

# of A TRADITION EXCELLENCE

## HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period starting on September 15 and ending on October 15. It was enacted into law on August 17, 1988, on the approval of Public Law 100-402.

The day of September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their

# #FROM *the* HELM Piper USD 203

independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively. Also, Columbus Day or Día de la Raza, which is October 12, falls within this 30-day period.

As our community continues to grow, 20% of our current student population identify as Hispanic/LatinX. It is our pleasure to take part in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with our inclusive community!



## SPOTLIGHT ON ESOL (ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES)

The Piper School District is the proud home of families who represent over twenty-three+ languages, and that number grows every year. As one can imagine, these students face unique challenges in the classroom as they strive to learn academic content while their English skills are still developing. Some of them have little to no English fluency when they begin in Piper Schools.

The ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) program, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through high school, provides each student the opportunity to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing proficiency to successfully mainstream into all their classes.

Rachel Wellendorf, ESOL Coordinator and Elementary ESOL Teacher, has worked tirelessly during her tenure to develop positive relationships with these students and their families. Rachel's meticulous processes allow her to follow up these familial relationships with effective study skills, content vocabulary, instructional scaffolding, and cultural immersion. An expert in content knowledge, Rachel understands how to interpolate second language acquisition with rigorous knowledge retention through clearly articulated content and language objectives. Ms. Wellendorf acts not only as an advocate for students. She is a professional resource to instructors of all grade levels and subject areas.

Rachel has established a detail oriented and highly organized repository of general ESOL information, student files, state required paperwork, and Individual Learning Plans (required for each student) to foster academic and social-emotional success for everyone in the program—which, before beginning of the year testing, could potentially be as many as 132 students at elementary and 83 students at secondary.

Rachel Wellendorf's commitment to these students is a personal ministry and professional charge that far exceeds the daily expectation of the Piper Nation. She has established an example that is second to none.



For the 2021-2022 school year, the Piper School District is thrilled to welcome Mr. Jim Poplau as our new ESOL Secondary Teacher. Mr. Poplau is returning to education this year after a three-year hiatus as a branch manager in the Kansas City Missouri Library system.

In 24 years of public education service, Jim has taught band/orchestra, vocal music, and humanities—all at the middle school level. Eighteen of those years were in administration—9 years as an assistant junior high principal, 8 years as an elementary principal, and 1 year as an interim middle school principal.

Along with his passion for education, Jim is also a professional musician and performs on woodwinds in the Kansas City Wind Symphony, as well as in jazz small groups and big bands in town.

He is elated to be in Piper schools and is grateful for the opportunity to serve our second language learners!