



# SEDOL News

## Superintendent Message

### Building Bridges

This is truly an exciting time of growth and transition at SEDOL, and as we say goodbye to 2025 and embrace 2026, we must acknowledge the amazing efforts of staff and leaders while embracing that positive momentum to propel us forward as we continue to make important advancements and changes to maximize student success. At every board meeting, we recognize a STAR student and employee of the month, which is reflected in this newsletter. In addition to these STARS, there are countless other moments of simple joy, accomplishment and determination every day in our programs and across the SEDOL community. The following pictures from across our programs capture just a few of the special moments.

We were also thrilled to have Dr. Tony Sanders, our IL State Superintendent, join us as a special guest judge for the annual Gingerbread House contest at Laremont School, and he visited many classrooms, engaging with students and staff and expressing gratitude for the special love and care across the program. With 31 member districts, SEDOL is the largest cooperative in the state, and the first special education cooperative Dr. Sanders has visited. We appreciate his advocacy and leadership for all students and for taking the time to embrace the specialness of SEDOL.

Dr. Judy Hackett & Dr. Tim Thomas





Student Recognition

## December STAR Student

Evans has been in the SEDOL Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program since the summer of 2025, after coming from the Sector LASSO program. Since joining us, he has made amazing progress!

Since starting in the program, Evans wears his hearing aids every day and uses both his AAC device and sign language to communicate. Evans lights up when he is able to communicate his wants or show what he knows—his joy fills the whole room, and he is celebrated by all!

Evans is an active participant in groups and activities. He is engaged and is picking up new vocabulary quickly. Evans knows the routine, transitions easily,

and follows 1-2 step directions. Evans is visually smart as well! In just this short time, he has been potty trained, learned to count to ten, and can identify all the letters in his name. His world is opening up, and his confidence grows every day!

On top of all that, Evans is such a kind and loving little boy. I am so proud of him and all that he has accomplished—he truly deserves to be SEDOL'S STAR STUDENT!



Staff Recognition

## Employee of the Month: Estefani Falcon

Estefani Falcon, SAB teacher, brings positivity, heart, and teamwork to Gages Lake School every day. She was nominated by 9 of her peers for employee of the month for all of her contributions to the school and the SAB program. Estefani builds strong connections with students, creates a welcoming classroom, and is always the first to step in when support is needed. Her generosity, leadership, and team-first mindset make a lasting impact on students and staff alike. Congratulations, Estefani!

Superintendent Search

## New Superintendent Approved

With recent unanimous approval from both the SEDOL Executive and Governing Boards, we are very excited to announce the appointment of Dr. Jennifer Thomas as the new Superintendent of SEDOL, effective July 1, 2026. Dr. Thomas currently serves as the interim Superintendent for Cary CCSD 26, and previously served as Assistant Superintendent of Special Services and Instruction in the same district over the past 19 years. In her various leadership roles, Dr. Thomas has focused on advancing her passion for special education, guiding processes in special services and evolving important focus areas of social/emotional learning. In the next few weeks and months, the SEDOL team will be working with Dr. Thomas to ensure a smooth transition into her role as the incoming superintendent of SEDOL, starting officially on July 1, 2026. Congratulations Dr. Thomas, we're excited to work together to build bridges for our students.



## Board Meeting Highlights

Want to stay updated with the decisions of SEDOL's Governing and Executive Boards? Keep track of everything with meeting summaries on our website.

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CIP Program Highlights

### Mid-Year Report

We are proud of the ongoing efforts across SEDOL to focus on the priority goals highlighted at every board meeting. These goals continue to serve as a roadmap for the key areas of growth identified across the cooperative. At the December Executive Board (EB) and Governing Board (GB) meetings, the [SEDOL CIP Mid-Year report](#) was shared, highlighting progress in each of the four goal areas and outlining important next steps for the remainder of the 2025–26 school year. Updates included curriculum team development and implementation, targeted and advanced professional development, and customized instructional coaching. Important work is also underway with the support of a member district committee focused on collaborative brainstorming to review the continuum of SEDOL programs and services to best address student needs.

A restructured tuition model was unanimously approved by both the Governing Board and Executive Board in the fall of 2025. This significant accomplishment reflects a clear and equitable structure developed through a year of meetings and consensus-building. SEDOL has also embarked on self-directed cyclical monitoring, aligned with the majority of SEDOL districts, which will be used to inform adjustments to training, coaching, and associated procedures. Safety remains a critical area of focus. Our participation in the Lake County consortium for Standard Response Protocol training continues to support sound procedures and preparedness for various types of emergencies. Another priority goal is reflected in newsletters and other communications focused on effective team practices. Program brochures have been developed and are available to support IEP teams in reviewing program and service options best aligned to student needs.

Next steps are outlined at the end of each goal area in the report. A complete and final report will be provided in June 2026, including evidence of success through both qualitative and quantitative measures. We are encouraged by the accomplishments across SEDOL thus far this year and the positive momentum that continues to guide our collective growth and success.

[Continuous Improvement Plan](#) 

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## Upcoming Events

"Ping Pong for Kids.

Sun., Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>

Where in the World is Larry the Lion?"  
Trivia Night

Sat., March 7<sup>th</sup> 6 pm - 9 pm

