



63 SUCCESS

WINTER 2023 • VOL. 12.1 • EAST MAINE DISTRICT 63

Family Resource Center: Lifting Up the D63 Community



It's 4:30 p.m. on a Wednesday and D63's Family Resource Center (FRC)—housed in the former Stevenson School—is humming.

The gym echoes with the shouts of students burning off some energy during Expanded Learning's after-school program while others work on art projects or tackle homework. Down the hall, a family newly-arrived from the Ukraine settles onto couches at the Welcome Center and uses one of the computers there to research the local community.

Around the corner, D63 parents are collecting boxes of cereal, a winter coat, and a few toys from the FRC Marketplace—free of charge. And in the office, staff is preparing for the Family BINGO Night that will kick off later that evening.

Wrap Around Support for All Families

Open since 2019, the FRC provides comprehensive support and resources that help all D63 families succeed—because children in safe, stable environments, with parents who are engaged in their education, are much more likely to succeed in school.

Expanded Learning

D63's Expanded Learning Program had a long history before the FRC opened its doors: the District has been offering after-school care for more than two decades. Originally called "Total Learning Community," the program has expanded from a trailer behind Apollo to separate sites in each school to a robust enrichment program. Serving **more than 860 PreK-8th grade students each year**, Expanded Learning

offers before and afterschool programs, Open Gym, a Youth Basketball League, special camps during school breaks

(Thanksgiving, Winter, Spring, and Summer), and care on Early Dismissal and other "out-of-school" days. "While parents do what they need to do to support their families, they can feel confident that their children are safe, having fun, and learning with us," explains Director of Family Services **Angelica Schab**. A sliding fee scale makes the program affordable for any family in need.



More than 200 students have participated in Expanded Learning's afterschool program this school year.



Enjoying time together during a Family Game Night at the FRC.

Family Enrichment

Having a dedicated space available means that D63 has the opportunity to grow its offerings for the entire family. Now, parents and children might gather for a special Board Game Night, parents may attend a weekend Zumba class or take an English language course, and students might participate in robotics, ballet, ukulele, or sports. Classes are

Continued on page 2



FROM PRESIDENT
ALEXANDRA BROOK

EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AT D63

At its January 2023 meeting, the Board of Education adopted a statement that reflects this District's beliefs and approach to ensuring that our community is safe, inclusive, and welcoming. I share it with you here:

District 63 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Belief Statement

- We recognize, embrace, and defend the many identities, abilities, and voices that make up our D63 community and view them as assets.
- We commit to fostering equitable systems, inclusive spaces, and supportive learning environments in which all students, families, and staff experience a true sense of belonging.

It's a great next step in D63's **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Initiative**, which is in its second year. Since kicking things off in August 2021, our work has greatly expanded. Among other things, we have:

- Established an **EDI Leadership Team**.
- Rolled out extensive, ongoing staff **EDI training and professional development**.
- Hosted a virtual **Introduction to Equity workshop** attended by more than 60 people.
- Welcomed 103 staff, parents, and Board members to **two virtual Book Clubs** to foster discussion of *So You Want to Talk About Race*.
- Offered two cohorts of **SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity)** for parents and staff. Through this ten-month national program, 48 participants have learned how to foster social justice in their own communities.
- Developed new classroom activities that teach students about **how to treat each other respectfully and be thoughtful with their words and actions**.

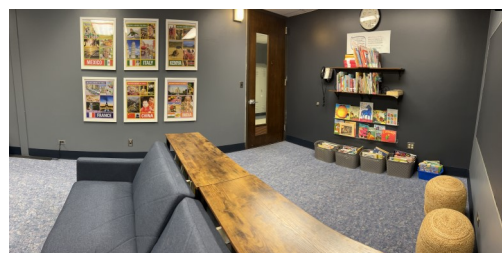
It has been an enriching, informative time as we all learn together—and I look forward to continuing our journey. Visit our EDI webpages at www.emsd63.org/Domain/1792.

Alexandra Brook

FRC . . . continued

generally free for adults (although some have a small fee) and childcare is provided at no cost. Thus far, during the 2022-2023 school year, attendance in Family Enrichment programs has topped 450.

Welcome Center



The FRC Welcome Center.

Each school year dozens of families arrive from other countries and enroll their children at D63. But it can be tough to navigate a new country, language, and community. The FRC's new Welcome Center is there to help. In this homey space, families can access computers, find books in their own language, sip a cup of coffee, and work with Parent & Community Liaison **Flora Modh** to navigate their new world. "The Center truly feels like a 'living room,'" she notes. "It's a place where our families can take a breath and get the help they need." To-date, the Center has assisted more than 50 families.

Marketplace

Sometimes, the simplest things—a package of diapers, warm winter clothing, some extra food—can make a big difference. The



Winter jackets line the walls of the Marketplace.

FRC Marketplace, also new this year, serves low-income D63 families with a wide range of free food and household goods. Open two days a week, these rooms are stocked with everything a family might need. Items are generally donated: the District's own 2022 We Care Campaign ensured that it was well stocked for the start of the new year (see page 5). And, last November,

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FRC . . . *continued*

the Marketplace was the recipient of a generous \$1,000 grant from Panjwani Network Restaurants and the Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation. Plans call for installing more shelves and storage space; already there have been 166 visits to the Marketplace this school year.

D63's mission is to empower all students to succeed in the changing world. That works best when the whole family succeeds—a goal that our Family Resource Center keeps front and center.



L-R: Flora Modh, Superintendent Dr. Shawn Schleizer, Angelica Schab & Dunkin's Reena Panjwani Khowaja.

ANKIT PATEL APPOINTED TO D63 BOARD



In September, the East Maine School District 63 Board of Education appointed Morton Grove resident **Ankit Patel** to fill the Board seat left vacant by former member Krystal Zec, who stepped down in August. The appointment runs through April 2023, when the seat will be filled

through local elections.

A District resident since 2014, Patel has two children — one of whom attends the District's Melzer School. Currently Vice President of Operations for First Look Appraisals, his career in real estate appraisal and analysis spans more than 12 years. Patel holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from DePaul University.

"We received applications from 15 highly-qualified candidates to fill this vacancy," notes Board President **Alexandra Brook**, "and it was a tough decision. In the end, we were impressed with Mr. Patel's deep interest in supporting the District's commitment to helping every student achieve success without boundaries. His professional background brings a financial perspective to the Board that will help us expand our skill set, and he is a thoughtful, open-minded listener. Already, in a few short months, he has become an outstanding asset to the Board."

"I was truly excited to join D63's Board of Education," added Patel. "The District does an incredible job of putting our kids first, offering an excellent educational system, prioritizing their safety, providing them with all the tools they need, and building an exceptional team of teachers and staff around them. My hope, simply put, is to contribute to this success and make a real, positive difference."

GROWING MELZER'S TREE CANOPY



On September 22, students and parents — with a helping hand from the Village of Morton Grove — joined The Morton Arboretum's Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) in

planting 15 trees at Melzer as part of its Centennial Tree Planting Initiative.

The event was one of 18 planned this fall. Part of the Arboretum's 100th Anniversary Celebration, the goal of the initiative - led by CRTI - is to plant 3,000 trees throughout the seven-county Chicago region, expanding the overall tree cover. The Arboretum established CRTI in 2014 in order to address the issues facing the Chicago regional forest.

The event kicked off with remarks from Melzer Principal **Angela Maki**, CRTI Director **Lydia Scott**, and Morton Grove Village Administrator **Ralph Czerwinski**—and a presentation by Melzer 5th graders. The group then spent the morning planting the trees, a job made a little easier by the Village's Public Works Department, which donated its time to prepare the holes for each tree.

Five additional donated trees found a home at Nelson School, with help from the Village of Niles Public Works Department.



D63 BOARD APPROVES 2022-2023 BUDGET



**EAST MAINE
SCHOOL DISTRICT 63**

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget

Adopted on September 8, 2022

By the

East Maine School District 63 Board of Education

Dr. Shawn Schleizer
Superintendent

Alexandra Brook
Board of Education President

10150 Dee Road
Des Plaines, IL 60016
847.299.1900 • www.emsd63.org

Empowering all students to succeed in a changing world.

In September, D63's Board of Education unanimously approved a balanced budget for the 2022-2023 school year.

The budget reflects operating revenues of \$56 million and operating expenses of approximately \$55.8 million, resulting in an op-

erating **surplus** of approximately \$200,000.

In addition, the Board approved capital projects for the year 2022-2023 in the amount of \$1.3 million. These projects are part of the District's ongoing plan for improvement and maintenance of our buildings and are being funded with bonds issued in prior years. Find the full budget at emsd63.org under "About Us/Business Services."

SUMMER CAMP ACADEMY 23







**REGISTER NOW FOR
EXPANDED LEARNING
SUMMER CAMP ACADEMY**

**Open to all D63 students entering K-8th
grade in August 2023**

**CAMP RUNS
JUNE 6–AUGUST 11**

**Learn more and sign up at
emsd63.org/expandedlearning.**



*FROM SUPERINTENDENT
DR. SHAWN SCHLEIZER*

A Focus on Mental Health

According to the American Psychological Association, the demand for mental health services is at an all-time high, especially for children. This is consistent with what we've seen here at District 63.

Recognizing the key role mental health plays in effective education, D63 has always provided support services—through school social workers and psychologists—for students in need. Our curriculum includes social-emotional learning that can help our students, from preschool through 8th grade, build the skills they need when facing life's challenges.

We also maintain strong connections to local mental health agencies and, when possible and appropriate, refer families and students to these services.

You may wonder what happens when a family can't get their child to a therapy session outside of the school day, or must delay care due to long waiting lists. It may also be difficult for parents to get their children help if they can't afford the fees.

To address this need, for many years we have partnered with **Niles Family Services** to provide some therapy for students onsite at Nelson and Mark Twain Elementary Schools, and at Gemini Middle School.

This year, we took the next step and expanded these services. Through a new partnership with **Maine Township**, therapists with the Township's MaineStay Youth and Family Services program are available at Apollo Elementary School each week. There is no cost to families for these services, and providing such support can make a world of difference to students and our families.

There's no question: good mental health is key to living well. We believe that investing in mental health just makes sense—and, we hope, results in happier, more successful students.

DISTRICT NEWS: #63SUCCESS



VIOLA NELSON FAMILY PAYS A VISIT • On October 14, D63 Superintendent Shawn Schleizer and Nelson Principal Lauren Leitao **welcomed several generations of Viola Nelson's family to the building that bears her name.** Nelson, a South Dakota native, taught for more than 40 years at D63, retiring in 1973. The school itself was formally dedicated on November 5, 1961, named in honor of her "outstanding service and dedication to the children of the community."

Many thanks to her family for donating a fascinating collection of artifacts, articles, and photographs related to Nelson.

L-R: Calvin Dodds (great-grandson), Katie Dodds (granddaughter), Henry Dodds (great-grandson), Ellie Reed (great-granddaughter), Kristin Reed (granddaughter), Trudy Nelson (widow of Nelson's son Lynn), Phoebe Reed (great-granddaughter), Leitao, Dr. Schleizer.

ENCHANTED BACKPACK RETURNS TO

APOLLO • District 63 was delighted to welcome local charity Enchanted Backpack to Apollo School on November 9 and deeply grateful to be part of its Adopt-A-School Program! Through this initiative, schools that previously benefited from Enchanted Backpack's Mobile Van School Supply Program receive a grant that supports needs *beyond* classroom supplies.

In Apollo's case, the charity's generous \$20,000 gift will fund a structured indoor recess room as well as dedicated spaces that will support students who may be experiencing stress or challenges during the school day.



WINTER CARD CONTEST WINNER • Gemini 8th grader **Adiliya Uzdanova's** snowy nighttime scene adorned the front of our 2022 District 63 winter card. A **record-breaking 105 students** from every school contributed entries. Uzdanova was recognized at the December 1 Board of Education meeting; she's pictured here with Gemini Principal **Lewis Roberts** and Board President **Alexandra Brook**. All of our Best in Grade winners were honored with a special video.



WE CARE 2022 MAKES A DIFFERENCE • A heartfelt thank you to all of our staff and families who donated to this year's campaign. Together, we were able to collect **3,000 items**, from nonperishable food items to diapers, toys, clothing, and more. More than 1,000 items were used to create care packages for D63 families in need; the rest will restock our Family Resource Center Marketplace (see lead story).

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Des Plaines, Illinois 60016

D63 FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER Winter 2023 Programs

9000 CAPITOL DRIVE, DES PLAINES | PH: 847.299.0926 | E: FAMILYRESOURCECENTER@EMSD63.ORG

ADULT & FAMILY



TO REGISTER
SCAN THE QR CODE

BILINGUAL YOGA

Facilitated by: Maria Paloma
Thursdays | Jan. 19-Mar. 23
4-5 PM

ZUMBA

Facilitated by: Sukanya Nandakumar
Mondays | Jan. 23-Mar. 20 | No Class Feb. 20
6-7 PM

FAMILY BINGO NIGHT

Facilitated by: FRC & Niles Family Services
March 8
5-6:30 PM

PAINT AND TEA

Facilitated by: FRC & Niles Family Services
Jan. 18 | Feb. 15 | Mar. 15
5:30-6:30 PM

PIÑATA CLASS

Facilitated by: Jackie Beiza & Mayra Antunez
Grade 2-5 | Wednesdays | Feb. 1-22
4-5 PM

FREE CHILDCARE AVAILABLE