

# NewsBits



Fall 2021

## Dr. Michael Amadei named next Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Michael Amadei was named the incoming Superintendent of Schools at the September 20 Board of Education meeting. Amadei will replace Dr. Paul E. Hertel when he retires at the end of June 2022 after serving as Superintendent of Schools for the last four years and dedicating 35 years to public education.

As a first step in his transition to Superintendent of Schools, Amadei was appointed Associate Superintendent at the September 20 Board of Education meeting.

"I have had the privilege of being part of the District 62 learning community for the past 14 years in a variety of roles, each of which have helped influence me to become a stronger instructional leader," said Amadei. "As I reflect on my years in the district, I am

extremely proud of the leadership, compassion and dedication that makes District 62 a destination district."

"It is my hope that I continue to support the children and families of Des Plaines and Rosemont. The significance of my role in education is never lost on me."

Associate Superintendent  
Dr. Michael Amadei

For the last four years, Amadei has served as the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources. In that role, Amadei was responsible for collaborating with all stakeholders to ensure best practice with regards to personnel services and records, staffing issues, contract administration, and personnel review and appraisal. Prior to that he served as the principal of Iroquois Community School, the district's year-round school, for a decade. Throughout his tenure

at Iroquois he led the school through a complete renovation that modernized the site. While keeping academic expectations high, he focused on strong social emotional learning practices as well as guiding his staff to become an Apple Distinguished School, 1 of 400 in the world.

"I have appreciated the opportunities for growth in this district. What fulfills me is maintaining a culture that is caring, professional, ethical, collaborative and accountable," said Amadei. "It is my hope that I continue to support the children and families of Des Plaines and Rosemont. The significance of my role in education is never lost on me. Every single day I recognize the privilege and importance of my position and the ability I have to make an incredible difference for those I serve. I am humbled to be named the next Superintendent of Schools for District 62."



## Bouncy the Dog joins the ELC to support social emotional learning

On a classic September afternoon, Anita Compart was discussing an important lesson with her students at the Jane L. Westerhold Early Learning Center.

“We belong together. We belong to a group together here at school,” she explained. “When we feel safe, when we’re together, we can be calm and strong.”

And with that, students broke into song, harmonizing about how they would be calm and strong...strong and calm.



All this with the help of a dog named Bouncy the Service Dog. Though not a real canine, the themes, the messages and the support have had a resounding impact on children since the pilot was introduced in January of 2020.

Community Consolidated School District 62 is one of four districts internationally that has introduced Bouncy to its students.

Bouncy was an idea created by Alice Ray, Chief Executive Officer of Ripple Effects. He was brought to the [Jane L. Westerhold Early Learning Center](#) in an effort to help teach and support the social emotional learning of preschoolers through 2nd grade. Bouncy the Dog is part of Ray’s Ready to Learn program which has evolved from a story book and dog, to several music videos, interactive apps and other supportive materials to teach and support critical social emotional learning skills in young children.

Early Learning Center Director Margarite Beniaris was excited to welcome Bouncy the Dog to introduce him to her students.

“Bouncy has been a soothing presence in our students’ lives,” said Beniaris. “The impact has been so great that we intend to expand this program for all children here at the Westerhold Early Learning Center.”

Bouncy first arrived in the classroom of Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Anita Compart. As part of her introduction, she explained his role as a service dog. Students were told that Bouncy would join their class to help them be calm and strong. Students were shown Bouncy’s music video about breathing in and out and invited to practice with him.

“This calming strategy is practiced with students everyday so that when the time comes that they need it, it’s familiar and routine,” said Compart. “Bouncy has become a presence in our classroom. Students are able to play with him, take him to snack, and some have even been able to take their

own Bouncy plush home with them.”

Today, Bouncy is being used in three classrooms at the Early Learning Center, including in Preschool teachers Michelle Dion’s classroom and Veronica Gonzalez’s classroom.



“Teachers have been using Bouncy to demonstrate age appropriate social emotional skills in an innovative way. Through group activities, as well as individual interventions, we have seen Bouncy provide

a positive and proactive impact on our students,” said Compart. “Students are learning appropriate behavior inside and outside of school, about how to encourage themselves intrinsically with self-talk, and how to use age appropriate calming strategies when they are struggling with big feelings.

“We are seeing a decrease in student outbursts and disruptive behaviors during transitions.”

Throughout the day, you will see paraeducators, teachers and therapists prompting students to use their “Bouncy Breathing” throughout the school day; in hallways, the lunchroom and classrooms.

“Our staff at the Westerhold Early Learning Center have taken this program to the next level,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Paul E. Hertel. “We always like to take the opportunity to explore new programs that benefit the children we serve.”

As the district continues to navigate through the global pandemic, there have been benefits to introducing this furry friend.

“Given what our youngest learners are currently demonstrating in school socially, emotionally, and behaviorally, it is apparent that they are in need of more consistent, intensive supports,” said

## District 62 Education Foundation Footnotes

As members of the community and longtime supporters of District 62, the [District 62 Foundation](#) wishes the District 62 administrators and staff a successful and healthy school year. The administration of District 62, as well as each group of school staff members, has truly been a beacon to the community in these uncertain times. We owe them tremendous gratitude for their work and dedication. We look forward to even better days ahead and to partnering with the district to achieve great things for District 62 students and their families.

Each year, the District 62 Foundation supports District 62 staff and students by offering competitive grants for the teachers in District 62. The Foundation grants were awarded this 2021/2022 school year after a year’s hiatus due to the pandemic. Twenty six grants were awarded to District 62 certified staff members on October 21st. The total amount of grants awarded was just under \$19,000. The Foundation Board members were happy to once again be supporting and enhancing educational experiences for the students of District 62.

Moving forward into the fall and winter seasons the Foundation plans to organize and support community events. The [Des Plaines Park District](#) and [Des Plaines Chamber of Commerce](#) host many excellent events designed to gather and engage community members. The Foundation hopes to partner or participate in events that promote health, well-being, and a strong sense of community. To learn more about the Foundation visit [d62foundation.com](https://d62foundation.com)

Assistant Superintendent for Student Services Dr. Ellen Swanson. “Promoting creative and impactful strategies that will enhance our children’s mental health is crucial right now.”



“The ease with which teachers have been able to use Bouncy through remote and in-person learning has also been a benefit to our students,” said Compart. “Bouncy has been a constant companion for our students during this unprecedented time in education.”

## District 62 recognizes its Difference Makers

Last year, District 62 began a formal recognition program to honor those staff members considered “Difference Makers” who are a defining example for the learning community of District 62. This recognition program aligns directly with Goal 3 (Work Environment) of the district’s five-year [strategic plan](#). Those recognized as a Difference Maker will receive a coin to commemorate this honor.

We thank our Difference Makers for doing a great deal for others without seeking recognition or acknowledgment. They make the District 62 learning community a better place through their dedication, commitment and support of public education.



Congratulations to our fall **District 62 Difference Makers**:

**Stella Barnaba** has surpassed expectations this summer to support both teacher learning and student learning. She volunteered to pilot the Essential Standards Unit Planning process with teachers and then served as summer school principal for Title I Summer School. During summer school, Stella solved challenges that arose for students and families in a way that restored relationships.

**Christine Trujillo** has gone above and beyond this summer. She helped finalize the organization of a resource that gave students and teachers access to thousands of high quality books for reading during their guided reading lessons.

**Kristin Jares, Kelly Krueger** and **Bradley Stein** are three principals who give time to work with Instructional Services to support instructional leadership for all principals. This collaboration makes the focus on learning more meaningful.

A shout out to physical therapist **Mary Kapolnek**. She has been nothing short of supportive and caring as she works with students, families and principals. She takes time to help and fosters positive relationships with children.

Not only is **Caitlin Hatta** an amazing, supportive colleague & science department facilitator, she has gone above & beyond to help her peers in the transition to Standards Based Grading. Thank you for your leadership!

**Christina Bowman** has been instrumental in supporting student learning and teacher practice in countless ways. Her commitment to math teaching and learning is steadfast. In addition, her ongoing support with standards-based learning and grading continues to be practical and powerful. You know you can rely on Christy for strong focus and dedication.

**Colleen White** spearheaded a districtwide effort to recognize and celebrate students' summer learning practice. Because of her leadership and collaboration with our district and the whole principal group, over 700 District 62 students were recognized this fall. Thank you for being a difference maker for our students, Colleen! Her family at Cumberland added, there is no one who deserves this award more than Colleen White. She is the amazing presence at Cumberland who gives 110% in all that she does. Colleen did a fantastic job last year, during the COVID crisis, working countless hours to keep the school running. She works so hard in every area, is incredibly organized, and is in the trenches when sensitive situations arise. She cares about each and every student and staff member. Colleen, thank you for all that you do!



**Mike Frytz** has been extremely helpful and supportive this school year. He always has a smile on his face and a positive attitude. Mike regularly checks in with staff members to ensure safety and provide assistance. Mike goes above and beyond to help others without ever being asked. No request is too big or small. Our South community greatly appreciates Mike for all of his hard work!

## District 62 celebrates its principals

District 62 recognized its principals during the month of October.

“A principal’s role has become more complex than ever as we continue to support families and children during this global pandemic,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Paul E. Hertel. “I thank and acknowledge each and every one of these educators for their commitment, compassion and leadership.”

District 62’s school principals include:

- Donald Jones, Algonquin Middle School Principal
- Panagiota “Patty” Tzortzis, Algonquin Middle School Assistant Principal
- Juliana Vissering, Chippewa Middle School Principal
- Gary Wheaton, Chippewa Middle School Assistant Principal
- Erica Cupuro, Central Elementary School Principal
- Colleen White, Cumberland Elementary School Principal
- Costantina Mazzone, Cumberland Elementary School Assistant Principal of Special Education
- Amy Cengel, Forest Elementary School Principal
- Kelly Krueger, Iroquois Community School Principal
- Dr. Margo Giannoulis, North Elementary School Principal
- Heather Cassidy, North Elementary School Assistant Principal
- Jennifer Suarez Bautista, Orchard Place Elementary School Principal
- Dr. Lisa Carlos, Plainfield Elementary School Principal
- Kristin Jares, South Elementary School Principal
- Dr. Bradley Stein, Terrace Elementary School Principal



**NATIONAL PRINCIPALS MONTH**  
**OCTOBER 2021**  
**#THANKAPRINCIPAL**

## FinanceBits

At its September meeting, the Board of Education approved the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. This year, the district created a conservative budget given the continuing needs of meeting the challenge of COVID-19.

Revenues are projected to be \$95.5 million and expenses are estimated at \$107.9 million, creating a potential deficit of \$12.4 million.

## Getting to know...the Community Backpack Project

The Community Backpack Project (CBP) is an outreach of several churches, organizations and the Self-Help Closet. They provide food for their weekend meals in a backpack for eligible children of District 62. CBP bridges the gap from Friday lunch to Monday breakfast (food provided by the district) when families often have little or no food in their pantries or refrigerators. They help students who are faced with hunger in their lives.

The CBP began as a grassroots ministry by one church in town, supporting nine students in three schools. In 2018, CBP was officially recognized by District 62 as a support organization and slowly, but steadily we have grown to five churches, a bank, several organizations and many volunteers now supporting 139 students in 11 schools, including the Jane L. Westerhold Early Learning Center. Requests are received weekly for more backpacks for more students as the effects of the pandemic are still being felt by so many families.

The CBP is in need of help to be able to continue its outreach. We can use food for the backpacks, or monetary donations. We can use volunteers to help pack bags of food and drivers to deliver the food to the schools.

The list of food that is most needed includes: canned stew (beef or chicken), heavy, chunky soups, chili with meat, individual cereal

### You can help!

Food and other donations can be delivered to the [Self Help Closet and Pantry of Des Plaines](#) (769 Holiday Lane, Des Plaines, 60016) on Monday or Tuesday mornings from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. or Thursdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Donations must be marked "CBP"

packets, juice boxes, canned fruit and vegetables, canned tuna or chicken, water-add only hot chocolate packets, water-add only mashed potato packages, boxed macaroni and cheese, water-add only pancake mix, pancake syrup, one pound packages of rice, red beans, peanut butter and jelly, canned spaghetti sauce and boxes of pasta. Please, no glass jars--plastic or cans, only, and nothing heavier than one pound packaging. Contact Jana Haas, Coordinator CBP, for more information: (847) 951.5111.

