



SCHOOL CITY OF EAST CHICAGO

Superintendent's Newsletter

"Moving with Intention, Executing with Purpose"

A Message From the Superintendent

Greetings Cardinal Nation,
 I cannot believe that I have achieved my 100-day mark since I have taken the helm of the School City of East Chicago and that we have just ended the second marking period. Every month the superintendent's office will publish News from the Nest, the first of many superintendent newsletters. This publication is another means for the school city to connect and engage with Cardinal Nation and keep the community informed. Over the past few months, I have met with a number of stakeholders for the purpose of providing a foundation of opportunities for our students to thrive. I am eager and excited to share some of the outcomes of these conversations so please stay tuned. As a precursor to the 100 Day Report, please check out the staff and community town hall summaries to get an idea of some of the initial changes we have put in place as a direct result of the town halls. These town hall summaries are a great way to keep track of the progress this administration is making. I look forward to your attendance and input at upcoming town halls because the voice of every community stakeholder is crucial in order for the School City to improve student learning outcomes. Let's keep moving with intention and executing with purpose.

Respectfully,
 Stephen D. Bournés

Proud Superintendent of Cardinal Nation



Sharing Progress and Celebrating Success

Dear Families and Staff,
 This newsletter is designed to keep you informed and connected with the exciting developments happening in our district. In this issue, you'll discover inspiring student stories from our different schools of all grade levels, important announcements, and opportunities for community involvement. Together, we can make a difference!

IMPORTANT DATES

Dec. 23 - Jan. 3	Winter Break - NO SCHOOL
Jan. 6	Organizational Day / PD
Jan. 20	Martin Luther King Day - NO SCHOOL



Moving with Intention, Executing with Purpose: Dr. Stephen Bournés' First 100 Days

On July 1st, the School City of East Chicago Board of Trustees voted to appoint Dr. Stephen Bournés as our new Superintendent. From the very beginning, Dr. Bournés has proven to be the fresh face and dynamic leader that our district needed. His first day on the job set the tone for his tenure, as he spent time walking up and down Main Street, meeting with local business leaders, community members, and local officials. He immediately connected with strategic partners such as the Boys and Girls Club and the Foundations of East Chicago, showing a genuine commitment to strengthening relationships across our community. Throughout the rest of July, Dr. Bournés prioritized listening to the people who matter most—our families, students, administrators, district leaders, teachers, and staff. By getting to know the heart of our district, he laid the groundwork for the future. August kicked off in spectacular fashion with a back-to-school rally, where over 1,000 community members joined us, and more than 850 backpacks were distributed to students. This event was a strong signal that our district is "Moving with Intention, Executing with Purpose," which is this year's district-wide theme. We continued the momentum with a convocation that united our staff as we prepared for a new year of learning and growth. In September, we marched proudly in UBM's 100th Anniversary Mexican Independence Day Parade, celebrating our community's rich culture and diversity. We've seen early successes in our fall sports programs and created renewed partnerships with the East Chicago Police and the Lake County Sheriff's Office to further enhance school safety. In an effort to increase transparency and foster open communication, Dr. Bournés hosted town halls at each of our schools, listening to the voices of all stakeholders. This progress reflects not only the leadership of Dr. Bournés but also the unwavering dedication of the

School Board. Trustee Jesse Gomez was instrumental in leading our Superintendent Search Committee, allowing us to find a visionary leader. Trustee Patti Gibson King brought the Sylvan Learning Program to our students, providing critical after-school tutoring. Trustee Diane Smith took the initiative in beautifying the exterior of Lincoln Elementary, ensuring that our schools are welcoming spaces for our students. Finally, Trustee Joel Rodriguez was recently elected President of CUBE (the Council of Urban Boards of Education), a

prestigious honor that brings national recognition to our district. As we move forward, I am proud of the collaboration between our board, district leaders, and community members. Under Dr. Bournés' leadership, we are not just moving; we are moving with purpose and determination. The first 100 days have been a powerful beginning, and there is much more to come as we continue to build a brighter future for our students.

Moving with Intention, Executing with Purpose—this is not just our motto but the guiding principle that will drive our district toward success.

Respectfully,
Jose Arteaga

Jose Arteaga

Board President



Meet the School Board



Jose Arteaga
Board President



Jesse Gomez
Board Vice-President



Patti Jo Gibson-King
Board Secretary



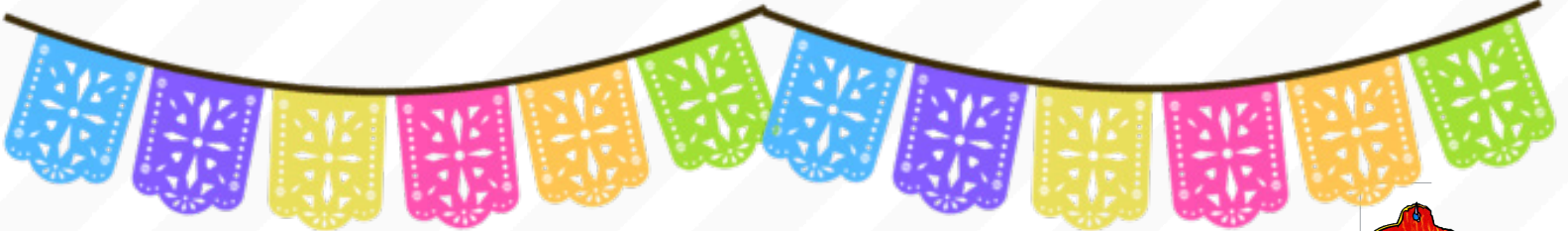
Joel Rodriguez
Trustee



Diane Smith
Trustee



Jewell Harris, Jr.
SCEE Attorney



Loteria Night

Lincoln Elementary School | September 24, 2024



The Importance of Family Engagement in Schools

Family engagement is critical to students' success and the overall school environment. When parents and guardians are actively involved in their child's education, it creates a robust support system that promotes academic and emotional growth. Schools that foster a collaborative relationship with families tend to see higher student achievement, improved behavior, and a stronger sense of community. By working together, teachers and families can ensure that students feel supported at home and in the classroom, creating a unified learning and personal development approach. Moreover, family engagement strengthens communication between the school and the household. When families are informed about school policies, curriculum changes, and upcoming events, they are more equipped to support their children and encourage positive habits. Regular involvement, such as attending parent-teacher conferences, school events, and volunteering, demonstrates to students that education is a priority. This involvement also allows parents to voice their concerns, share insights about their child's needs, and work with teachers to address their child's challenges. Ultimately, partnerships between schools and families create an academic and social environment where students thrive. Schools benefit from family engagement by building trust and a sense of collaboration within the community, making it easier to create programs and initiatives that address the needs of all students.



When families are actively involved, it fosters a school culture that values teamwork, communication, and shared responsibility, which leads to tremendous success for everyone involved. In honor of **Hispanic Heritage Month**, Lincoln Elementary hosted a Loteria Night. **Lotería** is a traditional Mexican game of chance, similar to bingo, but with a unique twist. Instead of numbers, the game uses a deck of colorful, illustrated cards featuring iconic Mexican symbols, characters, and objects. Each card has an image and its corresponding name in Spanish, such as "La Sirena" (The Mermaid), and "La Luna" (The Moon). Players are given a game board, or tabla, which contains a random selection of these images arranged in a grid, usually 4x4 or 5x5. One person called the cantor (caller), draws cards from the deck and calls out the names or descriptions of the images, often with rhymes or riddles to make it more fun. Players mark the pictures with beans, coins, or other small objects on their board. The goal is to be the first to complete a specific pattern on the board, such as a straight line, diagonal, or entire board. Players who complete the pattern shout "**¡Lotería!**" to win the round. Lotería is a fun game and a way to celebrate and share Mexican culture often played at family gatherings, parties, and community events.

Be on the look out for our next Family Engagement Night!



SUPERHERO UNIVERSE

WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MRS. LISA D. GARY-JONES, BA, MSW, LSW, ACSW
SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

It brings me great pleasure to discuss and highlight Washington Elementary as the “**Superhero Universe**” that it is! I am the Team Lead for the Social Emotional Learning & Character Plus Core Team at Washington Elementary. I am very intentional about recognizing the great efforts being made by our staff, students, and their parents in making sure our scholars are spending time **growing** their social, emotional, and behavioral minds in great ways! To me, it is imperative that we execute with purpose by acknowledging them as “**Superheroes**”!

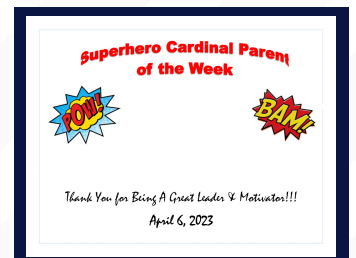
Students are recognized on a weekly basis by teacher nomination. Teachers complete a “**Superhero Nomination Card**,” and turn it in to me on Thursdays. I collect all of the student nominations, and create certificates for each nominated student. Their names and why they have been nominated is announced, by me, over the Public Address system every Friday! The students are called down to the office to get their certificate packet and pick a prize! At the end of each month, all the students nominated within that month receive a “**Token of Appreciation**” and a “**Dress Down Coupon**” for their great work!

Staff is also recognized, by random pull, to ensure that every staff member is recognized as a “**Superhero**” by the end of the school year! Staff members are also given a certificate, and can pick a prize from the “**Staff Rainbow Cart**” located in my office. Their names are also called over the Public Address system on Friday mornings! Staff should be publicly recognized for the work they do in shaping the minds of the future. Staff feeling & knowing they are “**seen**” and “**valued**” goes a long way in motivating them to continue the great work they do on a daily basis!

Parents are also recognized, as they are the support and motivators, at home, working to make sure our students are at school daily & on time! In addition to instilling great values within our scholars to be those awesome “**Superheroes**”! They also get a certificate, that goes home with our student’s certificate packet!

I have also added a “**Superhero Shout Out**” category for staff who just want to acknowledge someone for doing something kind, caring, and/or extra! What I have come to understand in my 30-year career in Social Work is that people don’t have to be kind, but a little kindness goes a long way! It doesn’t hurt to recognize people for the wonderful things they do, even if it’s not always seen on a large scale, it still matters! So... Up, Up & Away!

Have you acknowledged your “Superheroes” today?



HARRISON ELEMENTARY

CANOEING ADVENTURE AT WOLF LAKE: A Memorial Field Trip for Grades 4-6

Harrison students in grades 4 to 6 set off for an exciting field trip to Wolf Lake, where they traded classroom lessons for paddles and life jackets. Upon arrival, the students were greeted by the friendly staff from the Dunes Learning Center. They began the day with an informative session about the Lake Michigan watershed, gaining an increased awareness and understanding of this vital ecosystem. The students learned about the importance of preserving biodiversity and managing natural resources, sparking curiosity and a sense of responsibility toward the environment.

The Canoeing Experience

Next, it was time to hit the water! Students were divided into small groups and given the unique opportunity to paddle with Voyageur Canoes. Under the guidance of experienced instructors, they learned the basics of paddling, steering, and teamwork. The initial nervousness quickly transformed into excitement as they glided across the sparkling lake, laughter echoing in the air. Paddling together fostered camaraderie among classmates. Students cheered each other on as they navigated through gentle waves, discovering how teamwork made their canoeing experience both fun and rewarding. Many even spotted ducks and other wildlife, deepening their appreciation for the natural world around them.

Hands-On Learning Stations

After an invigorating morning on the water, students engaged in hands-on learning stations that emphasized the preservation and management of biodiversity. Through stewardship activities, they explored the role each individual plays in protecting natural resources. Whether planting native species or learning about aquatic habitats, students gained practical knowledge that they could apply in their own communities.

Team-Building Activities

The fun continued with team-building activities on the shore. Students participated in relay races and cooperative games, enhancing their communication and collaboration skills. It was a joy to see friendships deepen as they cheered each other on, celebrating both victories and efforts.



Reflections on the Day

As the day wound down, students gathered to reflect on their experiences. Many expressed how much they enjoyed being outdoors, connecting with nature, and learning in a hands-on way. A common sentiment was that they couldn't wait to return to Wolf Lake with their families. This field trip to Wolf Lake was not just about canoeing; it was an invaluable opportunity for students to work together, deepen their understanding of the Lake Michigan watershed, and learn about environmental stewardship. A special thank you to the teachers and parent volunteers who made this trip possible. We look forward to more adventures that inspire our students to explore and protect the world around them! Stay tuned for our next newsletter, where we'll highlight more exciting events and activities happening at our school!



MCKINLEY ELEMENTARY **Igniting STEM Passion With Starbase**

McKinley Elementary has partnered with the Starbase Department of Defense Youth Afterschool Program from Gary, IN, to advance STEM hands-on education with our students. Every Wednesday, our afterschool program is led by teacher volunteers, Mrs. Ramos and Mrs. Clark, and Starbase personnel. This program fosters curiosity and builds foundational skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Our Starbase collaboration allows students to develop a deep passion for science education and careers. Our current focus is on weather-related topics, from understanding cloud formation to learning how weather data is collected.

The afterschool program's design emphasizes teamwork and problem-solving, two skills essential in STEM fields. Students develop critical thinking and collaboration skills by constructing weather models and interpreting data. The McKinley Elementary and Starbase partnership highlights the importance of community involvement in education. With our dedicated teachers, supportive Starbase experts, and a bright outlook ahead, the sky's the limit for our students.



CARRIE GOSCH EARLY LEARNING CENTER **WELCOMING THE EAST CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT**



Carrie Gosch Early Learning Center welcomed the East Chicago Fire Department on Friday, September 13th, 2024 from 10:00- 11:00 for our annual Fire Safety and Meet the Fire Fighter Day. The students had the opportunity to learn the role of a firefighter and the importance of dialing 911 and fire safety. Principal Rancifer provided safety songs, safety rules, and the importance of calling 911.

The East Chicago Firefighters came dressed in full gear and showed the students what to expect during a fire or an emergency. The fire chief allowed the students to come outside, listen to a little "Fire" from the O'Jay's and get an up close and personal inspection of the fire trucks. Students were given red fire hats along with an invitation to visit the firehouse with their parents for the annual Open House in October.

JOSEPH L. BLOCK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Highlights and Happenings!

Loteria Night and Movie Night at Block Middle School

September 26, 2024 - Loteria Night | Families were invited to come play traditional Mexican Bingo for the evening. They had a great turnout with students and their families. There were prizes, refreshments, and raffled student artwork that celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month. October 2, 2024- Movie Night | Families were invited to a screening of Blue Beetle, where snacks were provided.



Pioneers of Change

October 3, 2024- Storytime with Pioneers Of Change | We invited 20+ community members to visit our school. Our guests ranged from district administrators, Purdue Engineering Students, PNW representatives, Board Members, and other members of our community. We welcomed our visitors with a meet and greet in the library which was beautifully decorated by our HHM committee. Our visitors were each assigned an advisory class to visit where they read a short biography or poem from Hispanic Heritage influencers. They told their story and had time for a Q&A session. Our guests also received a framed certificate to recognize our appreciation for the positive impact they had on our students

that day. An impactful experience for our students to see the great success that comes from their own community and backgrounds.



School Assembly with ECPD Chief Rivera and Lake County Prosecutor Carter

Due to the recent challenges with threatening and unsafe communication among our students Chief Rivera and Lake County Prosecutor Carter, we had an event where our students were very receptive, and had the opportunity to ask questions, and give feedback.



Hispanic Heritage Month Culminating Event

Families volunteered to participate in the parade of flags which represented the diversity of the Hispanic Students here at

Block. We had 22 countries represented. Additionally, the Santa Maria Mariachi group performed.

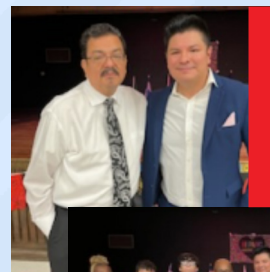


Student Town Hall

Dr. Bournes took time to meet with a select group of our students. It was great to hear their thoughts on the great things happening at Block and throughout the district. Students also had the opportunity to give critical feedback to school leaders on what could be improved.

Ray Flores Jr. Assembly

We were honored to have Ray Flores Jr. speak to our students. An East Chicago native and son of one of our very own teachers, Mr. Flores, gave a motivating and inspiring speech and took time for student questions. Ray Flores is a play-by-play commentator and ring announcer for various boxing and mixed martial arts events, including PBC on Fox Sports, Showtime, and Triller.



Coming Up!

We are excited to announce the formation of a new Parent Group at our middle school, aimed at enhancing our community and supporting our students' educational journey.

The goals of this group include:

- **Fostering Communication:**
Have parents share ideas, concerns, and insights.
- **Supporting Events:**
Organizing events and activities that enrich our students' school experience.
- **Encouraging Volunteerism:**
Offering opportunities for parents to get involved and make a difference.

Your participation can make a significant impact on our school community. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

We look forward to working together!

Want to learn more about the School City of East Chicago?

Scan this QR Code!



"Moving with Intention, Executing with Purpose"

EAST CHICAGO CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Students Enroll in COM 114 at Purdue University Northwest

In an exciting opportunity for our high school students, a group of rising scholars is taking part in a college-level Communications 114 course at Purdue University Northwest. The course, which covers fundamental communication skills including public speaking, writing, and interpersonal communication, is being offered to high school students as part of a dual-enrollment program aimed at giving them a head start in higher education. The class, which meets twice a week on the college campus, allows students to experience the rigors of college academics while still completing their high school requirements. Participants are already benefitting from



exposure to a more challenging curriculum and the chance to interact with college professors and students. The students will receive both high school and college credit upon completion of the course, further advancing their academic journey. This initiative is part of an ongoing partnership to expand access to higher education and encourage students to explore their academic potential early. For many students, the course is a stepping stone to greater opportunities in college and beyond.

