



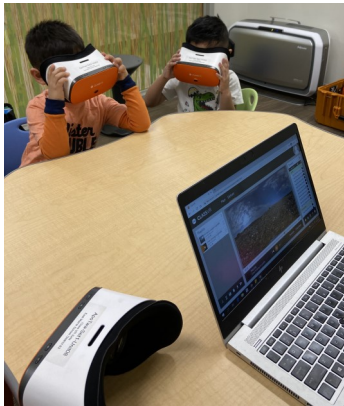
63 SUCCESS

SUMMER 2023 • VOL. 12.1 • EAST MAINE DISTRICT 63

SUCCESS IN A CHANGING WORLD: LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY AT D63

Empowering all students to succeed in a changing world: our mission statement is right there at the bottom of this page. Empowerment can mean many things—from academic success to social and emotional growth. And at D63, it also means equipping students with the skills they need to navigate the ever-changing world of technology.

Fifteen years ago, students might have headed for the school Computer Lab to practice their keyboarding skills. Those days are long gone: technology tools are tightly integrated into every aspect of learning, every day. But as technology does change at lightening speed, how do we ensure that our students can pivot to whatever comes their way?



Focusing on the “Four Cs” & “SAMR”

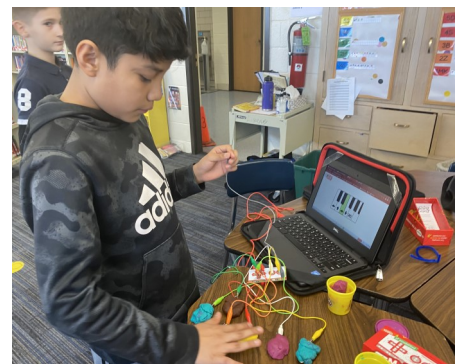
Rather than building D63’s technology around any specific device or program, choices about lesson planning, equipment, and new software are based on the **“Four Cs”**—**creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills**—and the **“SAMR”** framework, which categorizes degrees of classroom technology integration: **substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition**. Created to share a common language across disciplines, SAMR guides teachers as they personalize learning and help students visualize complex concepts. It can be especially powerful during remote and blended learning, when integrated classroom technology makes teaching and learning a more seamless experience. “We want our students to be innovative, and we work to anchor our technology use in real-world situations,” explains Director of Technology Keith Shaffer. “What we’re really teaching them is problem-solving skills they can use to design solutions—and to use technology responsibly.” But how does that look in our classrooms?

Technology Tools & Teachers

Every D63 student is issued their own Chromebook to use throughout the year. And K-8th graders take these one-to-one devices home each night.

But this is just the baseline. From virtual reality glasses and Ozobot robots to tiny Mirco:bit computers, Book Creator software, and more D63’s technical tools expand student horizons and enhance their math, reading, science, and even social studies learning.

D63’s strong commitment to technology is matched by a strong team of technology educators. Each building has a dedicated Technology Support Specialist—and four Instructional Technology Coaches support classroom teachers and technology learning at every school.



Continued on page 4



FROM PRESIDENT ALEXANDRA BROOK

Charting Our Course: Strategic Planning Kicks off This Fall

It's hard to believe we're just a few weeks away from another school year! Our 2022-2023 school year felt a little different: for the first time in many years, we had a new Superintendent at the helm (see page 4). With a year under his belt, Dr. Schleizer now has a strong foundation to build on as he oversees the development of the District's **new strategic plan** this fall. Ultimately, this plan will guide the District moving forward and build on its success.

A school district strategic plan is a comprehensive document that outlines the district's goals, objectives, and strategies over a specific period of time. It serves as a roadmap to guide the district's actions and decision-making processes to improve educational outcomes for students. Our own plan will include the key components of any strong strategic plan:

- District vision and mission
- Goals and objectives
- Needs assessment
- New strategies and initiatives
- Implementation
- Resource allocation
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Stakeholder engagement
- Revision and continuous improvement

Since completing our 2015 strategic plan, D63 has grown both physically and academically. The question for us now is "what next?". As we move forward, our goal is to involve important stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and local businesses—to help us answer that question. Visit our website, www.emsd63.org, in the coming months for more information about how you can participate.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I wish you a peaceful and restful remainder of the summer. We look forward to welcoming our students later this month.

Alexandra Brook

D63 WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

In May, the District 63 Board of Education appointed new members to two vacant seats. The appointments run until April 2025, when the seats will be filled during elections.



MARIA KUHLMAN

A District resident since 1999, **Kuhlman** is a D63 alumna herself, having attended what was then Gemini Junior High. She has two children, one of whom attends D63's Nelson School. Currently a General Manager for Jones Lang LaSalle Americas, Inc., she holds a B.S. from Dominican University in dietetics & food science and management.



JAINI MODY

Mody, who has lived in District 63 since 2008, has two children who attend Melzer School. A family physician, she has worked with Skypoint Medical Center for ten years and does rounds with patients at Northwest Community and Alexian Brothers Hospitals. Mody earned her M.D. from Texas A&M University.

We also extend a heartfelt thank you to our outgoing Board members for their many years of service.



WALTER GLUZKIN

had served on the Board since 2008. He was the District's representative to the Illinois Association of School Boards and the Federal Relations Network.



JANET KACZKOWSKI

SKI joined the Board in 2007 and was immediate past President. She served on the District's Financial Task Force and many committees over the years, including D63's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.

NEW D63 ADMINISTRATORS & NEW ROLES

This school year there will be some changes at D63. We're excited to usher in a new leadership team at Apollo as some familiar faces take on new roles—and to welcome two new administrators at the District and Gemini.



ANTHONY BERSANI • *DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS*

Formerly Director of Facility Management for Park Ridge-Niles School District 64, **Anthony Bersani** brings more than 25 years of experience in facilities management and construction to his new role—including a decade of experience in school-based facilities management and operations. He served as Facility Manager for Elmhurst School District 205 from 2014-2017, and in the same role for Valley View School District 365 in Romeoville from 2017-2021 before taking his position at District 64.



ELIZABETH RUSSELL • *APOLLO PRINCIPAL*

Principal Russell, who has served as the school's Assistant Principal since 2021, stepped into her new role on July 1. She holds a B.S. in elementary education from Illinois State University, an M.A. in educational leadership from the American College of Education, and a second M.A. in reading education from Concordia University. Russell joined District 63 in 2012 as a multiage classroom teacher at Melzer Elementary School, having previously taught at Glenview District 34's Hoffman School. During her time at D63, she also worked at Gemini Middle School as a Literacy Specialist and Instructional Coach before shifting to Apollo.



BRIAN GARITI • *APOLLO ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL*

Since 2018, Brian Gariti has served as an Assistant Principal at Gemini. Previously, he taught 5th grade for four years at River Trails School District 26's Euclid Elementary School; other past professional experience includes working as both a Reading Instructional Aide and a Special Education Aide for Oak Park and River Forest High School. In addition to earning an M.A. in teaching from Concordia University, Gariti holds a second advanced degree in leadership from Northeastern Illinois University. He holds a B.A. in English from Northern Illinois University.



DAVID LEE • *GEMINI ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL*

Lee joins the District from Chicago Public Schools' Mary E. Courtenay Language Arts Center, where he had served as a Grade 6-8 Special Education Teacher and Technology Teacher since 2009. Beginning in 2013, he also served as the school's Technology Coordinator, Testing Coordinator, and teacher lead for the Instructional Leadership Team. A graduate of DePaul University with an M.Ed. in special education, Lee recently completed a second M.Ed.—in educational leadership—at National Louis University. He holds a B.A. in history from the University of Michigan.

Technology at D63 . . . *continued*

Virtual Field Trips, Imaginary Friends & More

- Dan Santat's *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend* inspired our 3rd graders to use **Google Drawing** and **Flip** to create a story about their own imaginary friend (which they then recreated—3D—in felt).
- Preschoolers took a “field trip” to a local animal shelter without leaving the classroom, exploring 360 images through **virtual reality glasses**.
- Literacy lessons came alive when kindergarteners programmed small **Ozobot robots** to build blended words.
- In addition to required STEAM classes, Gemini students can join **LEGO Robotics Clubs** and compete against other middle school teams.

Looking Forward

With technology always in flux, constant change is inevitable and ongoing. While Gemini already has dedicated STEAM classrooms, this year elementary schools will have dedicated Maker Spaces housing 3D printers and more. As Shaffer notes, “We look forward to further expanding student access to the tools that will truly set them up for success.”

Love what you do. Join Team D63. Teacher Assistant Opportunity

If you're 19 or older, our Teacher Assistant positions might be the perfect fit!



Regular schedule; no evening or weekend hours.

Paid vacation & sick leave.

Competitive benefits including health insurance.

Pension eligible.

To apply, you'll need one of the following:

- ⇒ An associate's degree or higher **or**
- ⇒ 60 semester hours of coursework from a college/university **or**
- ⇒ A high school diploma or equivalency (GED) *and* successful completion of the ETS ParaPro Test or the ACT WorkKeys tests.

Apply today at jointeamd63.org



FROM SUPERINTENDENT DR. SHAWN SCHLEIZER

A Look Back: Year One as Superintendent

As I wrap up my “freshman year” as Superintendent I’ve spent some time looking back over the last twelve months. After spending 13 years with D63—serving as a principal and as a District administrator—my first year in the Superintendent seat was different, exciting, and sometimes challenging. It’s a good time to share some highlights.

Word Study in our elementary schools made an impact.

Word Study is a comprehensive approach to helping students learn how words work (phonics, spelling, meaning). Already, our teachers report higher student engagement and ample evidence that kids are transferring new mastery of words to reading and writing. Spring reading levels were also up over last year; we believe Word Study may be a contributing factor.

Our equity, diversity & inclusion (EDI) work expanded.

As noted in our winter issue, the Board passed an EDI Belief Statement in January—and this spring also passed a Hate Speech Protocol (see page 5). In addition, we offered multiple learning and growth activities to students and staff, including through Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) training.

Feedback from our staff and family surveys was overwhelmingly positive.

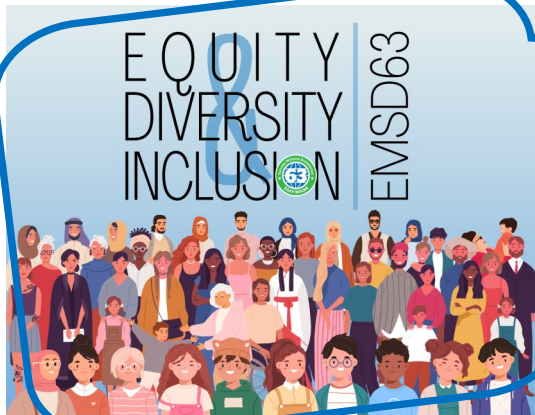
This year we asked our D63 families and staff to tell us how we’re doing. Ninety-two percent of families rated our school quality excellent/good and 85 percent of employees reported that they were highly engaged/engaged in their work.

We expanded mental health support for students.

In my winter column, I shared that D63 now contracts with both Niles Family Services and Maine Township to provide mental health services in our schools. In addition, this year we are implementing RULER (www.rulerapproach.org), a new social-emotional learning system that focuses on the five skills of emotional intelligence: **R**ecognizing, **U**nderstanding, **L**abeling, **E**xpressing, and **R**egulating.

As I head into my second year as your Superintendent, I look forward to continuing to lead this remarkable District.

DISTRICT NEWS: #63SUCCESS



BOARD APPROVES HATE SPEECH PROTOCOL •

Following up on its January approval of D63's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Belief Statement, in April the **Board formally approved a District-wide Hate Speech Protocol**, which outlines a clear set of action steps to be used consistently across all schools and for all individuals when addressing incidents of hate speech and discriminatory acts. The Protocol includes guidelines for notification, reporting, communication, and consequences. You can find the full document on our website.

FAMILY FUN FEST BENEFITS FOUNDATION •

Area residents enjoyed rides, carnival treats, and a fun-filled weekend during May's Family Fun Fest at Golf Maine Park. The best part? A portion of the proceeds benefitted D63! The District's Education Foundation coordinated the event with Fantasy Amusement Company, **ultimately netting approximately \$17,500**. Funds will support Expanded Learning scholarships, the Family Resource Center Marketplace—which provides food and household goods to D63 families in need—and other D63 initiatives that help our community



CHARITY BASKETBALL GAME •

D63's charity basketball game benefitting Lurie Children's Hospital returned for its 43rd year on May 19. Sponsored by the Gemini Student Council, the game pitted Gemini staff against staff from D63 elementary schools and First Steps Preschool—all in good fun. Students, staff, and families enthusiastically cheered on their teams, and the event **raised \$7,184 for the hospital**.

CELEBRATING OUR GEMINI GRADS •

More than 350 8th graders crossed the stage at Maine West on June 1, graduating from Gemini—and from District 63. The ceremony featured remarks by **Principal Lewis Roberts**, **Superintendent Dr. Shawn Schleizer**, and **Board of Education President Alexandra Brook**. Student **Madeline Marasas** shared warm and wonderful words in her Address to Students; other student speakers included **Marvin Owusu** and **Moosa Nomani**. Congratulations to the Class of 2023!



HAVE YOU REGISTERED YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL? SCHOOL STARTS AUGUST 17

All registration is online; visit www.emsd63.org/registration to get started.

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more and sign up.**