

# Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter

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May 2, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

We need your active participation in our upcoming Unite U-46 Session, a crucial effort that plays a significant role in shaping the future of our school district and the communities it serves. As previously shared, we launched Unite U-46 to engage our community in the Board's vision of moving to a true middle school model (grades 6-8), expanding early childhood opportunities, and beginning the process of renovating or retiring facilities that no longer adequately, or equitably, serve our students.

I continue to be proud of the turnout at sessions ([an overview of the work](#)) and our community involvement. I appreciate everyone who has attended, especially our community members, and hope they continue to participate. Your contributions are invaluable, and I hope to see more of you in the upcoming session.

Our final Unite U-46 session for the school year is Wednesday, May 8, at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria of Eastview Middle School, 321 Oak Ave. in Bartlett. Please help spread the word about the Unite U-46 work and this final session. The focus of the session is reviewing the boundary recommendation for the new middle school in Bartlett. This is an important session and we definitely want to hear from our community members on this topic.

**Registering is easy!** If you live within the boundaries of U-46, you are welcome. Do not assume your school families know about this important work; instead please use your direct connections and influence with families to encourage them to register and participate.

We appreciate your help to raise awareness and increase community participation in this important work.

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

Dr. Suzanne Johnson

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## 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 Thomas Schmitz and Nanos Tamras, School Bus Drivers, Transportation Department, from Renee Sweeney, Special Skills Paraprofessional at Centennial Elementary School**

These two bus drivers helped make our recent field trip to Hickory Knolls Nature Center very wonderful. They helped provide assistance to a student in a wheelchair using the wheelchair lift for the first time. They were caring and kind to all of the 2nd graders on this trip. Thomas and Nanos, thanks for making the bus ride fun and enjoyable.

**Kudos to the Under the Sea Dance Committee at Heritage Elementary School, from Catherine Fletcher, Principal, at Heritage Elementary School**

I want to send a huge shout-out to all those who made Heritage's "Under the Sea" dance such a fun and creative event for our families. The decorations and activities for our Eagles were out of this world! Thank you to: Carol Romero, Claudia Olvera, Dan Youngerman, Mandy Byrne, Sara Elwood, Kathleen Speck, Vicky Alfaro, Nadia Betancourt, Elia Sanchez, and parent rep Melanie Patterson. Thank you for your care and time to make this such a special event for our families. It did not go unnoticed! We appreciate you all!

**Kudos to Anna Falco, Principal's Secretary, Parul Bhatia, Home School Liaison, and Teresa Mackender, Secretary/Clerical, all at Liberty Elementary School, from Stephanie Sylvester, Principal, Liberty Elementary School**

We would like to wish Anna, Parul, and Teresa a very happy Administrative Assistants Day! The Liberty staff is so lucky to have your support at our school. We would be lost without the guidance and assistance we receive from all three of you. Thank you for all that you do for everyone and for always going above and beyond!

**Kudos to All Those Who Supported the Newcomer Parent Session from Brenda Escobedo, Coordinator, Family Welcome Center**

I want to send my heartfelt kudos to the many staff who supported the Family Welcome Center and the Multilingual & Multicultural Education Department as we offered our third informative session for Newcomer Parents on April 17.

A special thanks to our Home School Liaisons for their dedicated efforts in reaching out to every Newcomer Parent from their buildings to inform them about the sessions this school year. Also, thank you to the following school liaisons who provided essential child care, allowing parents to engage fully with and benefit from the presentations: Teresa Martinez, Martha Castelan, Norma Esteves, Adrianna Miranda, Isela Gonzalez, Lizby Sanchez, Sofia Torres, Veronica Ramirez, and Angelica Kobylinski.

Thank you to Patricia Ortiz and Dr. Angelica Ernst, for their fantastic support during these sessions.

Acknowledgments are also due to the following teachers: Arshiya Quadri, Beata Mirkiewicz, Dorothy Silwa, Estela Macias Boner, Sergio Marin, Hana Zelenyuk, Neepa Thakkar, and Maria DelPilar Garcias for their invaluable support in translating the presentations into Urdu, Gujarati, Hindi, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, French, Lao, and Portuguese. Special thanks to Melina Pantoja for her adaptability and willingness to present to our parents.

We are grateful to the Project Access staff - Patricia Briones, Manuela Defaria Tavares, and Libertad De Leon - for their contributions and close collaboration, which made this session possible.

A big thank you to Marcy Murphy, Elizabeth Lapa, and Tina O'Farrell from the Transportation Department and to all the fantastic bus drivers who provided transport to the schools and ensured no barriers prevented parent attendance.

Finally, thank you to Leslie Cienfuegos and James Karras from the Welcome Center for securing the necessary spaces for our families, and to our School & Communications Department for effectively sharing the news and value of these sessions to our families.

**Kudos to Misa Edwardsen, 1st Grade Teacher, Heritage Elementary School from U-46 Parent Danielle McCracken**

Mrs. Edwardsen has been an amazing teacher for my son this year. It's been a hard year for him, but with help and support from her (and many others) he has made so much progress! We are so grateful for Mrs. Edwardsen, and we want to show her the appreciation that she deserves!

**Kudos to Noe Velazquez, Principal, and Norma Mariani, Home School Liaison, both at Lords Park Elementary School, from Brenda Escobedo, Coordinator, Family Welcome Center**

I want to extend heartfelt congratulations and appreciation for your incredible efforts in promoting the recent Café Para Padres at Lords Park. The event was exceptionally well attended, demonstrating the strong connection and trust you have fostered within the school community. It was particularly impressive to see how parents actively participated and engaged in reflective conversations that promoted leadership and collaboration among themselves. Thank you also to Laura Godinez, Family Welcome Center Facilitator, and Estela Macias-Bonner, ELL Teacher at Elgin High School, for supporting the presentation.

**Kudos to the Assessments, Accountability & Student Success Office from Hilltop Elementary School**

During IAR testing, the members of the Assessments Department were prompt in supporting us as we navigated various issues. We appreciate the clarity, attention and quickness to help us conduct the testing smoothly. Thank you.

**Kudos to Susan Ackerman, Psychologist, Special Education, from Kelley Thomas, Itinerant Teacher, Illinois Park Center for Early Learners**

We would like to thank Sue for all she has done in her role as our Early Childhood School Psychologist. She never has a moment to breathe, but always has a smile to give! She reaches out

behavior support, helps to facilitate meetings, coordinates testing with bilingual staff, and so much more. We want you to know how much you are appreciated!

**Kudos to Rosa Irizarry and Maria Esposito, both Secretaries at Elgin High School, from David Dybalski, Psychologist, Special Education**

This is a special thank you to Rosie and Maria who helped in preparing the snacks and other things for the group activity in which Ellis and Larsen Middle School 8th graders visited Elgin High School for a student-led tour of the school. Well done and really helped out a lot. The students enjoyed and made their visit special.

**Kudos to Adam Baxter, Stage Tech, Plant Operations, Larkin High School, from Nicholas Lambert, Orchestra Music Teacher, Larkin High School**

Adam is a rock in the fine arts department. He does a terrific job maintaining all of our resources. I am so proud to perform in the Larkin Auditorium. It is in immaculate condition, and the effects that Adam offers are second to none. Adam is also incredibly proactive in assisting our various performing groups to have fantastic performances. He is always willing to go the extra mile and share his extensive expertise.

**Kudos to Stephanie Hopkins, Early Learners Instructional Coach, from the Kindergarten Team at Sycamore Trails Elementary School**

Thank you to Stephanie for always going above and beyond to support our kindergarten team in successfully teaching our students with developmentally appropriate strategies. Stephanie has deep knowledge and understanding of early learners and the many requirements of teaching young learners in our hands-on, play-based environment. She is prompt and efficient and clear when called upon for her expertise. She works beyond her "suggested" hours! Our littles thrive because of you, Stephanie!

**Kudos to Debbie McMullen, Coordinator, K-12 Science & Planetarium, from the 2nd Grade Team at Oakhill Elementary School**

Debbie helped us plan a field trip to the Elgin Public Museum. The kids were able to see firsthand how wind and water affect landscapes and provided a real-world context for their science studies. At the museum, they didn't just hear about these things; they experienced these phenomena in action, with hands-on activities and demonstrations. Thank you, Debbie, for helping us plan our field trip for our future budding scientists!

**Kudos to Brian Leatherby, Stage Tech, Plant Operations, from Carolyn Rodgers, Science Teacher, Eastview Middle school**

Thank you Brian for all of your help with setting up the sound for our play production. You went above and beyond. Our students sounded great during the performance, and we could not have asked for anything more!

**Kudos to Jeff Kerber, Dean's Assistant, Larkin High School, from all the "D Wing" Teachers at Larkin**

Jeff goes above and beyond every day to support the teachers in the D wing. He always has backup materials for us in case we run out, and he's always willing to help us carry something or support our needs or classroom needs in any way. Thanks for being the best team player, Jeff! We appreciate you!

**Kudos to CTE Coordinator Doreen Roberts, Alignment Collaborative for Education (ACE) Executive Director Nancy Coleman, and her ACE Team, from Kathryn Thompson, Business Teacher, Larkin High School**

The job and career fair was a success! Our students made connections that turned into real job opportunities. It was very organized, had a great variety of employers, and the presentation in the auditorium was top notch. As a teacher, the level of detail was appreciated. It went very smoothly and my students all got something out of it. Thanks for all your hard work!

**Kudos to Amy Messer, Principal's Secretary, Laura Carpio, Home School Liaison, and Candace Cieslica, Secretary/ Clerical, all at Otter Creek Elementary School, from Jami Windau, 1st Grade Teacher at Otter Creek Elementary School, and the Otter Creek Staff**

In honor of Administrative Professionals Day (April 24), we'd like to recognize and thank the three amazing ladies who keep our front offices running so smoothly, and do so much for ALL of us at Otter Creek Elementary. We are Otterly Blessed!



