

SEDOL

NEWS

AUGUST 2026



Ashley Merkel
2025-26
Employee of the Year
Laremont School

**SEDOL Celebrates Our
Employee of The Year!**

Congratulations, Ashley,
on this well-deserved
recognition! SEDOL is
fortunate to have you as
part of our team.





FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL!



On August 20, we officially welcomed our students back for the first day of school across all SEDOL facilities! Smiles, warm hugs, and incredible energy set the tone for an exciting start.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our families and member districts for trusting us with the honor of serving your children. We are looking forward to an amazing 2026–2027 school year filled with growth, community, and learning!







RECOGNIZING SEDOL'S EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

2025-26

ASHLEY MERKEL

SEDOL is proud to recognize Ashley Merkel, teacher at Laremont School, as our 2025–26 Employee of the Year! Ashley is described by her colleagues as caring, compassionate, dedicated, and student-centered, consistently putting students at the heart of everything she does.

Ashley's impact extends far beyond her daily responsibilities. She is an innovative, creative, and out-of-the-box thinker who is always willing to go above and beyond to help every student shine. Her colleagues recognize her as an amazing coworker who is helpful, kind, organized, committed, and passionate about making a difference.

Perhaps the greatest testament to Ashley's work is the consistency of the words used to describe her: exceptional, inspirational, phenomenal, impactful, and admirable. She brings dedication and compassion to her work each day and creates a positive difference for students and colleagues alike.

Congratulations, Ashley, on this well-deserved recognition! SEDOL is fortunate to have you as part of our team.





SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT



The 2026–2027 school year is off to an incredible start across the Special Education District of Lake County!

We were thrilled to welcome more than 70 new staff members to the SEDOL family, guiding them through a vibrant series of new staff orientation activities.

Our momentum continued to build on August 19 during our All-District Institute Day. Centered on our inspiring theme, "It Starts With Us," the day featured an energizing keynote by Ali Hearn, meaningful staff service recognitions, and the celebration of our Employee of the Year, Ashley Merkel.

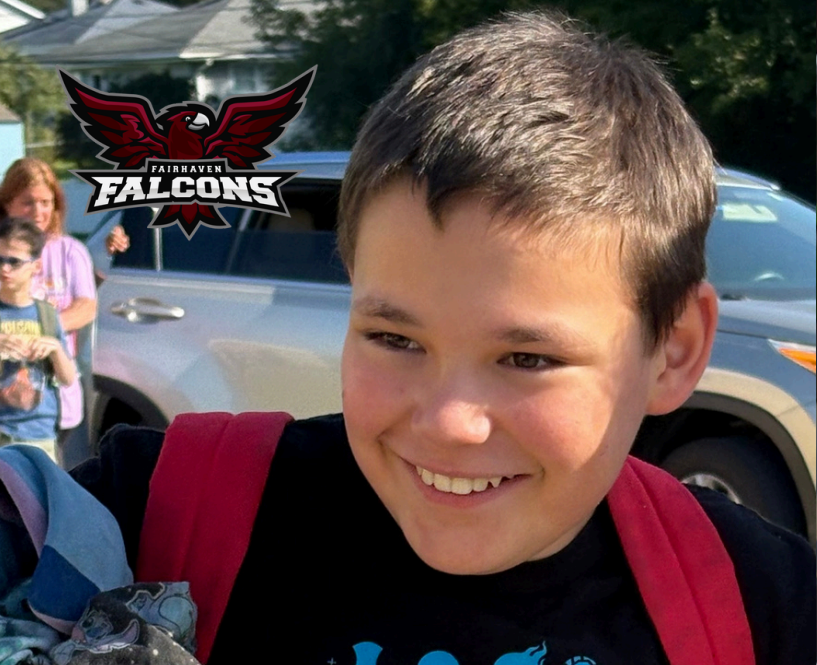
As students returned for their first day on August 20, I had the privilege of visiting each SEDOL operated school in our district. Seeing the powerful, positive connections already forming between our talented staff and amazing students was truly inspiring. That shared commitment sets the perfect foundation for our work ahead.

Thank you to our entire SEDOL community for your dedication to our students. We are poised for a wonderful, successful school year together!

— Dr. Jennifer Thomas, Superintendent

DR. JENNIFER THOMAS
SEDOL Superintendent







2026 - 2027

CIP PLAN

SEDOL's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) identifies goals, objectives, and measures designed to advance opportunities for our students. The CIP was developed from the input of various stakeholders including leadership in SEDOL and member districts, executive and governing board members, and SEDOL staff.

Similar to the last two school years, the CIP will guide and focus the important work that is done on behalf of students, their families, and member districts at SEDOL throughout the 2026-27 school year.

The CIP plan was reviewed and approved by the SEDOL Executive Board at the regular meeting on August 27 and can be viewed [here](#).



SEDOL
Continuous Improvement Plan
2026-2027



NEW ENTRY PROTOCOLS FOR VISITORS

To enhance the safety and well-being of our school community, SEDOL has strengthened our entry protocols across all managed facilities in accordance with Board Policy 8:30. These proactive security enhancements allow us to maintain a secure, welcoming, and supportive environment for all students, staff, and visitors.

Visitor Check-In Process Upon arrival, all visitors—defined as anyone other than an enrolled student or SEDOL employee—are asked to check in at the Verkada Guest kiosk located in the vestibule.

- **Identification:** Visitors 18 years of age and older should present a state-issued ID or driver's license for a quick electronic screening.
- **Access Approval:** To maintain a secure perimeter, the door connecting the vestibule to the main office remains locked during check-in. Entry beyond the vestibule is granted once the screening is approved and verified by school personnel.
- **Parent & Guardian Accommodations:** As part of this enhanced policy, we recognize that a parent, guardian, or sibling of an enrolled student may not always have a state-issued ID on hand. In these instances, alternative security verification steps are available so you can access the building for matters related to your student.

This layered approach is a key component of our ongoing efforts to safeguard our learning community while continuing to provide a warm, accommodating experience for our families.

Thank you for your partnership and support as we put these enhanced safety measures into practice.

SPECIAL EDUCATION
DISTRICT OF LAKE COUNTY

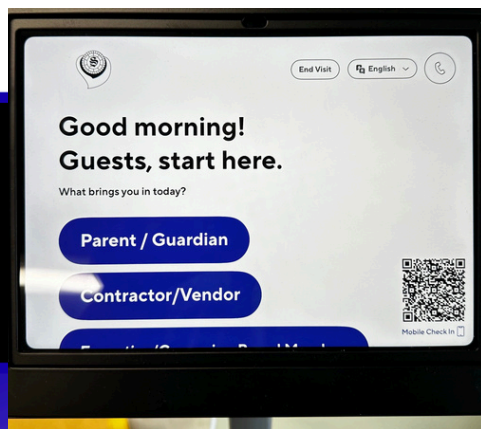


WELCOME VISITORS

(Bienvenidos Visitantes)

- 01 Please use the iPad to sign into the visitor system
- 02 Have a photo ID ready for the check-in process
- 03 Once you sign in, the office staff will unlock the doors to grant you access

- 01 Por favor use el iPad para iniciar sesión en el sistema de visitantes
- 02 Tenga lista una identificación con fotografía para el proceso de registro.
- 03 Una vez que inicie sesión, el personal de la oficina abrirá las puertas para concederle el acceso



SPECIAL EDUCATION
DISTRICT OF LAKE COUNTY

WELCOME

If you need assistance
pick up the phone
located in the vestibule.

OR

Dial 847-986-2301 using
your mobile phone.

¡BIENVENIDA!

Si necesita ayuda,
levante el teléfono
situado en el vestíbulo.

O

Marque el 847-986-2301
desde su teléfono móvil.



SEDOL FOUNDATION SUPPORTING SEDOL STUDENTS



The SEDOL Foundation is gearing up for an exciting and busy fall season, beginning with the Annual Golf Invitational on Monday, September 14, at Stonewall Orchard Golf Club.

Just a few days later, they will host the Making Strides for Special Kids 5K Run/Walk on Saturday, September 19, at Independence Grove. Making Strides for Special Kids is a fun-filled, family-friendly event that is free for all students with special needs and one parent or caregiver. Participants can enjoy live music, a balloon artist, a bubble artist, an exciting raffle, and many other activities designed for the whole family.

Click on the link to register for the 5K: <https://secure.qgiv.com/event/sedolfdn2026/>
Remember – SEDOL students and their parent/caregiver can register for FREE!

The Foundation's final event of 2026 will be One Special Night for Very Special Kids on Saturday, November 7. This year's celebration will feature the music of The Beach Boys, performed by the nationally recognized tribute band, The Sounds of Summer.

We hope you will join the SEDOL Foundation for these wonderful events as we continue our mission of enhancing educational, vocational, and social opportunities for children and young adults with special needs.

For more information about any of these events, please visit the SEDOL Foundation website [here](#) or contact Ann Subry at asubry@sedol.us or 847-548-7032.



Making Strides
for special kids
5K RUN/WALK



SAVE THE DATE

**SATURDAY
NOV. 7, 2026**
LIVE MUSIC
Ten Hotel
6161 Grand Ave.
Gurnee

For more information or to
make reservations contact:
Ann at asubry@sedol.us
or 847.548.7032



UPCOMING EVENTS

↓ SEPTEMBER ↓

14

SEDOL FOUNDATION GOLF OUTING

Stone Wall Orchard - Grayslake, IL



CLICK LINK



SHOTGUN START 10:30AM

18

LAKE COUNTY RESOURCE FAIR

(Registration opens at 8:30 a.m.) at The Chapel in Grayslake

CLICK LINK



9AM - 11:30AM

19

SEDOL FOUNDATION MAKING STRIDES FOR SPECIAL KIDS

Independence Grove - Libertyville IL

CLICK LINK



RACE START TIME 8:30AM

↓ OCTOBER ↓

3

LAREMONT SCHOOL SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCE FAIR & FALL FESTIVAL / TRUNK OR TREAT

CLICK LINK



10AM - 1PM



FOR MORE INFO VISIT: WWW.SEDOL.US