

# Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter

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**February 22, 2024**

Dear Colleagues,

While School District U-46 aims to celebrate Black history throughout the school year, our schools and District have been recognizing contributions of Black Americans throughout the month of February with learning opportunities, messaging, and displays.

Some of the events still scheduled are listed below. Make sure to check out our [Facebook page](#) and [Instagram account](#) for pictures from the Black History Month celebrations.

Thank you to our students and team members for recognizing and celebrating Black history across our school district.

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

Dr. Suzanne Johnson

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## **Harriet Gifford Elementary**

A Mini-Reader's Theater: Morning announcements feature a student reading a paragraph in the first person about an important African-American figure in history and then placing their photo on the Black History Wall. All month.

## **Horizon Elementary**

Morning announcements featuring quotes related to Black History Month, read by I Am LEAD students. All month.

**Otter Creek Elementary**

Morning announcements will feature students sharing accomplishments about African-American men and women they have researched. All month.

**Kenyon Woods Middle School**

Displays, morning announcements and a food drive centered around Black History Month. All month.

**Tefft Middle School**

Daily student messages and door decorations centered around Black History Month. All month.

**Bartlett High School**

Facts related to Black History Month read during the morning announcements. All month.

**Elgin High School**

Frederick Douglass Exhibit in Library. All month.

**Ridge Circle Elementary**

Open Mic in which students share details about and quotes from influential African Americans they have researched. Fridays in February.

**Channing Elementary School**

Black History Celebration and Literacy Night. Thursday, Feb. 22, from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

**Equity & Innovation/Alignment Collaborative for Education**

Panel with representatives from several Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Tuesday, Feb. 27, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. [Virtual event.](#)

**Parkwood Elementary**

Gallery Walk focused on African Americans. Thursday, Feb. 29, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

**Ridge Circle Elementary**

Gallery Walk featuring student-decorated doors honoring influential African Americans. Elgin's "Project 2-3-1" will be shown in the gym. Thursday, Feb. 29, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

**African American Advisory Council**

Meeting with special guest Dr. Bettina Love. Thursday, Feb. 29, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. [Virtual event.](#)

**Larkin High School**

The Catapult of the Collective: Our Legacy, Our Vision, and Our Path. Thursday, Feb. 29, from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH



## 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 Team Supporting the Black EXPO at Heritage Elementary School, from Catherine Fletcher, Principal, and Dr. Angel S. Brooks, Assistant Principal, Heritage Elementary**

Our 1st Black EXPO: Soul of Heritage was an incredible success! The spotlight on Black-owned businesses, talent, and entrepreneurs, as well as student performances, was phenomenal! Huge shout-out to our chief organizer Melanie Patterson! We could not have done it without you, Melanie!



We had several elves helping us as well: Ericka Brown (thank you for all that you did in planning), Rosalind Cobbs, Kimberly Dedeaux, Jamie Crosen, Anahi Herrera, Teagan Pompa, Alec Barlow, Dan Youngerman, Dan Hoffman, Mandy Byrne, Corina Morales, Iliana Gonzalez, Sara Elwood and all the District peeps that showed up to support and cheer us on - Dr. Lance, Executive Director Teresa Winters, Dr. Satterwhite, Mrs. Lisa Jackson, and Dr. Ann Williams, and Superintendent Johnson, who joined us virtually. We appreciate all of you! Here's to next year!

### **Kudos to Ridge Circle Elementary School, from Rebecca Miller, Museum Educator, Elgin History Museum**

I want to send my highest compliments to U-46's Ridge Circle Elementary. I see about 1,000 school kids at the museum each year. They come from 40 to 45 local elementary schools. It's common for one grade at a school to visit at one time. These are usually 40 to 60 kids, coming from two or three general education or dual language classrooms. I have also had other visits from self-contained special education classes. These are usually six to 12 kids from one special needs classroom.

What I have not seen, until Ridge Circle visited last week, was a school visit that included both the school's gen ed classes and their self-contained special education class at the same time. Same bus, same destination, same field trip. It blew my mind, and I am embarrassed that I hadn't noticed this was missing from my world.

Inclusion is just that simple. If the 3rd grade is going on a field trip, everyone goes, regardless of whether they're in a gen ed, dual language, or self-contained classroom. I needed Ridge Circle to remind me. The bar has been set.

**Kudos to Shannon Pennington, Instructional Coach at DREAM Academy, from Katie Mucha and Christy Craig, Instructional Coaches at Tefft Middle School**

We just wanted to give a shout out to our amazing colleague for receiving the Award of Excellence through ISBE. It is so well deserved as she is an amazing colleague, and we learn so much from her every time we have the opportunity to collaborate. Congrats, Shannon! So happy for you!

**Kudos to Val Albuck, English Teacher, Tefft Middle School, from Her Instructional Coaches at Tefft Middle School**

We wanted to give a big shout out to Val Albuck for receiving the Award of Meritorious Service in ISBE's Teacher of the Year awards. This is such a well deserved honor and we are so privileged to be her colleagues. The work she does day in and day out for both students and staff is extraordinary and makes such an impact not only on student achievement but also the overall positive culture of her classroom and our building. SO PROUD OF HER!

**Kudos to all our Staff at Liberty Elementary School who Supported with Testing, from Stephanie Sylvester, Principal, Liberty Elementary School**

Thank you to Jennifer Ford, Jaclyn Scheck, Arshiya Quadri, Neepa Thakkar, Jennifer Trygar, and Dorothy Sliwa for all their support and effort to help all of our Liberty students finish ILAR and Access Testing. These ladies went over and beyond to make sure we had 100% of our students tested during the testing window. Special thank you to Parul Bhatia for helping keep the tickets safe and locked up each day and keeping the administration informed on progress throughout the testing window. We couldn't have done any of this without all of your help. Thank you so much!

**Kudos to Matt Willock and Leah Gibson, PE Teachers; Katie Mucha and Christy Craig, Instructional Coaches; and Dan Proctor, English Teacher, all at Tefft Middle School, from Valerie Albuck, English Teacher, Tefft Middle School**

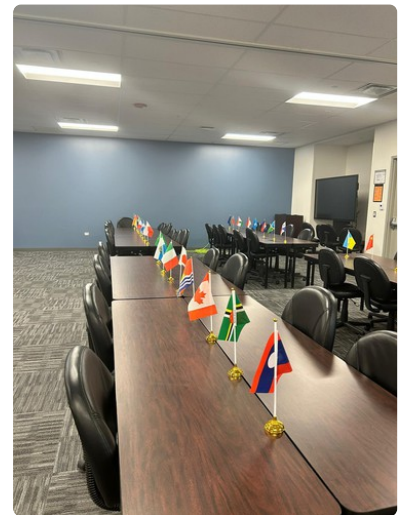
A big shout out and thanks to Matt, Leah, Katie, Christy and Dan for planning, organizing, and running a fun team-building assembly for our students!

**Kudos to all who Supported the Newcomer Parent Support Group, from Brenda Escobedo, Family Welcome Center Coordinator, and Dr. Angelica Ernst, Multilingual & Multicultural Education Department Coordinator**

We want to thank each of the following individuals for your invaluable support during our second Newcomer session for parents, held on Feb. 15 at the U-46 Welcome Center. Your dedication and efforts played a significant role in the success of this event, which saw remarkable attendance of 200 parents and 80 children. The feedback we received from the parents was overwhelmingly positive. They expressed gratitude for the vital information provided, which will undoubtedly assist them in navigating their children's educational journey with confidence. Your welcoming presence,

expertise, and willingness to engage made a significant difference, creating a supportive and informative environment for all who attended.

The following individuals welcomed parents during registration, provided a homework club for the students, and supported and directed parents as needed: Abigail Aragon, Adrianna Miranda, Isela Gonzalez, Martha Castelan, Lizby Sanchez, Norma Esteves, Sofia Torres, Noemi Torres, Patricia Ortiz, Maria Del Pilar Garcia, and Laura Godinez. Thank you, all.



The following teachers translated the presentation into various languages: Arshiya Quadri, Dorothy Sliwa, Neepa Thakkar, Hanna Zelenyuk, Estela Macias Bonner, Sergio Marin Martinez, and Manuela Defaria Tavares, creating a welcoming atmosphere that made our parents feel at home

To all of our Home School Liaisons, thank you for contacting the parents and personally inviting them. Thank you to the members of the Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee. Thank you to Instructional Coaches Maria Chamorro and Irma Verastegui.

Thank you to Tiffany Trewartha and Raquel Robelo for providing information about Early Learners to our families. Thank you to the members of Project Access - Patricia Briones, Manuela Defaria Tavares, and Libertad DeLeonn; to the bus drivers in the Transportation Department as well as Marcy Murphy, Elizabeth Lapa, Tina O'Farrell, and Sue Moe.

Thank you to Karla Jiménez, Tara Burghart, and the entire team in the School & Community Relations Department for promoting the event to ensure every family received the information.

Thank you to James Karras, our Welcome Center custodian, for diligently preparing the building for the meeting.

To all those who have supported this new effort, your commitment to fostering an inclusive and educational community space is truly inspiring. Thanks to your efforts, we offered a session that informed and empowered our parents, making them feel part of our school's community from the very start. Thank you for your dedication and hard work, which contributed immensely to the success of this event. Your efforts are deeply appreciated.

