

Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter



May 30, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication this school year and for celebrating our students over the course of the Spring. My sincere appreciation to our extensive team responsible for Graduation 2024! Graduation was a wonderful event and the highlight of our year. I cannot believe today was our last day with students! I look forward to our return in August and the exciting work ahead during the 2024-2025 school year! But first, sharing all of the kudos submitted for this final weekly message of the school year.

It's a great day to learn in U-46! And, a great time for summer recess!

Dr. Suzanne Johnson

Kudos

The Superintendent's Weekly Message, and Kudos, will be taking a break during the summer. Look for it to resume with the start of the 2024-25 school year. We received nearly 450 kudos this school year!

Kudos to the Entire School & Community Relations Team - Tara Burghart, Brenda Gomez, Teagan Pompa, Alec Burlow, Cecilia Rodriguez, and Jean Bednar, from Karla Jimenez, Director of School & Community Relations

Big thanks to our amazing School & Community Relations team for their exceptional hard work throughout the year! From promoting events, handling media inquiries, crafting bios and speeches, and producing videos, to providing simultaneous interpretation, taking photos, maintaining the 55-

plus websites in our district, posting on social media, compiling the weekly Kudos, sharing highlights across our schools and district, and much more. They manage it with grace and always a smile. ¡Muchas gracias!

Kudos to Joe Corcoran, Principal, Harriet Gifford Elementary School, from Liz Blanchard, Principal's Secretary, Harriet Gifford Elementary School

Joe is retiring after 37 years with U-46. I have been fortunate to serve as his secretary for the past 12 years. He has made it a pleasure to come to work every day. He is kind, hard-working, diplomatic and fair. We will miss him greatly but we also are excited to see him spend more time with his growing brood of grandchildren. There's a saying: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Joe has made sure that families have felt like they are heard, seen and that they are special. He has given his blood, sweat and tears to this school, and they just don't make them like him anymore. Good luck in your retirement, Joe!

Kudos to the Culture and Climate Department from Mark Gonnella, Coordinator, Culture and Climate

I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to Adriana RayaVillagomez and the SERTs - Elisabeth Ferrill, Robert Luck, Zehra Tahir, and Laura Smail - for all your incredible hard work and dedication over the past year. It has truly been a remarkable journey, and I am deeply appreciative of the warm welcome you extended to me as your new coordinator. I am genuinely proud to be part of such a talented and dynamic team. Thank you for your trust, diligence, and for making this past year an outstanding one. I am excited about what the future holds for us, and I am confident that together, we will continue to reach new heights.

Kudos to the Entire Independence Staff, from Lisa Bergbreiter, Principal, and Cretia Kirkwood, Assistant Principal, at Independence Center for Early Learning

Thank you to each and every staff member at Independence Preschool. You all have supported each other through the ups and downs of the school year all the while sticking together as a team. We are so glad that we are a family and look forward to seeing you all next year!

Kudos to the Independence MTSS Team Members from Lisa Bergbreiter, Principal, and Cretia Kirkwood, Assistant Principal, at Independence Center for Early Learning

This kudos is for Angela Rojas, Alejandra Ganddini, Olga Pecina, Sue Ackerman, Benjamin Jeffrey, Marina Reutenauer, Tanishia Callender, Patricia Cronin, Michelle Sweeney, and Marina Reutenauer. Thank you for supporting our school's process on tracking ALL students to support their needs. Your hard work resulted in great growth and development!

Kudos to Liciele Acance, Dean of Students, and Johnny Chacon, Resident Administrator, both at Dream Academy, from Mary Mangione, Principal, Dream Academy

Thank you for your leadership and your contribution to Dream for the past years. We will miss your smiling faces in the halls and in your offices. You have truly made a difference in our students' lives!

Kudos to Tina O'Farrell, Trip Advisor, Transportation, from Shannon Pennington, Lead Teacher, Dream Academy

Tina always comes through in a pinch with our many CAAEL schedule changes. I know there are many demands on her and what I appreciate the most is how pleasant she is no matter how

stressful the bus situation. Thank you, Tina, for always being so helpful but mostly for being so kind.

Kudos to Michele Chapman, Director of Post-Secondary Success, from Beth McKinney, Coordinator of Instructional Programs and Supports, Alexa Charsha, Lead School Counselor, both in the Post-Secondary Success Department

We wanted to take a moment to shine a spotlight on someone whose dedication and hard work often go unnoticed amidst the hustle and bustle of our daily responsibilities. Michele Chapman demonstrates the qualities of advocacy, organization, and unwavering support in everything she does.

Michele's advocacy for counselors is inspiring. She ensures that our concerns are heard. She doesn't just talk the talk; she works to ensure that their profession receives the recognition and support it deserves.

In the whirlwind of meetings, deadlines, and ever-changing priorities, her meticulous attention to detail and knack for keeping everything running smoothly are the backbone of our successes. We owe much of our efficiency and effectiveness to her diligent planning and coordination.

But perhaps what truly sets her apart is her unwavering support and dedication to each member of our U-46 team. She goes above and beyond to ensure that we have the resources, guidance, and encouragement we need to thrive in our roles.

Kudos to the Special Education Department at South Elgin High School from Kim Shead, Special Education Teacher, South Elgin High School

I can't even begin to share how amazing the Special Education Department is at South Elgin High School! We are not just a team of like-minded educators, we are a family! Every day I see colleague after colleague putting forth all of themselves for the betterment and success of their students. It is both an honor and a privilege to work alongside such kind, caring, and hardworking individuals! I could not ask for a better department, and a better school to work at. Please remember that "a good education can change anyone, but a good teacher can change everything" (Unknown). Thank you for all you do, you are appreciated and loved!

Kudos to the Highland Elementary School Team from Brenda Jurdado, 4th Grade Dual Language Teacher, Highland Elementary

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Highland team in a time of change! My kudos to all of you for the way you've endured all these changes with a positive attitude and hopes for the future!

Kudos to Rosita Mania, Senior Accountant, Financial Operations, from Sue Kowalewski, Principal's Secretary, McKinley Elementary School

Rosita is always so friendly when I call her with a question. She always responds so quickly and is very thorough in her explanations. It's always a pleasure to talk with her! Rosita is an amazing asset to School District U-46! Thank you, Rosita.

Kudos to Maggie Kallal, Secretary, Post Secondary Success, from Tiffany Mikhail Wright, Mentor Program Facilitator, Equity and Innovation

Maggie Kallal might possibly be Wonder Woman. There is not a person nor task that Maggie will not assist. In my short time in the E&I department, I have learned so much from her. She goes above and beyond to help everyone regardless of their role/title and if she does not have an answer for you she makes sure she can direct you in the right direction. She is a wealth of knowledge.

Kudos to Jennifer Gulumian, Teresa Withall, Alice Padilla and Jennifer Sulejmani, Dream Academy Secretaries, from Kelli Walsh, Phoenix Program Teacher, Dream Academy

You guys are the absolute best! Thanks for always helping me with my questions, students, and anything that came up during the school year and doing it with a smile! I will miss you guys and all the laughter next year, but I will come visit!

Kudos to the CML (Multicultural Community) Team at Lowrie Elementary School from Rene Chinn, 4th/5th Grade Teacher at Lowrie Elementary School

I want to recognize and give thanks to Karen Rivera, Emily Granados, Martin Porras, and Margarita Carmona, our CML Team this year. You have worked tenaciously over the past two years to create a stronger parent, teacher, and community relationship with all of the shareholders of Lowrie School. Our 2024 end-of-the-year celebration was the best yet! Thank you so much!

Kudos to the Transportation Team from Marcy Murphy, Director, Transportation Department

Every day, rain or shine, you ensure that our students get to and from school safely and on time. Your dedication, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to our students' well-being do not go unnoticed. From early mornings to late afternoons, you navigate through all challenges with a smile and a can-do attitude. Thank you for being the backbone of our school district and for making a positive impact on our community. We are incredibly grateful for all that you do! Let's give a round of applause for our incredible Transportation Team!

Kudos to the Independence URC Team from Lisa Bergbreiter, Principal, and Cretia Kirkwood, Assistant Principal, at Independence Center for Early Learning

Trenie Gorak, Patti Cronin, Alejandra Ganddini, Olga Pecina, and Natalie Koessler were an awesome team to work with. Although our official work is ending, your hard work to support SIP will continue to show an impact on student growth!

Kudos to Aimee Polgar, PM Route Manager, Transportation, from Juli Tjeerdema, Bus Driver, Transportation

This is a shout out to Aimee. You do such an awesome job at keeping transportation "moving" and running smoothly. Words can't express how in awe I am at your abilities. U-46 would not be the same without you! You know all the drivers' routes and are so talented to organize what needs organizing on a daily basis. We all love you here in Transportation! I hope you have a great summer and some possible R&R, before doing it again in a few months.

Kudos to the Independence SD Team from Lisa Bergbreiter, Principal, and Cretia Kirkwood, Assistant Principal, Independence Center for Early Learning

Thank you to Patti Cronin, Natalie Koessler, Ana Lara, Olga Pecina, Michelle Sweeney, and Bobby Weiss. You all kept the building up and running by making important decisions and bringing forward concerns to the admin. Thank you for your collaboration and dedication!

Kudos to the Math Department at Elgin High School and the Entire School Staff from John J. Leone, T1 Interventionist, Elgin High School

I have spent the last six years of my 12-year tenure in the District in the Math Department at Elgin High School. Upon my retirement this week, I reflect back on many warm memories of my interactions with the staff. I am extremely fortunate to have been a part of a great math department where the camaraderie and collaboration I experienced is exceptional!

Kudos to the Independence SIP Team from Lisa Bergbreiter, Principal and Cretia Kirkwood, Assistant Principal, at Independence Center for Early Learning

Thank you to Angie Rojas, Alejandra Ganddini, Trenie Gorak, Patti Cronin, Brandy Carbery, and Katlyn McBride. As a team your hard work resulted in instructional growth. Thank you for your dedication to the children and parents of our school!

Kudos to Elena D'Onofrio, ESL Teacher, Language Arts, Elgin High School, from Emily Schuler, ESL Teacher, Language Arts, Elgin High School

Our ESL juniors gave their school improvement projects to the staff and students in the library this week, and it never would have happened without her. Her dedication to her students is breathtaking, and her creativity is unparalleled. Her students sing her praises because they know she will go above and beyond to prepare them for life beyond EHS and show them they are capable of amazing things.

Kudos to All of the Paraeducators at Independence Center for Early Learning, from Lisa Bergbreiter, Principal, and Cretia Kirkwood, Assistant Principal, at Independence Center for Early Learning

The paraeducators have attended monthly para meetings to receive professional development to assist them in supporting the teachers in the classroom. They have been invaluable assets in the building and are immensely appreciated!

Kudos to Tara Burghart, Communications and Media Relations Coordinator, and Cecilia Rodriguez, Secretary, School & Community Relations, from Charity Di Liberti, 6th Grade Dual Language Teacher, Century Oaks Elementary School

Kudos to Tara and Cecilia for all the hard work they put in to make sure our kudos to co-workers are clear and concise. Every week, Tara and Cecilia get the kudos into the Superintendent's Weekly email and someone's day is brighter because of the kind words from a co-worker. Thank you, both, for all your hard work getting this done!

Kudos to Elizabeth Schimmel, Culinary Teacher, Elgin High School, from Emily Schuler, ESL Teacher, Language Arts, Elgin High School

Elizabeth works so hard to give her students an abundance of opportunities to share their culinary creativity with the school. She will never settle for doing less than her very best. She goes above and beyond to make sure they have every chance to create delicious food and have fun doing it. I do not know how she juggles as much as she does, but she does it with style, and her students love her for it.

Kudos to Karen Rivera, 4th Grade Teacher, and Emily Granados, 6th Grade Teacher, both at Lowrie Elementary School, from Selina Zagal Trupp, 4th Grade Teacher, Lowrie Elementary School

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Karen and Emily for being exemplary colleagues. Your dedication and unwavering support for our staff have not gone unnoticed. It is your drive and

passion that have contributed significantly to making our school exceptional. While we will miss you at Lowrie, we are thrilled for you as you embark on your new roles.

Kudos to Ms. Scout Scanlon, Ms. Michele McKinney, and Ms. Kathleen Ratzek, and the Entire IP Team at Illinois Park Center for Early Learning, from Heidi Tornberg, U-46 Parent

This week I had the opportunity to attend my son's final preschool picnic at Illinois Park and reflect on the amazing experiences our family has had there. Both of my boys were lucky enough to be in Ms. Scout Scanlon's classroom throughout preschool. Ms. Scout and her team, Ms. Michele, Ms. Kathleen, Ms. Ashley, and Ms. Lindsay work together to create a positive learning environment for all children while still providing individualized attention to each and every student. Just walking through the hallways it is evident that this is the practice of every staff member at this school. The utilization of space, enriching classroom environments and the many family engagement activities make Illinois Park a great place for all students to learn! You are all amazing and an asset to our early learners in U-46!

Kudos to Debbie McMullen, Coordinator for K-12 Science & Planetarium, from Peggy Hernandez, Astronomy Teacher, U-46 Planetarium

As my time in the Planetarium winds down, I happily share some first hand experience with Deb's attributes: She exhibits kindness in effective leadership, extensive knowledge and understanding of many sciences, utilizing the best pedagogical skills for the moment, exuding civility in troublesome situations, composure in the face of conflict while conscientiously insisting on the right way, ambitious willingness to try another way for improvement, eagerness to allow true professional autonomy for consequent growth, always making time for others even when overburdened, unflappable support of the U-46 Planetarium's programming and success, eclipse success planner extraordinaire and most of all, a true friend to me and countless others. Thank you for being you, Deb, and impacting others in genuine, heartwarming, and life changing ways.



Kudos to Carmina Larson and the End-of-Year Committee at Ontarioville Elementary School from Crystal Kempf, Resident Administrator at Ontarioville Elementary School

A huge OWL HOOT and thank you goes out to Carmina and the Committee for organizing and hosting a fun filled end-of-year celebration at Ontarioville. There was so much fun and joy in the air during the annual EOY Celebration. The entire event was a smooth operation - from set up to food preparation to cleanup to the next day returning borrowed items. Your hard work is very much appreciated! Thank you for providing a memorable event for the students, families, staff, and community of Ontarioville.

Kudos to Jacob Vandemoortel, Mario Pestana, Gloria Verastegui, and Mireya Perez, from Elgin High School Administration Team

Thank you for coming to Elgin High School to support the effort to provide more than 500 students the opportunity to earn college credit by taking the AP Spanish Language and Culture Test. Your help, attitude and efforts were noticed and appreciated.

Kudos to Karen Fox, Retired Administrator, from Tara Burghart, Communications and Media Relations Coordinator, School & Community Relations

Karen, thank you for all your behind-the-scenes help with the Retirement Dinner this month. I really appreciated your time and talent at an especially busy time of the school year. You are amazing!

Kudos to Bonnie Droesch, Secretary, Independence Center for Early Learning, from Lisa Bergbreiter, Principal, and Cretia Kirkwood, Assistant Principal, at Independence Center for Early Learning

Thank you for always going above and beyond in everything that you do for Indy! You are appreciated more than you know.

Kudos to Naul Conejo, Mathue Wurtz, and All the Level 1 and 2 Techs in Information Services from Jana Hite, Linda Walter, and Kelly DiFulvio, Special Education

The Augmentative and Alternative Communication department wants to send a huge kudos to the Information Service team! We have been very thankful for your continued support of the AAC iPads that are used throughout the school district. The last few weeks there were many bumps in the road and the entire IS team has been extremely patient and worked to help correct the issues. Naul and Mathue spent extra time with Apple to figure out what was happening with the iPads. We are thankful for our relationship with IS and the support we receive across the District! We wouldn't have survived the end of the year without you!

Kudos to the Independence Data Team - Angela Rojas and Trenie Gorak, from Lisa Bergbreiter, Principal, and Cretia Kirkwood, Assistant Principal, at Independence Center for Early Learning

Thank you all for your dedication to meeting weekly to examine the growth and glows of the school. Your focus on the data has allowed us to continue to push students towards success and kindergarten readiness.

Kudos a Karen Rivera, Emily Granados las dos maestras en la Escuela Elemental Lowrie, departe de Margarita Carmona, Padre de U-46 / trabajadora de la hora de mediodía en la Escuela Elemental Lowrie

Mrs. Rivera a sido la maestra de dos de mis hijos y es una maestra muy profesional en su profesión ha sido de mucha ayuda en la escuela por parte del grupo multicultural de Lowrie ha sido una de las maestras que está enfrente del grupo al igual que la maestra Mrs. Granados también ha sido maestra de mi hija y es una maestra muy profesional y a sido parte del grupo que ha ayudado a la escuela. Nunca tuvieron ningún problema mis hijos con ellas ni yo como padre y trabajadora de la escuela Lowrie, he visto que son muy profesionales en su trabajo.

Translation:

Kudos to Karen Rivera and Emily Granados, Both Teachers at Lowrie Elementary School, from Margarita Carmona, U-46 Parent and Noon-Hour Supervisor at Lowrie Elementary School

Mrs. Rivera has been the teacher of two of my children and has been a very professional teacher in her profession. She has been very helpful at school on behalf of the Lowrie multicultural group. She has been one of the group's leaders as well as Mrs. Granados. She has also been my daughter's teacher and is a very professional teacher and has been part of the group that has helped the school. My children have never had any problems with them nor have I, as a parent and employee at Lowrie School, I've seen that they are very professional in their work.

Kudos to Ms. Skwirblies, Ms. Mowers, Mr. Styles, Mr. Guerrero De Jesus, Mr. Peterson, Mr. Wozniak, and Mr. Clehouse at Elgin High School from the Elgin High School Administration Team

We had more than 70 students graduate with post-secondary career credentials as CNAs, welders and auto mechanics. Thank you for all you do.



Kudos to Marc Mota, Automotive Teacher at Streamwood High School, from Lynee Ackert, APEX Teacher, Streamwood High School

Mr. Mota was recently recognized by the AED Foundation for his outstanding work with the Automotive Technology Program at SHS. His program was the only one to receive this recognition this year in the Chicagoland area. SHS is lucky to have him, with all the automotive knowledge he imparts to our students. Way to go Mr. Mota!

Kudos to Those Who Made Lowrie Elementary School's Celebration a Success from Karen Rivera, 4th Grade Dual Language Teacher, Lowrie Elementary School

On behalf of the multicultural community, I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who supported and contributed to making the Lowrie school celebration party a great success. Martha Mancera, Emily Granados, Margarita Carmona, and Martin Porras, infinite thanks for backing me when I presented the idea of creating this community. I want to acknowledge that this idea was not mine alone; it originated from a suggestion by Tiffany Robinson, in her effort to strengthen the connection between our community and the school.

It has been a true honor to have worked with each of my Lowrie family members, and I deeply appreciate the support you have given me since I started at Lowrie. Without you, I wouldn't have become the teacher that I am today.

Thank you to Rene Chinn, Betty Martinez, Andrea Spieglan, and Lesley Calderone for all your guidance and support. To Emily Granados and Martha Mancera, Lauren Abascal and Zahidelys Tapia. for their constant support and friendship. To Cassie and Selina, for putting up with me as their teammate for three years.

Although this may seem like a farewell message, it is merely a token of gratitude, as I am only moving buildings, not cities, and I hope to continue counting on the friendship of each of you. Thank you all!



School District U-46

