

Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter



December 7, 2023

Dear Colleagues,

On Saturday, December 2, we hosted our latest Unite U-46 session and welcomed nearly 50 parents and community members, in addition to staff. During the session, we provided an overview of our recent Unite U-46 work, reviewed costs and other considerations associated with maintaining each of our schools, worked to quantify the number of elementary schools we will need going forward, and considered different planning scenarios.

This Unite U-46 work is directly connected to our goal that “U-46 will establish and operate equity-focused, inclusive, efficient, and safe learning environments.” To help achieve this goal, the Board of Education approved significant recommendations earlier this Fall to address our middle schools, which include:

- Retiring Abbott, Ellis
- Additions to Kimball, Kenyon Woods
- Construction of a new middle school in Elgin

Additionally, through our Unite U-46 sessions, parents, community members and staff have provided us with some considerations for guiding our work as follows:

- Put students first
- Continue communication with the community
- Remain mindful of the rich history of our schools
- Increase equitable access to programs at more schools
- Ensure all schools are inclusive and accessible to all.

We also discussed design patterns of future ready learning environments to be:

- Engaging and student-centered
- Collaborative
- Flexible and adaptable
- Safe and welcoming

Thank you to our participants for providing guidance as we begin to make the facility changes needed to support our focus on standards-based learning and assessment, rigorous student tasks and assessments, and academic teaming.

To continue to learn more about this work, please consider attending the next Unite U-46 event at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 8. at Elgin High School. Your voice matters and can help shape our work going forward. Please make our [Unite U-46 site](#) a favorite site. We also provide regular updates to our Board of Education, which you can watch via our YouTube channel [here](#). The next update will be Monday, Dec. 18.

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

Dr. Suzanne Johnson

Kudos

Send Kudos directly by clicking [HERE](#) or using Let's Talk. 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 Caridad Garcia, Assistant Principal at Creekside Elementary; Ashley Talip, Assistant Principal at Century Oaks Elementary; Geynell Tabb, Assistant Principal at Harriet Gifford Elementary; Brian Brennan, Assistant Principal at Hillcrest Elementary; Anissa Upshaw, Co Principal at Highland Elementary; Churchill Daniels, Interim Principal at Lowrie Elementary; and Maria Martin Bowman, Assistant Principal at Washington Elementary, from Gladys C. Crespo, Special Education Administrator - Larkin Network

Thank you for all you do on behalf of Special Education at your schools. Our students with disabilities benefit when their school IEP teams collaboratively work together to maintain trust and effective relationships that lead to consensus-based, legally compliant decisions that are focused totally on student needs and successful outcomes. Your leadership and professionalism make this possible in each of our Larkin Network schools.

Kudos to Jimmy Brown, Dean's Assistant at Streamwood High School, from Joshua Travis, Dean of Students at Streamwood High School

Jimmy has embraced his role and is learning the ins and outs of social work as he is planning to join the Horizons 4U program to earn his social worker credentials. He is a great resource for our students and in our community.

Kudos to Lora Nora, Certified School Nurse; Maggie Olson, Registered Nurse; and Pam Thomas, Health Office Secretary; all at South Elgin High School, from Genevieve Hebeke, School Social Worker, South Elgin High School

I want to send a kudos to our phenomenal Health Services staff. Thank you for putting extra care, patience, and thought in working with all of our students and staff, especially during very distressing situations.

Kudos to Claire Ditchman, Support Center Agent, Information Services, at the Educational Services Center, from Sara Marcason, Homebound Teacher, Districtwide

After submitting an IT ticket, Claire came immediately to my office to fix my computer issue. She is extremely helpful and a wonderful member of the team. Thank you!

Kudos to Tiffany Jourdan, Special Student Services Resident Administrator, at Tefft Middle School, from Richard Lebrón, Principal at Tefft Middle School

Mrs. Jourdan's extraordinary passion, commitment, and expertise shone brightly at Tefft Middle School last year. This year, she continues to enrich our school with invaluable advice, coaching, and mentoring for our SPED staff and administrators. Mrs. Jourdan's unwavering support for both students and teachers is remarkable. She stands out as one of the most talented, knowledgeable, and trusted administrators I've had the privilege to work alongside.

Kudos to the Special Education Teachers at Elgin High School from Dr. David Dybalski, Psychologist, Elgin High School

This kudos goes out to the wonderful special education teachers at Elgin High School. As the father of a son with Autism, I spot a good teacher easily. It's not how you write IEP's or BIP/FBA plans, I see, but how you show compassion, patience, empathy, and sensitivity to the students with special needs.

These wonderful teachers show these qualities on a daily basis. I must name them all: Mrs. Crane, Mrs. Adan, Mrs. Paquette, Mr. Massey, Mrs. Remblake, Mr. Rattana, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Fisher, Mrs. Waichunas, Mr. McKavanagh, Mr. Karbowski, Mr. Zaragoza, Mrs. Sarney, Mrs. Siemon, Mrs. Kuzyk, Mrs. Kling, Mrs. Wilkins, Mrs. Saucedo, Mrs. Cooper, Mrs. Gdula, Mr. Camacho, Ms. Sanchez, Dr. Martinez, Mrs. Sankey. It is an honor to work with these teachers on a daily basis and some for many, many years.

Kudos to Lois Cooks, Bus Driver, Transportation Department, from Corinne Fitzgerald, Job Coach, Special Education, Streamwood High School

I would like to say a huge thank you to Lois, one of my route drivers, for going above and beyond earlier this year. Her continued assistance to secure a consistent sub pick-up driver for one of my student job sites was immensely appreciated! Her willingness to help and her reliability are always the best!

Kudos to Tracey Dendinger, School Resource Officer at Bartlett High School, and the BHS Autos Program, from Mike Demovsky, Principal of Bartlett High School

Huge shout out to Tracey and the autos program for stepping up for a community member in need who lost their home during the pandemic. She was living out of her vehicle and in desperate need of repairs. Our SRO worked to get the grant money needed for the parts while the autos program gladly did the labor. It sure does take a village!

Kudos to Cindie Cortinas-Vogt, Physical Education Teacher at Washington Elementary School, from the Washington Administrative Team - Principal Lori Brandes, Co-Principal Ryan Corcoran, and Resident Administrator Maria Martin-Bowman

Cindie was named the Teacher of the Year by the Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance (IAHPERD) last spring. Last week, she received her award at the Annual IAHPERD State Conference, as her family and fellow U-46 staff members cheered her on. Congratulations, Cindie. We are fortunate to have you on our team at Washington!



 **School District U-46**

