



# 63 SUCCESS

WINTER 2022 • VOL. 11.1 • EAST MAINE DISTRICT 63

## SUPERINTENDENT CLAY TO RETIRE *SEARCH FOR NEW LEADER UNDERWAY*



This school year—much like the last one—has been unprecedented, challenging, and full of surprises. And for Superintendent Scott Clay, it has also been bittersweet. After serving the District 63 community for 19 years - 13 as Superintendent - **Dr. Clay will retire on June 30, 2022.**

“The opportunity to lead this District, and work alongside some of the most talented and dedicated professionals it has been my pleasure to know, has been a tremendous honor and one I will forever cherish,” noted Dr. Clay. “I am incredibly proud of the work D63 has done on behalf of the children we serve.”

Dr. Clay joined District 63 in 2003 as Principal of Stevenson Elementary School (now closed) after spending 15 years in Waterloo, Indiana's DeKalb County Central United School District as a teacher, Assistant Principal, and Principal. He took on the role of D63's Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Pupil Services in 2006 - becoming Superintendent in 2009.

Under Dr. Clay's leadership, the District has expanded to offer full-day kindergarten, opened a purpose-built early learning center, transitioned its junior high to a middle school, and enhanced the District's communications efforts - both with parents and the community.

During his tenure, the District also greatly improved its long-term financial stability - and achieved notable education milestones. Among other things, D63's Special Education Program now includes a highly-regarded program for students with autism, and successfully serves a much larger percentage of students with special needs in its general education classrooms.

“Dr. Clay's leadership has been outstanding and has steered this District with skill, compassion, and a deep commitment to our students,” said Board of Education President Alexandra Brook. “No Superintendent could adequately prepare for a pandemic—but Dr. Clay managed to do so effectively because his primary focus has been to ensure that our students continue to receive a high quality education, while maintaining their safety as well as the safety of the staff. Dr. Clay leaves a strong legacy behind with almost two decades of service to D63. He will be greatly missed and we wish him well as he embarks on his next challenge: retirement.”



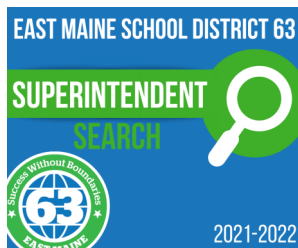
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## FROM PRESIDENT ALEXANDRA BROOK

### A New Superintendent: Seeking the Right Fit

Throughout the fall, D63's Board of Education has worked through the process of identifying a new leader to step into the Superintendent role when Dr. Clay retires at the end of June.



Our first step was to hire a skilled executive search firm. In August, after interviewing several candidates, the Board selected **BWP & Associates**, a Libertyville-based firm that has managed similar superintendent searches for a number of nearby districts, to provide support and expertise.

Stakeholder feedback—from staff and families—was a critical part of the process. In October, more than 355 online survey respondents provided input—with 60 more participating in one of six focus groups. Responses helped create a profile of the kind of leader who would be good fit for D63.

#### Desired D63 Superintendent Characteristics

Strong leader with successful experience in a similar district.
Passionate student-centered leader with in-depth understanding of curriculum, instruction, and social-emotional learning.
Visible and involved in the schools and the community at large. Can foster good relationships with the five municipalities the District serves.
Skilled communicator who can engage all stakeholders and clearly explain rationale behind decisions.
Relationship builder who can develop trust, confidence, and a strong team.
Long-term commitment to the District and community.
Good/fair decision maker who is personable, honest, intelligent, caring—and exhibits great integrity.
Can develop a good relationship with and assist the Board in providing leadership.

With these desired characteristics in mind, the Board selected eight candidates to interview in November, and narrowed the list to three finalists, all interviewed early in December.

I'm happy to report that our timeline is on schedule, and that we hope to bring a final recommendation to our January 6, 2022 meeting. The new Superintendent will step into the role on July 1, 2022.

*Alexandra Brook*

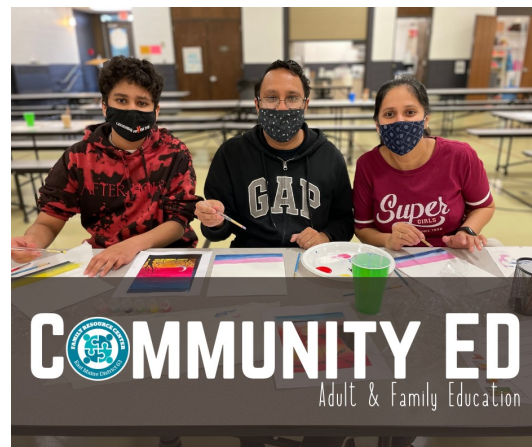
## TAKING THEIR BEST SHOT

Between October and December, more than 500 D63 students aged 5 and up stopped by either Gemini or the Family Resource Center with their parents to receive their COVID-19 vaccines. A special



thanks to partner **Jewel-Osco**, and the pharmacy techs who skillfully administered hundreds of vaccines at both clinics. A round of applause is also due to our PTO parents, who jumped in to volunteer for our clinics for the younger set (ages 5-11) throughout the afternoons and evenings, helping with everything from serving popsicles to lending a little extra support to children who had a few jitters.

## WARM UP YOUR WINTER AT THE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER



Yoga. Cooking. Guitar. Financial planning. Looking for a way to learn more, do more, and enjoy the colder months? Explore our **D63 Family Resource Center Winter Program offerings**. There's something for everyone and most programs are free.

Visit [www.emsd63.org](http://www.emsd63.org) and choose "Family Resource Center" from the top menu to learn more and register!

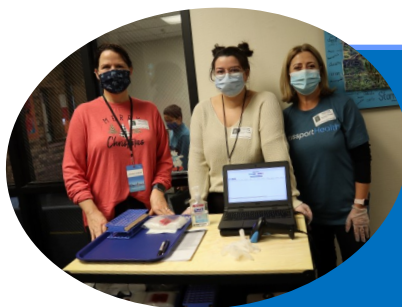


## SAFELY BACK TO SCHOOL: AN UPDATE



On August 16, D63 welcomed more than 3,500 students into its school buildings—from First Steps Preschool to Gemini Middle School. Long-anticipated, teachers, students, and parents all welcomed the chance to “return to normal.” But as we are all aware, “normal” looks different this year. **The COVID-19 pandemic is still very much with us, and keeping the doors open this fall took careful planning and daily vigilance.** Here are a few highlights from our “Safely Back to School” fall.

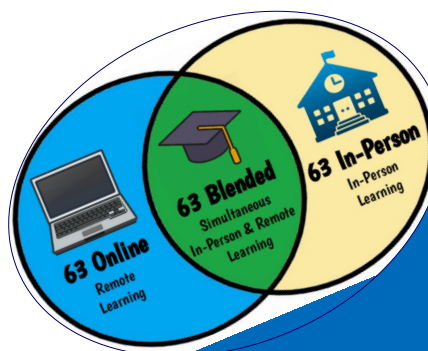
Masks are required in our buildings and on our buses, but students and staff worked together to ensure that learning continued without a hitch. During lunch, students are seated at least six feet apart and masks aren’t required outdoors. Recess provides a break—and as long as the weather cooperated, all gym classes were held on the playground.



Most of our students participate in weekly SHIELD Illinois saliva COVID-19 testing. Our Passport Health teams quickly got into the swing, visiting classrooms each weekday to administer the tests. Because such tests pick up asymptomatic cases, they can help prevent the virus from spreading. Since the start of the school year, we’ve administered 38,316 tests.

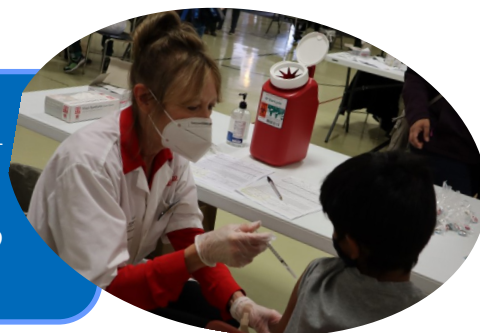


In addition to extensive sanitation and cleaning—as well as ample hand sanitizer in every room—powerful air purifiers can be found in every classroom.



Should a student need to be temporarily excluded from the school building due to a COVID-related reason, D63’s flexible educational program ensures that they don’t lose any ground. Instruction simply pivots from the classroom to remote learning until the student can return to in-person learning.

D63 requires all staff without an approved exemption be vaccinated as a condition of employment. More than 97 percent of the staff is vaccinated; unvaccinated employees are required to undergo weekly COVID-19 testing. In addition, hundreds of our students aged 5+ received their COVID-19 vaccinations at our onsite clinics (see page 2).



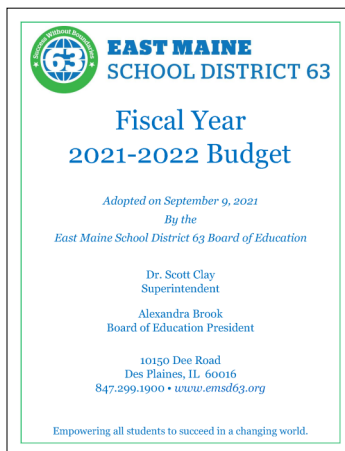
## Dr. Clay Retires . . . *Continued from p. 1*

“There is a reason I chose to stay with District 63 for almost two decades,” Dr. Clay added. “When I arrived here in 2003 I could see

right away that we had something very special to offer: an inclusive, diverse environment; a remarkable community of families; and a staff that was fiercely committed to student success and helping every child along their unique pathway to success. I couldn’t have asked for a better professional home.”



## D63 BOARD APPROVES 2021-2022 BUDGET



In September, D63’s Board of Education unanimously approved the budget for the District’s 2021-2022 school year.

The budget reflects operating revenues of \$55.1 million and operating expenses of approximately \$55.2 million, result-

ing in an operating deficit of approximately \$100,000. The deficit is driven by an anticipated lower transportation expense reimbursement from the State—which is due to lower transportation costs last year, as many students were learning from home.

In addition, the Board approved capital projects for the year 2021-2022 in the amount of \$2 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. You can find the full budget at [www.emsd63.org](http://www.emsd63.org) under “About Us/Business Services.”

## FROM SUPERINTENDENT DR. SCOTT CLAY



### Ensuring Equity

For many in our country, and even around the world, the death of George Floyd in May 2020, along with the subsequent protests, was a wake up call. The effects of racism and other injustices don’t simply disappear when “things quiet down.” **Equity - a quality education for all children regardless of their needs or background - has long been a guiding force at District 63.** During the summer of 2020, it became clear that we needed to take a more direct approach to ensuring equity for all with special attention to racial equity.

By the fall of 2020, a steering committee comprising 30 staff members began planning our initial steps. The group quickly agreed to team up with Maine Township High School District 207 to develop a consistent approach to this issue from pre-school through grade 12. The committee also chose to work with a consultant to help us through the process.

During this first year, we’re focusing on educating ourselves to better understand the issues facing our families of color, and how our own backgrounds may help or hinder our efforts. Most importantly, we’re making sure that everyone working in D63 knows that inequities of any kind in our schools must be addressed.

This process, done in conjunction with our consultant, involves multiple activities. A group of D63 staff members have volunteered to be part of a District 207 Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) group. Meeting monthly for intensive two-hour conversations, SEED addresses all forms of social justice through guided conversations about racism, homophobia, sexism, and more. In addition, nearly all of our staff members have attended an Introduction to Equity training session, and our administrators are participating in a four-part Unconscious Bias series. An Exploring Equity Workshop for our families and the community is scheduled for January 4 (check [www.emsd63.org](http://www.emsd63.org) for details).

This spring we’ll begin planning for next school year which may include more educational sessions for our staff, parents, school board, and community, but will also take a look at our practices and procedures for addressing inequities that exist in our schools. Throughout this process, the interests of all children will remain at the forefront of our efforts.

*Scott W. Clay*



## DISTRICT NEWS: #63SUCCESS



### EARLY LEARNING CENTER OPEN HOUSE •

On September 1, our award-winning First Steps Preschool Early Learning Center opened its doors to the community for a special Open House. Students, parents, staff, neighbors, and local officials gathered outside the building to enjoy delicious refreshments donated by Dunkin' Donuts at 7039 West Dempster—and, donning masks, toured the facility with **Principal Barb Golik**.

**CONGRESSMAN SCHNEIDER COMES TO PLAY •** Having spent some time in the ELC during our September Open House, **U.S. Congressman Brad Schneider** asked to return when our students were in the middle of their busy day. On October 15, Representative Schneider stopped by to check out several classrooms, chat with students, and experience first-hand how First Steps preschoolers learn *through* play!



**BURLINGTON DONATES \$5,000 TO GEMINI •** D63 and Gemini leaders joined officials from Burlington Stores on October 29 to cut the ribbon of the chain's newest store at 590 West Golf Road in Niles. **As a part of the celebration, Burlington—in partnership with national award-winning nonprofit AdoptA-Classroom.com—made a \$5,000 donation to Gemini that will provide much-needed supplies for the school.** Pictured left to right: District 63 Board Member **Krystal Zec**, Gemini Principal **Lewis Roberts**, District 63 Associate Superintendent **Dr. Shawn Schleizer**, Superintendent **Dr. Scott Clay**.

**WINTER CARD WINNER •** Apollo 3rd grader **Aaravi Kabi's** whimsical penguins adorn the front of our 2021 District 63 winter card. More than 50 students from every school contributed entries. Aaravi was recognized at the December 2 Board of Education meeting with a special gift from Board President **Alexandra Brook**, and all of our Best in Grade winners were honored with a special slideshow.



**WE CARE 2021 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 create 54 care packages for D63 families in need, donate six large boxes of food to the Maine Township Food Pantry, and provide five boxes of items to WINGS, which provides support to victims of domestic violence. Some donors also gave online gifts to Niles Family Services.

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East Maine School District 63  
Educational Service Center  
10150 Dee Road  
Des Plaines, Illinois 60016

## ADMINISTRATION

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