ILLINI CENTRAL C.U.S.D #189

208 N. West Avenue, Mason City, IL 62664

Dr. Jennifer Durbin, Superintendent
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www.illinicentral.org

Mrs. Cassy Carey, Grade School Principal
Mrs. Kyra Fancher, Middle School Principal
Mrs. Annie Baugher, High School Principal
Ms. Lori Avart, Special Education Coordinator

Superintendent's Report
November 13, 2026

School Maintenance Project Grant: Gene and I are working on preparing our application for the School Maintenance Project Grant. If we submit it, we are guaranteed to receive the funds. The state will match up to $50,000 for a project. We are looking to fix the drainage around the building, the downspouts around the new addition, and the west side of the Cougar Center near the concessions stand. We will bring it to the board for approval before submitting it at the December meeting.

School Safety and Security: A community member reached out to Chelsey Lemme about the security of the new grade school entrance if someone decides to drive a vehicle into the entrance area, especially during drop-off or pick-up. This was on our radar after a school safety assessment, but we didn't want it to look like a blockade. Gene explored some options, and we ordered large concrete planters that we will fill with rocks to create a barrier without it looking like one. It will take a few weeks to complete production, but we should have it in place by the new year.

ALICE Training: We have been using ALICE training with our students and staff for several years. ALICE is the original civilian, active shooter response program developed to empower individuals of all ages and ability to participate in their own survival using proactive response options in the face of violence. ALICE addresses the fallacies of a one-size-fits-all response plan by explaining the truths and realities of violent critical incidents. The reality is that incredibly tragic outcomes in these events can be mitigated. Taking a traumainformed approach to training and empowerment, citizens can apply the ALICE program and improve chances of survival. The ALICE program can be used by anyone, anywhere, and anytime individuals are confronted with violence. ALICE strategies are now also mirrored and recommended by many Federal and State o cial guidelines.and we were approached by Navigate360 about hosting a "Train the Trainer" event at Illini Central. We are working to secure a two-day training on campus this summer. If we have at least 15 participants, we can receive two seats for free.

CPR Training: On October 19th, 27 staff members were certified in CPR training. We had a lapse in our training, so we are working to retrain everyone, focusing on our coaching staff and those who would spend a lot of time with students in active areas.

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Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee: I would like to start a parent-teacher advisory committee with at least one or two board members. I anticipate quarterly evening meetings to discuss school events, concerns, and celebrations. If you are interested, please let me know.

Believe. Belong. Become. Last month, we challenged ourselves to get to know three students a little better, learn something meaningful about their lives, and use that knowledge to build stronger connections.

After reading through your reflections, one thing stood out to me: "It doesn't take a grand gesture to make a student feel like they belong. Sometimes, it just takes someone who notices, listens, and remembers."

Here are a few of my favorite examples from your responses:

- One staff member bonded with a student over a shared love of jumping spiders. What started as a conversation turned into a recess spider club, daily conversations, and a meaningful relationship. (Coincidentally, I fell right in the middle of this bond when the student was carrying a jumping spider in his hand during LUNCH and wanted to show me--NO THANK YOU!)
- Another discovered how much it meant to a student when staff attended her athletic events. Simply asking about her games changed their interactions.
- One staff member connected with a student over a love of Legos and followed up to ask about a special project the student was building.
- Another shared that a student who had previously been reluctant to engage actually sought them out on the playground to talk, eventually feeling comfortable enough to share something personal.
- Several staff members found connections through pets, siblings, sports, first jobs, and even conversations about a flat tire!
- What I loved most was reading about the differences these connections made. Students became more willing to talk, more comfortable asking for help, more engaged in learning, and more open about things happening outside of school.

In fact, all of the reflections reported at least some positive difference in their relationships or interactions with students.

I also want to share a few of your responses to the question, "Students know they belong when..."

- They feel seen, loved, and cared for.

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- Someone shows they care about little things.
- They have a grown-up who knows about their life outside of school.
- They are free to share about themselves and their lives.
- Someone sees them and takes an interest in them.
- Those responses say so much about the kind of school we are working to create.

As we move into November, we'll continue focusing on BELONG, but from a slightly different perspective...What we notice grows.

Think about that for a minute. In the busyness of a school day, how often do we notice the things that go wrong? The student who isn't following directions, the assignment that didn't get turned in, the behavior that needs correcting, or the coworker who didn't follow through on something.

It's not that those things don't deserve our attention because they do. But sometimes, without even realizing it, we become so focused on addressing problems that we overlook the good happening right in front of us.

And there is SO much good happening at Illini Central every single day!

Students showing kindness, making progress, helping others, demonstrating perseverance, or simply making better choices than they did yesterday. Coworkers going the extra mile, stepping in to help, showing patience, or doing the little things that make someone else's day easier.

The question is, are we taking the time to notice it? More importantly, are we telling people we notice?

Our November Challenge: "Catch Someone Doing Good."

This month, I'm challenging each of you to give at least FIVE specific, genuine acknowledgments to students or coworkers in person or in a quick note or email. Not just a quick "good job" or "thank you," but something that shows you truly noticed what they did and why it mattered. For example:

"I noticed how you helped that student who was struggling. You didn't have to do that, but you made a difference for them today."

"I've seen how hard you've been working to improve, and I hope you're proud of the progress you're making."

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"I know you've had a lot on your plate lately, but I see how much effort you're putting into your students, and I appreciate you."

"Thank you for stepping in to help today. You made a difficult situation a whole lot easier."

And here's the bonus challenge: Don't just tell the person you noticed. Tell someone else about the good you saw in them! Send a quick email to a parent about something positive their child did. Tell a colleague how much another staff member helped you. Share something great a student accomplished with another teacher or administrator. Submit a staff shout-out!

Imagine the impact if every staff member intentionally recognized five positive things this month. That's a whole lot of good being noticed, acknowledged, and celebrated!

As we head into November, a month when we naturally reflect on gratitude, I hope we'll be intentional about recognizing the people around us. Because belonging isn't just about knowing someone's name or story. It's also about helping them feel seen, valued, and appreciated.