

Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter



March 7, 2024

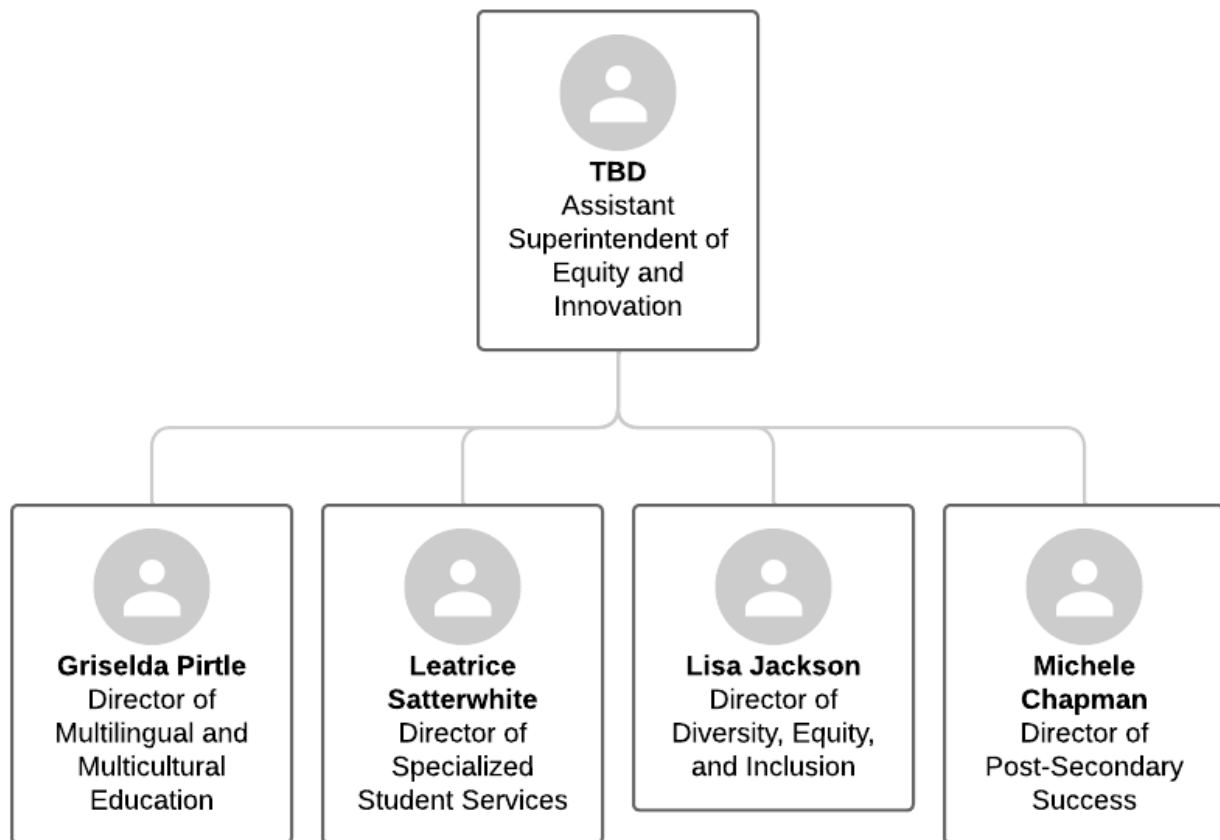
Dear Colleagues,

As part of our recent state summative designations and school report card data, we have 22 schools that have been identified as having one or more student groups performing at or below the “all students” group in the lowest-performing 5% of schools in the state. To better address this challenge, the structure of our Equity and Innovation Office will change starting in the 2024-25 school year. Under the new structure, the Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Innovation will have direct oversight of the Specialized Student Services and the Multilingual and Multicultural Education departments, in addition to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Post-Secondary Success departments. This will ensure that our programming and instructional support align with best practices and remove barriers that inhibit opportunity and access for historically marginalized groups of students. By transitioning to this structure, we can also enhance our focus on equitable programming for all students across grades preK - 12+, the opportunity and attainment gaps between student groups, and eliminating the overidentification of African American males for IEPs. We thank Dr. Teresa Lance for her leadership and contributions to our work in U-46. At the conclusion of the school year, Dr. Lance will become the Superintendent of Kankakee School District 111, and we wish her the best of luck in her new role.

Below is an image of the new structure, including the areas overseen by the Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Innovation.

I recognize that the restructuring causes uncertainty for our dedicated U-46 team members who could be impacted by this shift. I assure you that we will work quickly to respond to questions about this shift. I am confident that this change will allow for the system change that is needed to make School District U-46 work for all students.

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



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 Daniel Lopez, Custodian, at Heritage Elementary School, from Catherine Fletcher, Principal, at Heritage Elementary School

Thank you so much for all that you did for Heritage! You went above and beyond each and every day for us. We will miss you terribly!

Kudos to Chris Sanzeri, Assistant Director, Specialized Student Services-Operations, Special Education; Dove Holecek, Teacher Leader ILP Special Education, at Bartlett High School; and Jessica Harrisson, Behavior Specialist, Special Education, from Rich Bosh, Director of School Safety

Thank you for providing professional development to the 14 School Resource Officers on Autism Spectrum Disorder, providing strategies to use and making visual identifiers for them to communicate with students with Autism. The SROs all appreciated the presentation.

Kudos to the Early Learners First Steps Team and the Early Learners Initiatives Team, from Lynn Reuter, Early Learners Administrator of Preschool Access

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to these two groups for all of the love and support as I resume my cancer treatment. I am so fortunate to have a work family that loves in big ways.



Kudos to Nick Lucarelli, Maintenance, Plant Operations, from Rich Bosh, Director of School Safety

Thank you to Nick and the Plant Operations staff who assisted in labeling the exterior windows of our elementary schools. This initiative will improve and speed up the response at our schools in a time of need.

Kudos to Nicholas Rodriguez, Occupational Therapist, from Casey Lauinger, Lead Occupational Therapist

On behalf of Peggy Morris, from Tufts University, I would like to extend a heartfelt kudos to Nicholas for his help and support on Friday, March 1, following the Professional Development training she presented. After a long day of professional development, Peggy came out to her rental car only to find a flat tire. Nico stayed with Peggy and assisted her with changing the tire, and waited with her until road assistance came, when additional tools were needed. He continued to wait with her and only left after her spare tire was inflated and she was able to drive off, safe to get on the road to the airport.

Kudos to Danielle Pepa, Data Warehouse Programmer, Information Services, from the Assessment and Accountability Department

The Assessment Office would like to thank Danielle for all of her hard work during ACCESS testing. Danielle goes above and beyond in making sure the schools and the testing platform are up and running without any glitches. Thank you for all of your hard work!

Kudos to DUEA Staff who Supported the Crisis Center from Lorie Estanislao, DUEA Professional Development Chair

I want to thank all of the DUEA employees who donated diapers for the Crisis Center at ParaPalooza as part of DUEA's Community Outreach Program. Together we collected 14 packs of diapers and more than \$200 to purchase additional diapers.

Kudos to Emily Earnest and Elizabeth Malagon, Social Workers at Harriet Gifford Elementary School, from Patricia Smith, Paraprofessional, Harriet Gifford

I am so thankful for Emily and Elizabeth; they work so hard at Harriet Gifford. Every minute of every day they help a student or are doing something to help students. I appreciate all they do and are doing for the school, students and even adults in the building. Thank you, both, for all you do. Happy Social Workers Week!

Kudos to all who Supported and Attended the Leap Into Spring Event at Liberty Elementary School from Stephanie Sylvester, Principal, at Liberty Elementary School

Thank you to all the parents, students, teachers, and staff who attended our Leap Into Spring event! A special thank you to Mrs. Szyzsko and Ms. Tornero for organizing the event. Wow! What an amazing turnout!



Kudos to Paige Fitton, Early Learners Instructional Coach; Jennifer Hensley, MLP Teacher, at Sycamore Trails Elementary School; Amy Durkalski, SEA for Early Learners; Stephanie Hopkins, Shannon Manny, Colleen Pecucci, and Kelly Claude, all Early Learners Instructional Coaches; Lynn Reuter, Early Learners Administrator; Kelly O'Hara, Early Learners Assessment SEA; Lea Russelle, Assistant Principal at Prairieview Elementary School; and Jennifer Dienelt and Daisy Talavera, both Preschool Expansion Teachers at Horizon Elementary School, from Erin Jackle, Early Learners Instructional Coach

Thank you so much for presenting at the Early Learners Conference on March 1! It was wonderful to be able to offer such a variety of sessions. Your passion and expertise made it all possible!

Kudos to Shannon Manny, Colleen Pecucci, Kelly Claude, and Stephanie Hopkins, all Early Learners Instructional Coaches, from Erin Jackle, Early Learners Instructional Coach

Amazing work on the Early Learners Conference! This was such a big lift to pull together, and I am so proud of everything we were able to accomplish, from organizing to presenting to running the event. I am so lucky to work with such a wonderful team!

Kudos to Lisa Yagow, Orchestra Music Teacher, Kimball Middle School, from Rachael Tatar, Community Member

I wanted to share my positive experience from the Music and Arts conference on Friday, March 1. I had the pleasure of working with Lisa, and her presentation on the U-46 mariachi programs and how to get a program started was incredibly helpful. The information she provided was valuable and well-received by the audience in attendance. Cheers to inspiring music education!

Kudos to the DUEA Professional Development Team - Sara Moeller, Ana Reich, Karina Marin, Margaret Boghossian, and Tina Pizzitol, from Lorie Estanislao, DUEA Professional Development Chair

I want to give recognition and a huge thank you for a successful Professional Day of Learning at our 2nd annual ParaPalooza! This event was held at Bartlett High School on March 1 for the over 600 Paraeducators in the district. We had additional colleagues who joined us to form a Para Squad to assist that day, including Michelle Baldwin, Kathy Chwee, Cathy Daker, Tammy Datisman, Sue Gonia, Sue Meek, Jose Perez, Reyna Pena, Terese Sobenes, Korin Stocker and DeLona Yucuis. We also had retired Paraeducators and IEA Staff who volunteered their time to help make this a successful event.



School District U-46

