



63 SUCCESS

WINTER 2024 • VOL. 13.1 • EAST MAINE DISTRICT 63

Opening Doors: Multilingual Services @ D63

What do English, Spanish, Urdu, Assyrian, and Arabic have in common? **They're the top five languages spoken in the homes of our D63 students.**

In fact, only 22 percent of families list English as the language spoken at home. More than 16 percent list Spanish, with the other top languages ranging from 9.26 percent (Urdu) to 5.31 percent (Arabic).

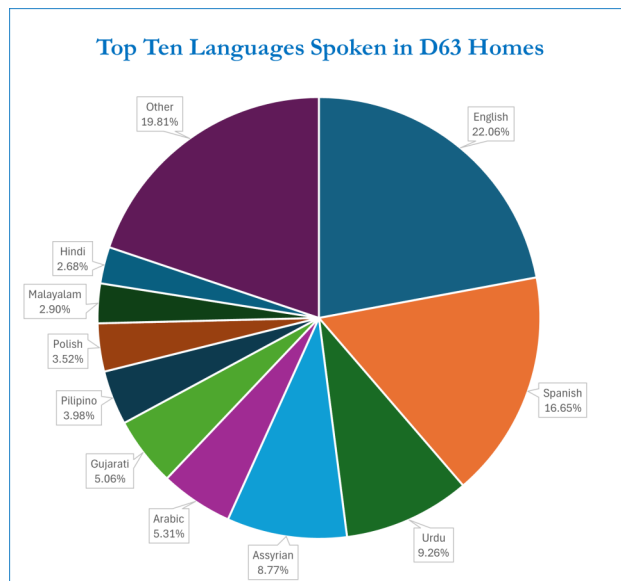
And this is just the tip of the iceberg. District 63 is one of the most diverse school districts in the area, **with 77 languages spoken in student homes.** But whether it's Tagalog/Pilipino or Gujarati, Ukrainian or Mandarin, Afrikaans or another language, D63 has a robust program in place to support every student.



Dual language students at Apollo celebrate Día de Playa (Beach Day).

Comprehensive Language Support

All families entering the District complete a Home Language Survey. If that survey indicates that a language other than English is spoken in the home, the student is given a language assessment and may qualify for multilingual services. Throughout the District, classroom teachers holding English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsements are specially trained in the area of language acquisition—and multilingual resource teachers may assist students in and outside the classroom.



Supporting Spanish-Speaking Learners

As Spanish-speaking students comprise such a large part of our school community, the District offers a wider range of options for this group.

Dual language PreK-5th grade classrooms offer instruction in Spanish and English simultaneously. The research is clear: providing instruction in Spanish while teaching these students to speak, read, and write in English is the most effective way to ensure that they become bilingual and biliterate.

Gemini's Spanish for Spanish Speakers language arts class supports 6th-8th grade students as they continue along their path toward fluency in both languages.

Multilingual Learner Summer Scholars is a free summer program offered to rising 1st-8th graders who qualify for our Dual Language Program or for multilingual services.

Continued on page 2



FROM PRESIDENT ALEXANDRA BROOK

Strategic Planning Update

It's hard to believe that we're more than halfway through the school year. As I noted in this space last summer, the District has begun a strategic planning process that will chart our course for the next three to five years. In this column, I want to share some thoughts I have on that process.

In January and February, under the guidance of Educational Leadership Solutions' Dr. Gary Zabilka, who has more than 40 years of educational experience in local school districts, our 48-member Strategic Planning team held three meetings. Parents, staff, students, Board Members, and community leaders gathered and split into smaller working groups with a mix of representation in each.



These were full and busy evenings, focusing on our mission, vision, core values, and goals. But what stands out for me is the discussion we had about our personal memories of elementary school. As we talked at my table, it was very clear that these memories all had one thing in common: **personal connections.** These connections—with our teachers, coaches, school administrators, and other support staff—are what made lasting impressions. We will carry this insight with us as we create a plan that ensures D63 students continue to achieve success without boundaries.

Although every voice is important, I want to share with you how excited I am that we have several Gemini Middle School students on our team. I was in awe of these young people as I listened to them speak so eloquently and thoughtfully about issues important to them. They truly inspired me and reminded me why I serve on the Board.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I wish you much peace in 2024 and beyond.

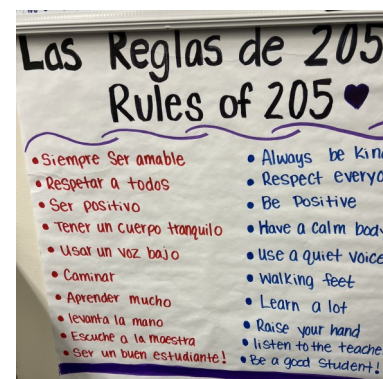
Alexandra Brook

Multilingual Services . . . continued

Outside the Classroom

It truly does take a Village to ensure that our multilingual students thrive—and that means providing strong support to families as well.

Particularly as there may be a language barrier, D63 provides wrap-around programming to help parents and guardians connect to the District, navigate the broader community, and fully participate in their children's educational journey.



Class "charter" for one of Apollo's Dual Language classrooms.

Adult English Language Classes



Recent "graduates" of D63's free English Language Class for Adults.

run throughout the school year. Parents/guardians who speak languages other than English are welcome to participate in these free weekly sessions. To help

Continued on page 4

2024-2025 Registration Opens April 15



for new & returning students
entering grades K-8 & returning
preschoolers
Visit emsd63.org for information



DIAZ NAMED TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST



First Steps Preschool Dual Language Teacher **Berenice Diaz** has been selected by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) as a **2024 Cook County Co-Regional Teacher of the Year**—making her one of 13 finalists for Illinois Teacher of the Year.

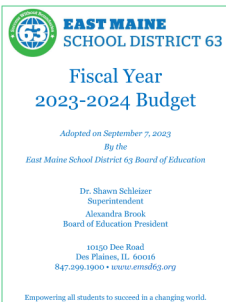
The award celebrates incredible classroom teachers, administrators, teams, volunteers, and school support personnel who have made lasting impacts on the students, families, and fellow educators in their school communities.

“Ms. Diaz is an outstanding educator who makes a significant impact on the lives of her students,” noted D63 Superintendent Dr. Shawn Schleizer. “It’s certainly no surprise to us that ISBE has recognized her talent and dedication to the children we serve.”

Diaz, who joined the District in 2019, added, “I am honored and truly humbled to receive this award. My goal is to continue supporting our school community, celebrate its diversity, and create a nurturing and inclusive learning environment for our students and families. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to D63 for its continued support and encouragement.”

The 2024 Teacher of the Year will be selected later this spring.

D63 BOARD APPROVES 2023-2024 BUDGET



At its meeting on September 7, D63's Board of Education unanimously approved the District's 2023-2024 budget. The budget includes operating revenues of \$59.3 million and operating expenses of \$60.9 million, which reflects the Board's decision to draw down \$1.6

million in reserves to fund a range of expenses. Among other things, the District is committed to continuing its free Summer Enrichment Program, previously covered by federal COVID grants. This year, it also made the decision to eliminate fees for Band and Orchestra, making them more accessible to all students. Finally, reserves will fund cost increases in our special education services.

In addition, the Board approved capital projects for the year 2023-2024 in the amount of \$2.5 million. These projects are part of the District's ongoing plan for the improvement and maintenance of our buildings and are being funded with bonds issued in prior years. Find the full budget on our website.

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 course-work 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

Multilingual Services . . . *continued*

make it a little easier, childcare is provided. Our **Dual Language Parents Advisory Council (DLPAC)** coordinates family activities that bring Spanish-speaking parents/guardians, students, and teachers together. From talks by children's authors and



DLPAC members, students, and D63 staff gather for an evening of fun and learning at the Family Resource Center.

BINGO nights to community celebrations (complete with piñatas) and potluck dinners the DLPAC fosters strong

school-parent relationships.

Mastering literacy is key throughout the District, and **Cuentos Familiares (Family Stories)** boosts parent involvement in their children's learning. Spanish-speaking families meet monthly throughout the school year on Saturday mornings, read bilingual books together, and take a few home! Part of the nonprofit Latino Literacy Project, the program focuses on reading comprehension strategies as well as vocabulary and English language development.

District 63 has always celebrated its diversity—and its multilingual programming only contributes to each school's rich learning environment and multicultural perspective that enhances all students' education.

EXPANDED LEARNING
ACADEMICS, WELLNESS, & ENRICHMENT AT THE FRC
SUCCESS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

24 | 25 SCHOOL YEAR
REGISTRATIONS OPENS APRIL 15



**FROM
SUPERINTENDENT
DR. SHAWN
SCHLEIZER**

RULER: Supporting Social-Emotional Learning

There's no question: supporting our students' social and emotional health supports academic success and District 63 is committed to providing this support (which is also required by state law). This year we're implementing a new social-emotional learning program: **RULER**.

Developed by Dr. Marc Brackett, Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, RULER is a roadmap for understanding emotions and using them wisely. The name is an acronym for the five skills of emotional intelligence.

RULER

R	<u>Recognizing</u> emotions in oneself & others.
U	<u>Understanding</u> the causes & consequences of emotions.
L	<u>Labeling</u> emotions with a nuanced vocabulary.
E	<u>Expressing</u> emotions in accordance with cultural norms & social context.
R	<u>Regulating</u> emotions with helpful strategies.

There are a number of RULER tools students can use, which are integrated into our classroom learning activities.

- **Classroom "charters"** define students' goals for how they should feel in school—happy, relaxed, safe—and how each of them can contribute to that goal.
- **Mood meters** (like the four-colored square above) help students identify how they're feeling, from strong, unpleasant emotions (red) to calm, pleasant ones (green).
- Students use a **learned vocabulary** to share their feelings—which helps their classmates and teachers understand how to respond and help them, if needed.
- Classwork centers on how we can all **"be our best selves."**

Learn more about RULER at rulerapproach.org.

DISTRICT NEWS: #63SUCCESS



THE EPIC QUEST OF THE DAMSELS IN DISTRESS •

Gemini's fall play pulled in a packed house last October. Audiences at three performances followed Isadora, Beatrice, Winifred, and the notorious Masked Mavin as they journeyed through a fairy-tale land of magic and monsters, royal fanfare, and fairies — proving they could find their own way through the world, despite angry villagers, arrogant princes, and even a dragon or two! Mark your calendar now for the school's spring musical *Moana Jr.*, which runs April 25-27.

BOARD HONORED BY IASB • D63's Board of Education was **one of only 45 Boards of Education in the state to earn Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) 2023 School Board Governance Recognition honors.** The award acknowledges boards that have engaged in activities and modeled behaviors that lead to excellence in local school governance in support of quality public education. A round of applause for all of our exceptional Board members: President **Alexandra Brook**, Vice President **Tom Simmons**, **Katie Anderson**, **Maria Kuhlman**, **Dr. Jaini Mody**, **Ankit Patel**, and **Sheila Urban**.

*Superintendent **Dr. Shawn Schleizer** presents President **Brook** with a plaque from IASB marking the occasion.*



WINTER CARD CONTEST WINNER •

First Steps Preschooler **Adele Shagid's** cheerful handprint cardinals adorned the front of our 2023 District 63 winter card. More than **75 students** from every school contributed entries. Shagid was recognized at the December 7 Board of Education meeting; she's pictured here with President **Brook** and First Steps Principal **Barb Golik**. All of our Best in Grade winners were honored with a special video.

WE CARE 2023 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 more than 1,000 food items, 300 winter coats, and 300 toys. Gifts helped restock our Family Resource Center Marketplace, D63's food pantry and community closet for families in need.



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

SIGN UP FOR D63's BUS TRACKING APPS



Although our buildings sometimes close due to winter weather, more frequently we keep the doors open. But snow can cause slowdowns and delays, and in cold weather, you don't want your child to be standing outside for longer than necessary.

Fortunately, parents can follow their child's bus in real time through our **bus tracking apps**.

You can find information on the D63 website (look for "Busing & Transportation Information" in Parent/Student) about our two apps: one for **Safeway**, which provides busing for most of our K-8 students and one for **First Student**, which provides transportation for our students with special needs.

NEW!
Catch up
with D63 on



Find us at
@eastmaine63