

Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter



May 23, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

There is no end to the exciting events during the last two weeks of school. In addition to actually having students in our buildings and classrooms during the day, our evenings are filled with end-of-year student recognitions, concerts, games, meets, celebrations and a variety of other events.

Still, I ask you to share with me your kudos for your colleagues and U-46 friends in order to fill my final weekly message of the year with recognition of the amazing work we have done this year. Please take a moment to send your Kudos via [Let's Talk](#). The Tuesday, May 28 deadline is firm, in order to get them compiled.

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 Amanda Leatherby, Assistant Director of Compliance in Specialized Student Services from Erika Washington, Assistant Attorney

Amanda is an absolute pleasure to work with and an extremely valuable leader during IEP meetings with family legal representation. She effortlessly navigates contentious issues and ensures compliance and exceptional service to U-46 students. Prompt communication, expeditious

resolution of issues, and comprehensive knowledge are only a few of Amanda's many skills. Thanks, Amanda for all that you do and for being such a great collaborator!!

Kudos to Laura Englehardt, Andi Peterson, Jasmine Oh, Kindergarten Teachers at Sycamore Trails Elementary School; Jennifer Hensley, MLP Primary Teacher at Sycamore Trails; Erin Bryant, Sue Bohlin, and Rhonda Ellena, Kindergarten Teachers at Centennial Elementary School; Stephanie Beer, ILP Kindergarten Teacher at Centennial; and Tricia Najera, Kindergarten Teacher at Lord's Park Elementary School, from Stephanie Hopkins-Early Learner Instructional Coach

Thank you so much for being so willing to open your classrooms to multiple visitors this spring. Repeatedly welcoming visitors is another thing to juggle while you already have so many balls in the air. Your generosity in sharing your time, your practice, and your classroom with colleagues to help grow our collective practice is greatly appreciated.

Kudos to Noelle Dupuis, Principal, and Jason Krause, Assistant Principal, at Spring Trail Elementary School, from Jessica Boese, Elementary Music Teacher, Spring Trail

I want to thank Noelle and Jason for their consistent support given to music education at Spring Trail, and for being an awesome hands-on admin team! The students and I loved collaborating with you at our Music in the Movies program on May 14, and we thank you for being a part of it! Your dedication to your students is admired and appreciated!



Kudos to All the Speech and Language Therapists and Hearing Itinerants from Deborah Miller, Occupational Therapist, Special Education

The month of May is Better Hearing and Speech Month. I would like to send a special thank you to our amazing speech therapists, Lauren Bergquist and Dena Kovarik, and to our Hearing Itinerant, Kristin Ferengul, at Prairieview Elementary School. We celebrate with you the amazing things you do for our students in U-46 and for making a difference.

Kudos to Javier Silva, 3rd Grade Teacher, Erica Johnson, 4/5th Grade Teacher, Karen Rottman, Special Education Teacher, Sophie Horn, Paraeducator, Paulina Rolon, Paraeducator, Garrett Brown, Paraeducator, Erica Yurgil, Principal's Secretary, Isela Gonzalez, Home School Liaison, and Linda Yi, Secretary Clerical, all at Hanover Countryside Elementary School, from Kim Sirotzki, 5th Grade Teacher, Hanover Countryside

Thank you for all of your help and support with our DARE graduation! You are amazing, and I thank you for everything you do!

Kudos to All of the Students and Staff in SWEP from Mishelle O'Regan, Licensure Specialist, on Behalf of the Entire Human Resources Department

As always, you have all outdone yourselves this past school year! While we are all extremely saddened by the last day of the year steadily approaching, we look forward to the next school year when you're back and open for business! Not only is the food absolutely delicious, but seeing all of your friendly smiles is undoubtedly the best part about getting to work here at U-46!

Thanks for all of your hard work and for keeping us well fed! We'll miss you something awful this summer!

Kudos to Susan Hoch, Certified School Nurse, Health Services, from Deborah Miller, Occupational Therapist, Special Education

Congrats to you on your retirement. Sue has made a difference to so many students, staff, and parents within U-46, but especially to Prairieview Elementary School. She has had a career in helping others. I wish now she can enjoy helping herself to the bounty of time not doing health reports. You will be missed.

Kudos to Mary Bonner, Bus Driver, Transportation, from Dawn Puglise-Suske, Paraeducator, Illinois Park Center for Early Learning

Thank you, Mary, for showing love and compassion toward our students at Illinois Park. Even though it is a challenge with our students sometimes, Mary is always patient and kind. Thank you again for a great year, and I look forward to working with you again.

Kudos to Lori Brandes, Principal, Washington Elementary School, from Kathleen Christerson, 1st Grade Teacher, Washington Elementary School

As you enjoy your last days before retirement, thank you for your dedication to the field of education and as our leader at Washington. You have touched the lives of so many students, families, and colleagues in the years you have been with U-46. I am blessed to have been the recipient of your knowledge, talents, encouragement, and kindness. You will be deeply missed by all.

Kudos to Plant Operations and Information Services from Alec Barlow, Digital Communications Specialist, School & Community Relations

Kudos to Nick Corn, Coordinator of Grounds, Jolene Linneman, Construction Project Coordinator, and the Plant Operations team who oversaw the installation of a time lapse camera at the new middle school site in Bartlett. Also, kudos to Naul Conejo, IS Supervisor, for ensuring the photos can be successfully transferred from the construction site to ESC via 5G LTE. This will be a great way to showcase progress of our newest middle school to the public once it is completed. Thank you!



Kudos to Meagen Balzer, English Teacher, Ryan Sims, Science Teacher, Robert Weihofen, Business Teacher, Reggie Dillard, School Counselor, and Cindy Javan, Secretary to the Assistant Principal of Innovations, all at Streamwood High School, from Tracy Stewart, Assistant Principal of Innovations at Streamwood High School

I want to thank all of these individuals. Their time, hard work, and dedication for our INCubator program is greatly appreciated! Students successfully pitched amazing concepts at our 3rd annual Pitch Night, and this team was instrumental in providing them a platform to showcase their ideas and talents!

Kudos to Richard Lebrón, Principal, Tefft Middle School, from Tiffany Jourdan, Resident Administrator

Thank you, Lebrón, for being there for me over the past two years! You have been the most amazing mentor one could ask for, even if you didn't know you would turn into mine. You have shown me the ropes, been there when I needed support and guidance, collaborated with me and

encouraged me to keep going. You never fail to support those around you. You share your knowledge to help us all grow and for that you are more than appreciated! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you do!

Kudos to Cheryl Domokos, Secretary, Specialized Student Services, from Tiffany Jourdan, Resident Administrator

Cheryl, thank you for welcoming me into the department this year and for sharing your space! You are such a kind person, and I have enjoyed working with you and learning from you this year. You have given me a wealth of knowledge to use as I move forward. I appreciate our daily chats and jokes and your encouragement throughout this year. Thank you for all the work you do for all of us.

Kudos to Dr. Bill Doran, Substitute Administrator, from Dr. Jennifer Schwardt, Principal at Horizon Elementary School

Thank you Bill for taking the call from your former AP to fill in as the Horizon Elementary School Assistant Principal! We are so glad you joined our administration team at Horizon for the 2nd semester this year. We loved having your support and care for the staff, students, and parents. Thank you for being a Sun-sational mentor and friend!

Kudos to Tanya Casey, Resident Administrator, Horizon Elementary School, from Jennifer Schwardt, Principal, Horizon Elementary School

Thank you for your work and dedication at Horizon as the RA this year, and congratulations on being named the new AP for Horizon for next year! I am looking forward to continuing the work we have done this year.

Kudos to Lucia Abreu, Parents as Teachers Home Educator, from Amber Peters, Executive Director, Elgin Partnership for Early Learning

A big shout out to Lucia for going the extra mile for the families she serves. Lucia has encouraged the families she serves to attend the EPEL free community playgroup that is offered on Mondays to give them another early learning touchpoint during the week. Not only has Lucia invited her families to attend to build community with others, but she meets them at playgroup to make the family feel supported.



Community playgroup offers opportunities to connect with other young families, the children a chance to play with other little ones their age, receive support from community partners and participate in developmentally appropriate story time and activities that build readiness skills. Thank you Lucia for going the extra mile for your families! The trust and relationship you have built with the families is evident in their excitement when they see you show up!

Kudos to LaNece Dyer, Joanna Rivera, Chandni Shah, Damaris Hernandez, and Jennifer Slaten at Nature Ridge Elementary School from Veronica Alonzo, 4th Grade Dual Language Teacher, Nature Ridge Elementary

LeNece, Joanna, Chandni, Damaris, and Jennifer served as the lead and coaches for Nature Ridge's "Girls Have More Run" club. Thank you, all, for your hard work and leadership in running the club this year. I could see how proud the parents were of their girls and how proud the girls were of themselves! The final event was well-organized and everyone's enthusiasm was wonderful. Phenomenal job!

Kudos to a Great Team at South Elgin High School from Daniel Affleck, Social Sciences Teacher, South Elgin High School

Kudos to everyone who made our yearbook distribution event a resounding success! A heartfelt thank you to Amanda Kalkstein, Christine Bowen, Chloe Burns, Sheila Ares, Kathy Bautista, Amanda Brex-Castillo, and Nancy Mercadante Nelson for their outstanding efforts in distributing the yearbooks and ensuring everything ran smoothly. Special recognition goes to Jill Kacer for creating the needed posters, Debbie Dillon and Karen Lawson for their invaluable logistical support, and Adam Bryl for his crucial role in setting up the tables and transporting the yearbooks from the dock to the commons. Your hard work and dedication are deeply appreciated, and you have made this event truly memorable for everyone involved. Thank you!

Kudos to Lori Nommensen, Retirement & Pension Specialist, from Patsy Martin, 2nd Grade Teacher, Century Oaks Elementary School

Kudos to Lori for making retiring and everything involved in retiring seem so easy. She is so knowledgeable and helpful. On top of that she is kind. She is an amazing asset to U-46. Thank you, Lori!

Kudos to Lesley Bealis and Rebeca Santana, Lords Park Elementary School; Lisa Naccarato, Horizon Elementary School; Sandra Lionello, Prairieview Elementary School; Cristina Tamayo and Christine Davis, Laurel Hill Elementary School, and Sara Henry, Willard Elementary School from Jami Windau, 1st Grade Teacher, Otter Creek Elementary School

As I prepare to retire from U46, I reached out for some help with a special project to commemorate my nearly 35 years in the district.

Seven teachers across the district, who don't even know me personally, were kind enough to help. While likely a small gesture to each of them, it was "big" to me, and reminded me yet again that the connections and relationships teachers make here with each other, our students, and our families...they are the things I will miss the most! Thank you Lesley, Rebeca, Lisa, Sandra, Cristina, Christine, and Sara. I am so grateful!



Kudos to Melinda Leman, Administrative Assistant, Human Resources and Lisa Luchtman, Payroll Specialist, Payroll, from Patsy Martin, 2nd Grade Teacher, Century Oaks Elementary School

Thank you, Melinda and Linda, for helping me with my many questions about timesheets and payroll and Workforce. Your patience was appreciated. You were both so helpful when I had questions, and you answered my questions with such kindness.

Kudos to Social Workers Amanda Huggins, Molly Carris, Abbie Hernandez, and Jen Delgado from Noah Layne Cross Cat Resource at Sunnydale Elementary School

These wonderful social workers already have their own students that they see at their own home schools but have graciously helped out our students here at Sunnydale. They have been meeting minutes, helping out in situations that may arise, and also coming to the service team to make sure that students are getting the services that they need. Many thanks go out to these extraordinary co-workers for going above and beyond each day to help out our students!

Kudos to the Staff at Independence Center for Early Learning from Natalie Adan, U-46 Parent

I wanted to send some kudos to our son's team of teachers and staff at Independence Center for Early Learning. From day one, in 2022, the entire school staff was warm and welcoming! Our little guy's teacher, Miss Marina, and her team of paraeducators - Miss Kathy and Miss Karina, have been

incredible for the two years we spent there! Miss Marina always communicated with us about everything – from daily sheets in his backpack, to pictures, and personalized messages so we always knew what was going on in his classroom!

They have taught him so much and really made us feel so encouraged with his progress. The entire team – the entire school, really, made our son's first experience with school so positive. The environment they created for him was nothing I could have ever imagined. We are forever grateful to Miss Marina and the staff at Independence! "Thank you" just doesn't seem to do justice to the amount of appreciation for you all!

Kudos to All Those Who Made Our Field Trip to Springfield Possible from the Hispanic Leaders Club of Streamwood High School

The Hispanic Leaders Club of Streamwood High School wants to send kudos to Dr. Moran, Principal of Streamwood High School, Dr. Lebrón, Principal of Tefft Middle School, Karla Jimenez, Director of School & Community Relations, and our partner club from Tefft Middle School for the opportunity to travel to Springfield for an educational session on leadership and advocacy.

The group composed of Javier Munoz, Abigail Montiel, Paula Ayala, William Cintora and Evelyn Canahui, and Ms. Castaneda, Dual Language Teacher Leader, attended a live session of the Illinois State Senate. During this session, we witnessed a live audience where a community group was presenting its services and representation provided to minority groups, specifically the Hispanic community. We were also able to speak with our community representatives, Fred Crespo and Cristina Castro, who explained the role that public officials have in representing the communities of Hanover Park and Streamwood.

Finally, we had the opportunity to learn about the fascinating life of President Lincoln, understanding his legacy, not only in history but also in the laws of this country. We visited his tomb and the house where he lived in Springfield. On this occasion, all of us learned about the value of the legacy of many generations and leadership in our current lives. As young Hispanics, we want to continue learning about advocacy, defense, and leadership to refine our leadership skills. Thank you for all the opportunities provided.



School District U-46



