

# Superintendent's Weekly Newsletter

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Jan. 9, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

I am looking forward to the work ahead for U-46 in 2025. In this new year, we will approve various capital projects as presented to the Board of Education in December, update attendance boundaries, and [open a new school](#)! It is a wonderful time to be part of U-46, and our students will benefit greatly from our work. Thus, I am excited to see our students and staff back in our buildings to continue our mission:

*To change until all our systems measurably work for all children. It is our responsibility to ensure all students are engaged in rigorous learning, receive quality core instruction, and can develop the skills they need for better life chances and opportunities. Our focus must be on rigor, agency and equity (and all systems must support). We will become a choice district that inspires families to join us.*

Last fall, we provided the Board of Education with an [update on our instructional priorities](#) aimed at enhancing student growth. Also, prior to winter recess, during the [December 9th](#) meeting, we made preliminary recommendations to the Board of Education for boundary changes across the school district. Throughout the second semester, we will continue to provide updates in connection to our goals for the 2024-2025 year:

- School District U-46 will maximize resources available to accelerate student growth in alignment with the U-46 instructional clarity framework.
- School District U-46 will update and enhance the wide range of college and Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways and magnet school programs.
- School District U-46 will increase access to and enrollment in high-quality early childhood programs.
- School District U-46 will establish and operate inclusive, efficient, safe and equitable learning environments.

The following sections on our website continue to be excellent resources for our ongoing work: [Instructional Clarity Playbook](#) and [Unite U-46](#).

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 Cathy Taluc, from Zachary Novick, both at Bartlett High School**

Kathy Taluc teaches Honors Academy Biology at BHS. She is tasked with holding all students to high expectations and supporting students to meet them. Cathy has proven herself to be an ally of all learners, regardless of their individual needs. She works hard to ensure students' IEP accommodations are met so that every student can learn and provide authentic evidence of learning. It is an honor and inspiration working with her.

### **Kudos to Helena Konert and Jesus Sandoval in the Transportation Department, from Ariana Moreno, U-46 Parent**

I would love to give a huge kudos to my daughter's after-school bus driver Helena. She is truly a blessing. She is a wonderful woman who goes above and beyond and we appreciate her so much! You can tell she loves what she does. My daughter has special needs and that comes with its own set of challenges and worries, but with Helena being her bus driver it brings us such peace of mind. She is so kind and compassionate - my daughter even gets upset if her drivers are absent, and she doesn't get attached to people easily. Thank you as well to the morning bus driver Jesse who is so kind and compassionate. He has a great attitude everyday, and he is so patient with my daughter. She wears braces on her legs to help her walk and has trouble with stairs sometimes and he gives her all the time she needs. Her favorite part of the day is getting to ride the bus! Thank you for having such amazing bus drivers. I wish there were more people like them.

### **Kudos to the Bus Drivers Who Serve Liberty Elementary School, from Stephanie Sylvester at Liberty Elementary School**

Here's a special shout out to all our bus drivers who get into the school spirit! Thank you for putting a smile on our student's faces! We appreciate all of you!



**Kudos to Eddie Baturin at Ellis Middle School, from Kelly Perry at Ellis Middle School**

Eddie - I wanted to take a moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for all that you have done for the learning environment here at Ellis Middle School. Your dedication and hard work have made a significant impact on creating a classroom space that not only operates efficiently but also fosters a positive and supportive atmosphere essential for student learning.

Before you stepped in, there were numerous maintenance and repair issues that had persisted despite the best efforts of our custodial staff. Your immediate and meticulous attention to these matters transformed our space almost overnight. The precision and attention to detail with which you addressed every challenge are truly commendable and have not gone unnoticed. Your commitment to excellence and your ability to go above and beyond expectations are invaluable to our school community. On behalf of the students and staff, thank you for your hard work and dedication.

**Kudos to the Culture and Climate Team from Mark Gonnella**

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the SERT team (Elisabeth Ferrill, Rob Luck, Zehra Schwarze, Laura Smail, Melissa Nytko, Kelli Walsh, and Marisa Herrell) for their dedicated work and unwavering commitment to our schools' safety. Your expertise and professionalism are invaluable, and I am grateful for your ongoing efforts to ensure the well-being of our students and staff. Your expertise in your areas has contributed so much to our team and Melissa, Kelli and Marisa have been great additions.

I would also like to give a kudos to Adriana RayaVillagomez for your hard work and dedication to this department. Thank you for all you do, you are a lifesaver!

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the TAT team (Genevieve Lukes, Rob Kirch, and Jessica Goldstein) for their invaluable contributions and work toward thorough assessments and actionable recommendations for our students who are in need of assistance.

**Kudos to Laura Azcoitia, at Tefft Middle School, from the Reyes Family**

*Translation:* Congratulations to teacher Laura Azcoitia, for going above and beyond the call of duty as a teacher, being a guide and inspiration for many teachers in the Dual Language program, and being a guide for her students and support for parents. You have always supported and inspired my daughter to achieve her dreams. With admiration, a family parent from Tefft Middle School.

Una felicitación a la maestra Laura Azcoitia. Por ir más allá del deber como maestra, por ser guía e inspiración para muchos maestros del programa Dual, por ser guía para sus alumnos y apoyo para los padres de familia. Usted siempre apoyó e inspiró a mi hija a lograr sus sueños. Con admiración, padre de familia de Tefft Middle School.

**Kudos to Beatriz Bernardo, at Bartlett High School, from the Reyes Family**

*Translation:* We want to recognize the work of a teacher [Mrs. Bernardo] who with her wisdom and ingenuity, has changed the lives of many students, and who, despite the trials she has faced, continues to work with love for the education of this Nation. Thank you very much, Mrs. Bernardo, for all your help.

Quiero reconocer la labor de una maestra que con su sabiduría e ingenio a cambiado la vida de muchos alumnos y que a pesar de las pruebas que a enfrentado, sigue trabajando con amor por la educación de esta Nación. Muchas gracias maestra por toda su ayuda. Muchas gracias Mtra. Beatriz Bernardo de Bartlett Middle School.

**Kudos to Liberty Elementary School's DUEA and DUSA Members from Stephanie Sylvester at Liberty Elementary School**

Thank you to all our Liberty DUEA and DUSA members for all that they do! We appreciate your school spirit, jumping in and supporting wherever you are needed. We could not function without each and every one of you. Thank you so much for your positive energy! We appreciate you!



**Kudos to Elgin Network Instructional Coaches Dawn McCusker, Paige Fitton, Sara Pletcher, and Colleen Pecucci, from Marcella Sheler, at Huff Elementary School**

Thank you for your dedication in supporting our teachers and TCTs, sharing resources to implement high effect sized core instruction, engaging in Impact Cycles, and for showing genuine care for our teachers, students, and families. You are an integral part of our Wildcat Family!

**Kudos to Teacher Leaders Brooke McGrath and Allison Hale, from Heather Heatley, at Wayne Elementary School**

Thank you both for always being ready to support our students in our self-contained classrooms. Whether it is an observation that leads to productive feedback, a new data collection format, or just solely being a thought-partner, Wayne appreciates all that you both do to support our students and staff. Thank you!

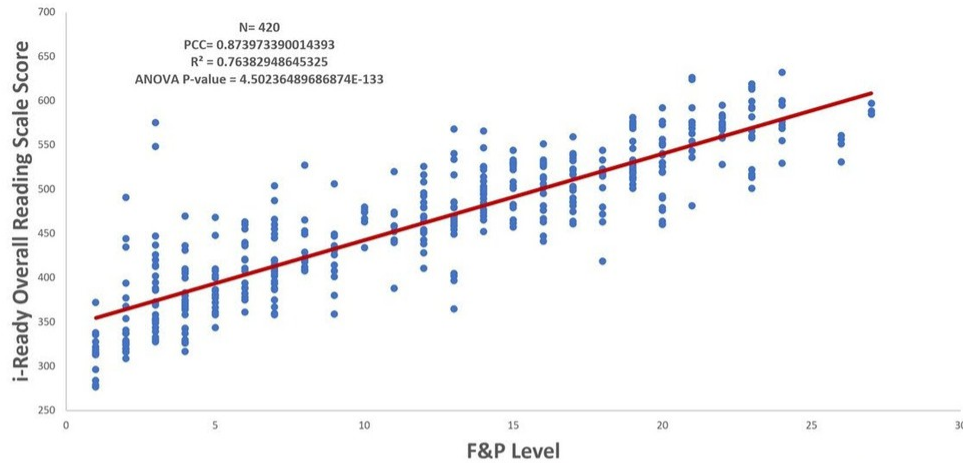
**Kudos to Lindsay Alvarado, Karla Rodriguez, Jen D'Ambrosio, and Kathy Szotko, from Heather Lass, all at Liberty Elementary School**

Please know the integral part you play in teaching our Kindergartners! All of your work, support, and effort is not unnoticed. You are (typically) the first experience for these students and go above and beyond to meet needs, accommodations, and establish expectations! It is seen at every level as your kids move forward on their school experience. Your team continues to support your students in every avenue.

**Kudos to Lords Park Teachers, from Pablo Díaz, at Lords Park Elementary School**

As the data coach at Lords Park, I would like to recognize Lords Park teachers for their expertise in assigning accurate reading levels to their students. If these words of praise ring hollow, consider the facts. When compared to a normed test like i-Ready, the results of the F&P tests administered by Lords Park teachers during the 24-25 Winter window showed a robust correlation between the two variables. With a sample size of 420 student data points, the correlation coefficient (PCC) was 0.87, the linear regression analysis showed a strong goodness of fit ( $R^2=0.76$ ) and the variance analysis indicated the model is statistically significant ( $p<0.05$ ). Lords Park educators show once again their professionalism and commitment to fostering the academic growth of each student. Their careful and thoughtful approach ensures that students are given the right resources to succeed and thrive in their reading development.

Lords Park i-Ready vs. F&P Regression Analysis  
Winter 2024-25



School District U-46

