave, but knows that the children of the state of Illinois will benefit from his leadership at the Illinois State Board of Education.

Dr. Sanders' accomplishments in U-46 are numerous, including the expansion of the Dual Language program; the launch of full-day kindergarten; the creation of a dual credit program with Elgin Community College; undergoing a facilities study identifying infrastructure needs; and the continued growth of career pathways programs for high school students. Work continues on U-46 Rising, which is an initiative to improve student achievement through rigor and academic teaming, and the transition to a true middle school model that moves 6th grade from the elementary level to middle school.

He accomplished this while eliminating the district's structural deficit, building up cash reserves, and abating millions of dollars to taxpayers.

We will deeply miss Dr. Sanders. He has been active in numerous community organizations, has been a constant presence in school buildings and districtwide events, and has never hesitated to reach out to state legislators and the media to advocate on U-46's behalf. We wish him all the best in this next chapter of his life."

As the District wishes him all the best in his new endeavors, the U-46 Board of Education will discuss the next steps at its closed Board session on Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. The Board will take action at their next regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, Feb. 13.

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. More than 35,000 preschoolers through 12th graders attend the 57 District schools and programs.

Source/**U-46** Media Release

– **KHQA** –

ISBE names Dr. Tony Sanders new state superintendent of education

Jan. 31, 2023

By WICS/WCCU Staff



Tony Sanders, (Courtesy of the Illinois State Board of Education)

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (WICS) — The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) today named **School District U-46 Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders** the new state superintendent of education.

Sanders will take over in late February.

ISBE Deputy Education Officer Krish Mohip will serve as interim state superintendent of education during the transition. Dr. Carmen I. Ayala's term as state superintendent of education concludes on Jan. 31. She announced her retirement after 40 years of service and leadership in Illinois public schools.

“Dr. Tony Sanders is an extraordinary choice for State Superintendent of Education,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Dr. Sanders’ breadth of experience as superintendent of School District U-46 and his entire background have prepared him to take on this role. His focus on innovation, social emotional development, and academic excellence make him an extraordinary pick. I can think of no better person to lead the Illinois State Board of Education as we continue to invest in, support, and elevate our students and educators.”

Prior to becoming the **U-46 superintendent** in 2014, **Dr. Sanders** served as the district's chief of communications and accountability and then chief of staff. He also previously served as the chief communications officer for St. Louis Public Schools and in communications and governmental relations roles within Illinois government, including at ISBE. **Dr. Sanders** received his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois Springfield, his Master of Business Administration from the New York Institute of Technology, his Chief School Business Official Endorsement from Northern Illinois University, an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Judson University, and his Doctor of Education from Aurora University.

Dr. Sanders also has advocated at the state and federal levels as a member and past chair of the Large Countywide and Suburban District Consortium. He supported the effort to reform Illinois' school funding formula and enact Evidence-Based Funding and pass the Every Student Succeeds Act.

– WVIK (NPR) – Tony Sanders to become state superintendent of education

This story also ran in the Edwardsville Intelligencer

Jan. 31, 2023

By WSIU Public Broadcasting | By Peter Hancock - Capitol News Illinois



Provided - IL State Bd Of Education / Capitol News Illinois

Tony Sanders, Elgin Area District U-46 Superintendent, will become the state superintendent of schools beginning in February.

Elgin Area School District chief to replace outgoing Supt. Carmen Ayala

The Illinois State Board of Education announced Tuesday that Elgin-based **School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders** will become the next state superintendent of education.

Sanders, 53, will succeed Carmen Ayala, who announced in November that she would retire effective Jan. 31. ISBE said **Sanders** will take over the post in late February while Deputy Education Officer Krish Mohip will serve as interim superintendent during the transition.

Sanders has been superintendent of the Elgin-area district since 2014. It is the second-largest district in Illinois, serving more than 35,000 students across five high schools and nearly 50 elementary and middle schools, according to the most recent state [report card](#). Of those students, 46 percent are classified as low-income, and 39 percent are English language learners.

Gov. JB Pritzker recommended **Sanders** for the job.

“**Dr. Tony Sanders** is an extraordinary choice for State Superintendent of Education,” Pritzker said in a statement. “**Dr. Sanders’** breadth of experience as superintendent of **School District U-46** and his entire background have prepared him to take on this role. His focus on innovation, social emotional development, and academic excellence make him an extraordinary pick.”

According to ISBE, **Sanders** expanded the Elgin district’s offerings during his time as superintendent, adding full-day kindergarten for all students, expanding the district’s dual language program and establishing an alternative high school, the **DREAM Academy**, to reduce expulsions and serve students in need of trauma-informed care.

Before becoming **U-46 superintendent**, **Sanders** served as the district’s chief of staff for 11 years following a stretch as the district’s chief communications officer.

He received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Illinois Springfield, a master’s degree in business administration from the New York Institute of Technology, a Chief School Business Official endorsement from Northern Illinois University and his doctorate in education from Aurora University.

“**Dr. Tony Sanders** has distinguished himself as a visionary leader and passionate advocate for students and educators,” ISBE Board Chair Steven Isoye said in a news release. “As the superintendent of one of Illinois’ largest school districts, he intimately understands the strengths, the policy history, and the challenges of our public schools.”

Isoye praised **Sanders** for championing equity, expanding opportunities for students and launching innovative programs at the **U-46** district.

“The Board looks forward to his leadership; we are confident he will build on our record-high graduation rates and college and career readiness to continue leading Illinois’ schools in a positive direction,” he said.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide, as well as hundreds of radio and TV stations. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

– ABC-7 Chicago News –

Dr. Tony Sanders leaving Elgin District U-46 to become Illinois' new superintendent of education

Feb. 1, 2023

By John Garcia

Video: <https://abc7chicago.com/tony-sanders-district-u-46-school-elgin/12759303/>

ELGIN, Ill. (WLS) -- The head of the second-largest school district in Illinois is taking on an even bigger role.

Elgin District U-46 Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders is about to fill a position at the state level that was once held by his father.

Sanders met his new colleagues Wednesday morning at a reception at the state school board's downtown offices. It's a big change from **District U-46** in Elgin where **Sanders** has worked for the last 15 years, including the last nine as superintendent.

"I'm going from 37,000 students to 2 million," **Sanders** said. "So I'll have a lot of names to learn."

The new state school superintendent is actually pretty familiar with the job. He posed next to a picture of his father, Ted Sanders, who served as state superintendent in the

1980s. **Tony** went to high school in Springfield and started his career in education there. He always hoped to return.

"There's only one job I would ever leave **U-46** for, and that's the state superintendent if I were lucky enough to get it," **Sanders** said. "So this is a dream come true."

After a national search with hundreds of candidates, the state found its next superintendent in the northwest suburbs. At **District U-46**, his accomplishments include expanding early childhood education, going to all-day kindergarten, and expanding a dual-language program that is considered a national model.

"I hope he will bring the perspective of local school districts to Springfield because sometimes the issues we face aren't heard," **U-46 Board President Sue Kerr** said.

Sanders plans to split his time between Chicago and Springfield. But he also hopes to find time to spend with kids in schools.

"The best part of any job in education is being around students," **Sanders** said. "That's what fills our bucket every day."

Sanders' name remains on his desk for the next few weeks. He's expected to take over officially as the new state superintendent at the end of February.

– WGN Radio 720 –
(Lisa Dent Show)

U-46 Superintendent Sanders on being named the next state Superintendent of Education

Feb. 1, 2023
By Brian Althimer

Tony Sanders, the Elgin Area School District U-46 Superintendent, joins Lisa Dent to discuss his plans for helping schools, educators, and students when he takes on his new role later this month as the Illinois State Board of Education Superintendent.

To hear the full interview, see link:

<https://wgnradio.com/lisa-dent/u-46-superintendent-sanders-on-being-named-the-next-state-superintendent-of-education/>

– WCIA.com – ISBE picks a new state superintendent

Feb. 1, 2023

By Danny Connolly



Dr. Tony Sanders Courtesy: School District U-46 via Facebook

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (WCIA) — The Illinois State Board of Education has announced their pick of a new superintendent of education.

According to a news release from ISBE, Dr. Tony Sanders, the superintendent of Elgin District U-46 since 2014, was chosen for the role. The outgoing superintendent, Dr. Carmen Ayala, retired Tuesday.

“As the superintendent of one of Illinois’ largest school districts, he intimately understands the strengths, the policy history, and the challenges of our public schools,” ISBE Board Chair Dr. Steven Isoye said. “At U-46, he has championed equity, expanded opportunities for students, and brought innovative new programs to the district.”

Before becoming superintendent, Sanders served as the district’s chief of staff and chief of communications. He also served as the communications officer for St. Louis Public Schools along with several other roles in state government.

“Dr. Sanders’ breadth of experience as superintendent of School District U-46 and his entire background have prepared him to take on this role,” Governor J.B. Pritzker said. “His focus on innovation, social emotional development, and academic excellence make him an extraordinary pick.”

The Illinois Federation of Teachers applauded the choice of Sanders and said they supported his policies while U-46 Superintendent.

“We appreciate Dr. Sanders’ past advocacy for the Evidence Based Funding Formula and hope in his new role, he helps to move our state closer to achieving equitable funding and eliminating disparities in districts statewide,” IFT President Dan Montgomery said.

ISBE officials said Sanders will start in late February. ISBE deputy education director Krish Mohip will serve as interim director.

– IASA Leadership Matters –

ISBE Names Dr. Tony Sanders New IL. State Superintendent of Education

Krish Mohip Will Serve as Interim Superintendent of Education

Feb. 1, 2023

Submitted by the Illinois State Board of Education

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) named **School District U-46 Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders** the new state superintendent of education after a nationwide search. He will assume his duties in late February. ISBE Deputy Education Officer Krish Mohip will serve as interim state superintendent of education during the transition. Dr. Carmen I. Ayala's term as state superintendent of education concludes Jan. 31.

She announced her retirement after 40 years of service and leadership in Illinois public schools.

"**Dr. Tony Sanders** is an extraordinary choice for State Superintendent of Education," said Governor JB Pritzker. "**Dr. Sanders'** breadth of experience as superintendent of **School District U-46** and his entire background have prepared him to take on this role. His focus on innovation, social emotional development, and academic excellence make him an extraordinary pick. I can think of no better person to lead the Illinois State Board of Education as we continue to invest in, support, and elevate our students and educators."

"**Dr. Tony Sanders** has distinguished himself as a visionary leader and passionate advocate for students and educators," said ISBE Board Chair Dr. Steven Isoye. "As the superintendent of one of Illinois' largest school districts, he intimately understands the strengths, the policy history, and the challenges of our public schools. At **U-46**, he has championed equity, expanded opportunities for students, and brought innovative new programs to the district.

The Board looks forward to his leadership; we are confident he will build on our record-high graduation rates and college and career readiness to continue leading Illinois' schools in a positive direction.

Dr. Sanders expanded the district's offerings during his tenure in **U-46**, which is headquartered in Elgin and is the second-largest school district in Illinois. He added full-day kindergarten for all students and implemented a developmentally appropriate

play-based instructional program. **Dr. Sanders** grew the district's dual language program and created a new alternative high school, the **DREAM Academy**, to reduce expulsions and better serve students in need of trauma-informed care. He also invested in a grow-your-own educator initiative to provide educational support professionals the ability to return to school to earn their teaching credentials. The initiative has supported more than 60 **U-46** employees in receiving full tuition reimbursement as they work toward their teacher licensure. **Dr. Sanders** improved the district's financial standing, while overseeing a \$660 million operating budget.

Krish Mohip has served as ISBE's deputy education officer for operational education since 2019. Prior to joining ISBE, Mohip served as the chief executive officer of Youngstown City Schools in Youngstown, Ohio.

– WCLT Northern Public Radio – Elgin schools chief named new state superintendent

Feb. 1, 2023

By Camryn Cutinello



Photo Courtesy Of The Illinois State Board Of Education

For **Tony Sanders**, becoming state superintendent was a natural career progression and a “longtime dream.”

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) announced Monday that **Sanders** will take over for State Superintendent Carmen Ayala. Ayala was first appointed to the position in 2019 and retired on Monday.

Sanders will assume the role in late February, with ISBE Deputy Education Officer Krish Mohip serving in the interim.

“**Dr. Sanders**’ breadth of experience as superintendent of **School District U-46** and his entire background have prepared him to take on this role,” Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker said in a statement. “His focus on innovation, social emotional development and academic excellence make him an extraordinary pick.”

Sanders has served as superintendent of **District U-46**, the second largest district in Illinois, since 2014 and said this job was the only one he'd consider leaving the district for.

During his time with **U-46**, he's overseen implementation of the dual credits program with Elgin Community College and full-day kindergarten. He also oversaw an expansion of the dual language program and established the **DREAM Academy**, an alternative high school which aims to reduce expulsions by providing a new learning environment for students.

Sanders said many of his priorities will remain the same as he steps into his new position.

"I'm looking forward," he said, "to taking what I've learned serving 37,000 students and scaling that up to 2 million students."

He hopes to see programs utilized in his district, such as the dual-language program and the career pathways program which offers high school students the opportunity to take classes associated with careers such as nursing and engineering, implemented across the state.

Sanders said the pandemic brought forth both positives and negatives for education in Illinois. It "revealed the best of us" with support for teachers and other school employees, as well as implementing new technologies which have improved learning in the classroom.

But it also created a learning gap and **Sanders** said improving student proficiency will be a top priority for the state going forward.

In October ISBE released the [Illinois Report Card](#), which showed declines in the percentage of students who meet or exceed standards in both math and English language arts proficiency from 2019.

“We need to get back to focusing again on what are the standards that students need to meet in order to be successful on any state assessment – and in life,” Sanders said. “And make sure that teachers have the tools necessary to teach to those standards at high levels.”

With teacher shortages becoming a top issue on the national stage, Sanders said that in District U-46 they implemented “Horizons4U”, a program which offered tuition reimbursement for individuals who wanted to go back to school to become a teacher or social worker.

This is a program he would like to replicate on the state level.

He said one of the biggest lessons he will carry over is to be connected with peers, including the governor’s office, local businesses, unions and the Department of Children and Family Services.

“We can't be an isolated agency,” Sanders said. “We have to work together with others for the betterment of kids.”

Sanders said serving as superintendent in a local school district has allowed him to see the impact state policies have on schools and students. He said this has prepared him to take over the role and really consider how to best help schools, and students, in Illinois.

– WSEI Freedom 92.9 FM Radio – Wednesdays Headlines (2/1/23)

Feb. 1, 2023

by Mark Weiler

(SPRINGFIELD) The Illinois State Board of Education yesterday named Elgin School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders as the new State Superintendent of Education after a nationwide search. Sanders has served as the head of the second largest school district in Illinois. He will assume his new duties in late February. It was last fall that Carmen Ayala announced her plans to retire after 40 years of service in Illinois public schools this month.

– Daily Herald –

Elgin High School hosts its annual National Biodiversity Teach-In, 10 years after launch of student-led event

Hour-long webinars on biodiversity offered on Fridays in February

Feb. 1, 2023

By Tara Burghart - Elgin Area School District U-46

A new group of **Elgin High School** students is continuing an initiative launched 10 years ago designed to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity.

Featuring webinars led by renowned scientists, the National Biodiversity Teach-In will focus on issues near (plastic pollution in the Great Lakes) and far (contaminants in the Arctic) and aim to inspire its participants to take action in environmental protection.

The National Biodiversity Teach-In will feature more than 25 webinars, all free and open to the public, on Fridays in February.

Other subjects to be addressed during this year's Teach-In include Arctic plants, reefs in the Great Lakes, and native plants, as well as presentations that center on polar bears, wolves, elephants, snow leopards, amphibians, sharks, whales, and bats.

As in previous years, the 2023 Teach-In is expected to draw environmental science enthusiasts, as well as whole classrooms of students, from around the globe.

Over the years, it has registered more than 110,000 participants from more than 27 countries.

Environmental students at **Elgin High School**, guided by several teachers, have been working on the 2023 Teach-In for several months.

Student organizers delegate the event responsibilities by committees. They troubleshoot technology issues, register participants, respond to media requests, advertise, and create promotional materials.

Elgin High senior Sabrina Gomez is a member of the Teach-In's "action team," responsible for identifying opportunities for webinar viewers to learn more or get more involved.

"I hope, more than anything, that the Teach-In accomplishes awareness about our world. The majority of the Earth's most vital issues go unnoticed," Sabrina said. "I hope the viewers of the webinars walk away with a sense of purpose; a purpose to spread the message of the Teach-In and do their part to take care of our singular, vital Earth and its inhabitants -- human and nonhuman."

The webinars are scheduled during the school day on Fridays, Feb. 3-24.

Each speaker will give a presentation based on their specialty and also include dedicated time for questions and answers.

As was the case the last few years, the Teach-In will feature a day of sessions with nearly all female presenters for the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, a declaration from the United Nations General Assembly to encourage a new generation of female scientists to tackle the major challenges of our time by leading innovation in science and technology.

Among the women presenting Friday, Feb. 10, are Jillian Morris, a marine biologist and a shark conservationist; Dr. Bonnie Hamilton, an ecotoxicologist who studies contaminants in the Arctic; Dr. Thea Bechshoft, a marine mammal biologist who studies polar bear ecology; and Deanna Leonard, a marine biologist who focuses on whales as ecosystem engineers.

Student organizers of the Teach-In made an effort this year to add programming on topics that have mass appeal.

For instance, Rebecca Shaw, who is chief scientist and senior vice president at the World Wildlife Fund, will present on the status of the world's biodiversity to close out the program at 2 p.m. Central Standard Time on Feb. 24.

"We have a very exciting roster of presenters with a wide variety of expertise, including people who study ecosystems and how humans are impacting it all," said **EHS science teacher Brigid Trimble**, who helped launch the event back in 2013. "It is very encouraging to see and hear from these scientists and feel the enthusiasm they show for their field of study."

The webinars first began at **Elgin High School** in 2013 to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity. The 100th anniversary of the extinction of the passenger pigeon in 2014 and the story of Martha, the last known living passenger pigeon, increased the students' interest and desire to discuss biodiversity with some of the best experts in the field.

The Teach-In website at www.nationalbiodiversityteachin.com has a full schedule and details on the speakers and topics being discussed. Those who register to attend a webinar will receive a personalized Zoom link.

Webinars also will be livestreamed on the Teach-In's social media channels on the day of the event at youtube.com/@nationalbiodiversityteachin,

www.instagram.com/natbioteachin/, www.tiktok.com/@natbioteachin or www.facebook.com/natbioteachin.

2023 National Biodiversity Teach-In presenters

Feb. 3

Koustubh Sharma of the Snow Leopard Trust on Snow Leopards at 8 a.m.; Dorie Stolley of Virginia State Parks on "Birds, Birds, Birds!" at 9 a.m.; Martha Parker of the International Rhino Foundation on "Protecting Rhinos from Extinction" at 10 a.m.; Olivia Reda of the Alliance for the Great Lakes on "Plastic Pollution in the Great Lakes" at 11 a.m.; Joe Milanovich of Loyola University on "All About Amphibians" at noon; Jordan Gray of the Turtle Survival Alliance on "Rewilding: Returning Turtles to the Natural Landscape" at 1 p.m.; and Debra Curtin and Laura Bahr of the New England Primate Conservancy at 2 p.m.

Feb. 10 (International Day of Women & Girls in Science)

Jillian Morris of Sharks 4 Kids on "Shark Science" at 8 a.m.; Bonnie Hamilton of the University of Toronto on "Contaminants in the Arctic" at 9 a.m.; Thea Bechshoft of Polar Bear International on "The Future of Polar Bear Research" at 10 a.m.; Deanna Leonard on "It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's a Super Marine Mammal!" at 11 a.m.; Erin Adams of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on "All About Bats" at noon; Dawn Bazely of York University on "Amazing Arctic Plants" at 1 p.m.; and Kimberley Miner of NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory on "STEM for All" at 2 p.m.

Feb. 17

Rick Wood on "Human Vs. Monkey Conflicts in Urban Areas" at 8 a.m.; Naomi Rose of the Animal Welfare Institute on "Captive Cetacean Welfare" at 9 a.m.; Stephanie Schmidt of the International Crane Foundation on "Whooping Cranes in the Eastern Migratory Population: Saving a Species from the Brink of Extinction" at 10 a.m.; Carol Buckley of Elephant Aid International on "Captive-held Elephant Rehabilitation" at 11 a.m.; Peggy Doty of University of Illinois and Pam Otto of the Hickory Knolls Discovery Center on "Backyard Birding the Correct Way" at 1 p.m.; and Elgin High alumni Autumn McGowan of The Nature Conservancy on "Reefs in the Great Lakes" at 2 p.m.

Feb. 24

Dan Branbury of the World Land Trust on "Saving Land Saving Species" at 8 a.m.; Lindsey Banks of Seacrest Wolf Preserve on "The Wolf is Key" at 9 a.m.; Nancy Lamia,

Jean Muntz, and Megan Vogt of Wild Ones on "Meet Our Native Plants" at 10 a.m.; Nicholas Kollias, aquatic biologist at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, on "Organisms in the Chicago Area Waterways" at 11 a.m.; Courtney Vail of the Oceanic Preservation Society on "OPS Restoring Wolves to Colorado Campaign" at noon; Miguel Rojas, lab technician at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, on the "Role of Microorganisms in Wastewater Treatment" at 1 p.m.; and Rebecca Shaw, World Wildlife Fund chief scientist, on the "Status of the World's Biodiversity" at 2 p.m.