



ILLINI CENTRAL C.U.S.D #189

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Superintendent's Report September 17, 2026

Believe. Belong. Become. I have made these three words the focus of this year. Each month, I want to challenge staff to a different task related to the theme. One of my favorite reminders in education is that every student needs a champion—someone who believes in them, sometimes before they can believe in themselves. Our expectations communicate what we believe our students can become. The words we choose, the tone we use, and even our reactions in difficult moments can either build a student's belief in themselves—or slowly diminish it. Sometimes it is easy to believe in the students who already believe in themselves. The bigger challenge is believing in the student who has decided they can't do it. The student who has stopped trying. The student whose behavior makes it difficult to see what is underneath. The student who may not have anyone else consistently reminding them that they are capable, valuable, and worth the effort.

So, here is our September challenge: Be The One. Think of one student who may not believe in themselves yet. Maybe they are struggling academically. Maybe they don't quite feel like they belong. Maybe they test your patience. Maybe they simply fly under the radar. Choose that student and intentionally invest in them this month. Notice them. Encourage them. Find something they are doing right and tell them. Ask how they're doing—and listen to the answer. Celebrate the small wins. Let them know through your words and actions, "I see something in you, even if you don't see it yet."

You don't have to fix everything in a child's life. You don't have to have all the answers. Sometimes you just have to be the person who refuses to give up on them. Because before our students can become everything they are capable of becoming, they have to believe that it's possible.

Cougar Shout-outs: The admin team decided we wanted to find more ways to celebrate our staff throughout the year. We created a way for staff to share the good things they see their peers doing. We talk a lot about creating a place where people Believe. Belong. Become. — and that applies to our adults just as much as it does to our students. Every day across our district, people are doing things that deserve to be noticed. Someone covers for a coworker. Someone takes extra time with a student. Someone offers encouragement on a hard day. Someone solves a problem



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without being asked. And sometimes, someone simply makes you laugh when you really need it.

By filling out a quick form, we let others know someone has done something that deserves recognition. We'll recognize these spotlights throughout the year and work to make this a place where people feel valued for the work they do.

CPR Training: In the madness of last year, we did not do any CPR training for our staff. We will train 30 staff members in October. The goal is to focus on coaches and administrators, as they are the ones around the most vulnerable and largest groups.

Who We Play For: Two years ago, we did the Who We Play For heart screening for our athletes. We plan to do this again with our athletes later this fall. This comes as an expense to the district, but two student-athletes were identified with heart-related issues as a result. We feel this is an important screening tool to make sure our students are healthy.

College Credit Salary Advancement: A new law went into effect limiting the coursework that can count toward salary advancement. I have been doing some research and talking with other superintendents, and it seems only courses from accredited colleges will count toward advancing a teacher on the salary table.

Ameren Public School Carbon Free Assessment (PSCFA) Program: Ameren is offering a free program to visit our buildings and assess our energy efficiency. They are looking at various aspects of our campus and will provide a report with ways we can reduce our carbon footprint. They are also offering incentives for implementing some of their recommendations.

Insurance: After talking with a superintendent from another district about our rising insurance costs, he suggested I reach out to Kepple Healthcare Consulting. They work only with health insurance, and they are part of two large cooperatives that school districts can join to reduce insurance costs. It is early in the process, but I want to explore options to provide our employees with the best coverage at the best price.