

# Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter

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**December 14, 2023**

Dear Colleagues,

On Thursday, December 7, we had our first District [groundbreaking](#) event for a school in over 20 years. With great anticipation, we have officially started construction to transition Hawk Hollow Elementary School to a middle school. Please take a look at [this video](#) that captures this significant moment. This transition is a first step toward moving 6th grade to the middle school level and updating our middle school instructional model beginning with the 2026-27 school year. While the new middle school is expected to be ready for occupation for the 2025-26 year, our middle schools will welcome 6th graders in the 2026-27 school year. To support this transition, we will build a new middle school on Rohrssen Rd., next to Hilltop Elementary School, and expand Kenyon Woods Middle School and Kimball Middle School.

This effort is directly connected to two goals:

- School District U-46 will maximize resources available to accelerate student growth in alignment with the U-46 instructional clarity framework.
- School District U-46 will establish and operate equity-focused, inclusive, efficient, and safe learning environments.

During the December 11 Board of Education meeting, another update on the facilities planning effort was provided, including an overview of seven elementary sites and a PreK site, including: McKinley ES, Century Oaks ES, Illinois Park Early Learning Center, Washington ES, Lowrie ES, Parkwood ES, Glenbrook ES and Hanover Countryside ES. We will present recommendations on elementary schools to the Board of Education on December 18.

To continue to learn more about this work, please consider attending or watching the next Board of Education meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, December 18 at the Educational Services Center or YouTube channel [here](#).

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 the Special Education Teachers in the Larkin Network - Kathleen Hermetet, Pam Goff, Paula Van Hagey, Kayla Lockhart, Lorie Reyes, Erica Guzman, Julie Radcliffe, Beth Colin, Silvia Patino, Mariano Mercado, Jose Rivera, Vinny Duong, Alice AlbrechtFrasch, Luisa Lara, Yorleydis Roman, Margo Rodriguez, Mayte Arreguin, Rachel Togerson, Yesenia Dimas, Betty Martinez, Mattie Boyd, Jovita Villanueva and Joan Berendt - from Gladys C. Crespo, Special Education Administrator, Larkin Network**

You are vital in ensuring that students with disabilities receive the support they need to reach their full potential. Thank you for your hard work writing individualized educational plans that are tailored to each student's unique needs, taking into account their learning style, developmental delays, or physical disabilities. You help to bridge the gap between students with disabilities and their peers, ensuring that each student has the opportunity to achieve academic success and develop the social and emotional skills necessary for a fulfilling life.

**Kudos to Latesha Young, Bus Driver, Transportation Department, from Ana Alanis, Paraeducator, Independence Center for Early Learners**

I want to send a kudos to Latesha for her kindness! Latesha gives off such positive vibes and is always friendly, her students are so lucky to have her!

**Kudos to Katherine Murdock, School Counselor, at Larkin High School, from Kelly Akeman, U-46 Parent**

A huge thank you to Ms. Murdock. She has helped my children at Larkin High School with their schedules and academic plans. She is always able to adjust things and offer her advice with my kids' goals and thoughts in mind. The advocacy she provides goes above and beyond, and I am so beyond thrilled to have her supporting my children. You are the absolute best!

**Kudos to Jim Karras, Custodian at the U-46 Welcome Center, from the NIU Math Cohort - Elizabeth Brunner, Georgie Towa, Joel Gamino, Heidi Martinez, Eunice Matos, and Katrina Hoekstra**

We have appreciated seeing your friendly smile opening the door for us every week and staying late for us as we finished our class.



Thank you for your support in ensuring the room was set up and ready every week!

**Kudos to Patricia Waldau, Director of Plant Operations, Mike DiGioia, Custodial Coordinator, Nick Corn, Grounds Coordinator, and the Rest of the Crew from Plant Operations, from Mark Gonnella, Assistant Principal at Horizon Elementary School**

They have worked tirelessly this year helping us update our main office as well as other rooms in our building. The recent upgrades and enhancements have truly made a positive impact at Horizon, and we are impressed by the attention to detail and commitment to excellence demonstrated by the entire team. These alterations have truly made a welcoming environment to all, and everyone is impressed by the fantastic work that was done!

**Kudos to Tony Romero, Technology Integration Support Technician, Curriculum & Instruction; Mary Juvingo, Student Wellness Teacher Leader; Jim Wolf, Director of Information Services; and the Information Services Team, from Tracey Jakaitis, Student Wellness Curriculum Coordinator**

A very big thank you to all of you who supported the heavy lift in protecting student data collection in PE. You spent significant time with me brainstorming a way to get our 800 Polar Heart Rate Monitor used for our Online Independent PE and Apex PE course ready for student use in the second semester. I could not have accomplished this task without each one of you, your unique expertise, and quick actions! Teamwork makes the dream work!

**Kudos to Mary Mangione, Principal at the DREAM Academy, from Shannon Pennington, Teacher Leader at the DREAM Academy**

Mary was named the Administrator of the Year by the Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance (IAHPERD) and received her award at their annual state conference last week. Mary understands how vital quality physical education is for our students, and we appreciate all of the ways she supports our physical educators and their programs.



**Kudos to Sharon Kniece, Maintenance Secretary, Plant Operations, from Jacqueline Scafidi, Library Paraeducator, Bartlett Elementary School**

I want to say thank you to Sharon for helping me through understanding some behind the scenes needs. As a newer full-time staff member it's easy to get lost. Sharon's there to help guide. Thanks, Sharon!

**Kudos to Kim Jones, Library Paraeducator, Channing Elementary School, from Jaqueline Scafidi, Library Paraeducator, Bartlett Elementary School**

I want to send a special thanks to Kim, who has been my mentor in my new role as library paraeducator at Bartlett Elementary. She has coached me via my many emails and phone calls as I learn about all the behind-the-scenes steps needed to make sure our students have the right books in their hands to foster reading. Great job, Kim!

**Kudos to our SWEP Students and Staff from Cailyn Van Dame, Health Services Specialist, Health Services**

Health Services wants to send a huge shoutout to our SWEP program at Central. The staff is always incredibly friendly, and the students are out of this world. Their kindness, professionalism, and positive attitude are a bright spot in our day. Keep up the great work!

**Kudos to Streamwood High School Administration, Staff, and Students from Rich Bosh, Coordinator of School Safety**

The staff, students and administrators at Streamwood High kept calm and followed our procedures during the evacuation on Dec. 11. Seeing the plan come together, safely evacuating the building, helping our special needs students, and using our tools for a student with mobility concerns shows a great team effort. It was also an admirable example in using best practices in taking school safety seriously.

**Kudos to Quentin Ruff, Dean's Assistant, Streamwood High School, from Erin Gamble, Teacher, Special Education**

Quentin deployed and maneuvered an evacuation chair during a minor incident to keep a student with mobility concerns extra safe while evacuating the third floor. He stayed with the student the whole time to make sure the student was safe and well cared for. Thank you, Q, for all the care and concern you demonstrated.

**Kudos to All Those Made the Newcomer Parent Support Group a Success, from Brenda Y Escobedo, Family Welcome Center Coordinator, and Dr. Angelica Ernst, Multilingual & Multicultural Education Department Coordinator**

Thank you to every staff member who contributed to the success of the first meeting of the Newcomer Parent Event hosted at the U-46 Welcome Center. We had an impressive crowd of families representing a number of different countries.

We extend our special appreciation to the following staff:

- Home School Liaisons: Thanks to our dedicated Home School Liaisons, who played a crucial role in reaching out to Newcomer families from their respective buildings.
- NON-EL Buildings Secretaries: Our heartfelt thanks go to the NON-EL Buildings Secretaries for their proactive efforts in promoting the event within their buildings.
- Translation Team: We are deeply grateful to these teachers who provided essential translation services in the high-incidence languages within our school district: Manuela Defaria Tavares, Neepa Thakkar, Sergio Marin Martinez, Arshiya Quadri, Beata Mirkiewicz Gordiano, Dorothy Sliwa, Estela MaciasBonner, and Hanna Zelenyuk
- Childcare Support: Special recognition goes to our Home School Liaisons, Noemi Perez, Martha Castelan, and Norma Mariani, who provided invaluable childcare support for our students during the session.

- We thank Laura Godinez, Family Welcome Center Facilitator, and Patricia Ortiz, FWC Data Entry Specialist, for their tireless collaboration in preparing all the details for this crucial meeting.
- We acknowledge the efforts of Karla Jiménez, Director, and Tara Burghart, Coordinator, in School & Community Relations for their dedication in promoting our first Newcomer session and ensuring that parents received timely information.
- Transportation Assistance: We thank Patricia Briones and the Project Access staff for providing transportation to parents who needed it to attend the meeting.
- MMED Team: Lastly, thank ALL our MMED staff for their invaluable support throughout this initiative.

Once again, we sincerely appreciate all your efforts to ensure that our newcomer families feel valued and are a vital part of our school district community. Your commitment is truly commendable.

**Kudos to All in Planning the Hawk Hollow Groundbreaking Event, from Karla Jiménez, Director of School & Community Relations**

Last week, we hosted a groundbreaking event in U-46 after more than 20 years! It was a success thanks to the collaboration of various departments. The Plant Operations and Food & Nutrition Services teams provided logistical support, ensuring everything was in place and ran smoothly. Our School & Community Relations team did an excellent job capturing and sharing the event with our families and community. Special thanks to elementary principals Paul Flatley and Noelle Dupuis for inviting students who will be in the first class of the new middle school in Bartlett and to U-46 Board of Education President Sue Kerr, Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Johnson, Deputy Superintendent of Operations Dr. Ann Williams, Chief of Staff Brian Lindholm, and Village of Bartlett President Kevin Wallace for their remarks during the event about this transformative work. The collaboration and hard work are greatly appreciated and were key to making this event not just a success, but a benchmark for future endeavors!

**Kudos to Bartlett High School Athletic Director Jeff Bral, Announcer Eric Ilich, Scorekeeper Brittany Lemmo, Referees Nate Miller and Les Lynott, Basketball Coach Jim Wolfsmith, Assistant Athletic Director Natalie Simons, and Door Security Alma Miho, from the Blue Stars Basketball Team and Brooke McGrath, U-46 Special Olympics Coordinator**

We want to send a huge thank you to Jeff and his team. These incredible people hosted our Special Olympics Blue Stars basketball game against the Hinsdale South Hornets. They went above and beyond to make our Blue Star athletes feel at home and recognized! We are very thankful for your dedicated time to ensuring our Blue Stars are included!



School District U-46

