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Class of 2023 to Step Into Spotlight at Graduation Ceremonies

U-46 to host commencement ceremonies on May 27

ELGIN - More than 2,700 students will mark the end of their high school careers on Saturday, May 27, as School District U-46 conducts five high school graduation ceremonies at the NOW Arena in Hoffman Estates.

The U-46 Board of Education, Interim Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Johnson, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Lela Majstorovic, and many other District administrators and principals will join families and friends in recognizing the Class of 2023.

“Before these students move onto the next chapter of their young lives, we’re looking forward to celebrating them — and recognizing the hard work, dedication, and resilience that got them to this point,” said Dr. Johnson. “These students are ready to take on the challenges ahead, and they’ll positively impact their communities and the world.”

The graduation schedule for Saturday, May 27, is as follows:

- 8 a.m. Larkin High School
- 11 a.m. Streamwood High School
- 2 p.m. South Elgin High School
- 5 p.m. Elgin High School
- 8 p.m. Bartlett High School

As it has done since 2018, the District will be honoring seniors who enrolled in the full-time Dual Credit program on the campus of Elgin Community College. These students must demonstrate certain college readiness

benchmark scores for acceptance and take all of their courses at ECC. They earn both high school and college credits for each class in the program.

A group of 40 Dual Credit students will graduate with the equivalent of an associate's degree in addition to their high school diploma. Another 28 will graduate from high school with at least a year's worth of college credits. For graduation, they will wear special stoles they will receive at an end-of-the-year recognition ceremony being held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, May 24, at Elgin Community College.

Preston Harris said he was interested in the Dual Credit program as soon as he heard about it as a freshman at South Elgin High School. He's leaving high school with an associate's degree, and he said he feels better prepared as a student as he heads to Indiana University, where he plans to major in finance and accounting.

"The Dual Credit Program prepares you for college — the course rigor, time management, peer collaboration, and professor interaction. You need to be disciplined in your studies and time management. It can be overwhelming at times, especially during final exam week," Harris said. "However, I have enjoyed the journey, and if you are a student who is up to the challenge and the rigor, it is worth the time and effort."

Also wearing special stoles will be nearly 600 students who participated in the District's award-winning Dual Language program; many of them have been a part of Dual Language since 1st grade, when the current Dual Language program first became available to them.

One of those students is Elgin High School's Xixtlally Chavez, who plans to major in criminology at DePaul University in a special program that would see her earn a bachelor's degree in three years and then immediately enter DePaul's law school.

She's grateful for the Dual Language program — her family speaks Spanish at home — and thinks it will be an asset in her career.

“It helped me to not forget about my first language,” Xixtlally said. “I feel very comfortable with speaking and writing in both English and Spanish; I feel like my skill in both languages grew equally over the past 12 years.”

Larkin’s Makiya McClelland is also graduating from the Dual Language program, and she admits she found it demanding in her early grades because she did not have a Spanish-language background at home. That changed when Makiya, who is African-American, had a Spanish-speaking African-American teacher in 5th grade who inspired her.

“When I walked into that classroom on the first day of school, you would not believe the way my face lit up,” she said, adding that learning the Spanish language “gave me opportunities that I wouldn’t have experienced if I had not been in a Dual Language classroom. The challenge helped me grow to become a hard worker.”

For the eighth year, U-46 will also issue a special honor to 404 graduates who have earned the State of Illinois Seal of Biliteracy, showing that they’ve demonstrated proficiency in one or more languages besides English. Another 308 students earned the Commendation, given to students who have demonstrated significant progress toward achieving a high level of proficiency. Languages that students earned the Seal for include Spanish, Polish, Korean, German, Italian, Turkish and Gujarati; the Commendation included Hindi and French.

Students who earn the Seal can qualify for two years of foreign language credit at any Illinois public university; that translates to a combined total of \$752,652 in tuition savings for this year’s Seal recipients, using the credit hour cost at ECC for calculation purposes.

The Class of 2023 graduates includes 26 Superintendent’s Scholarship recipients, a program that honors first-generation college students. They are honored at a springtime reception hosted by the U-46 Educational

Foundation. Those students are highlighted in this [video](#) posted on the District's YouTube channel.

Elgin High School's Litzy Melchor said she was "in utter shock" when she learned she had won the Superintendent's Scholarship because she knew it was a competitive award. She'll be putting the scholarship money toward her freshman year at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she plans to major in business or data science.

"Receiving the Superintendent's Scholarship not only allowed me to feel more confident and supported throughout my academic journey, but it also helped me realize that I'm not on this journey alone," she said. "Knowing that there are people that believe in me and my future goals and aspirations really helps me to be at ease, especially as a first-generation college student."

Larkin High School's Nelly Alvarado, who moved to the United States during middle school knowing no English, said winning the Superintendent's Scholarship was a "great honor and privilege that makes me feel very proud of what I have achieved. It also gives me extra motivation to keep going and accomplish more. My goal is to reach the sky!"

Fifty graduates rank among the top two percent of their graduating class within the five high schools. These students will attend top universities, including Northwestern University, the University of Michigan, Georgetown University, Notre Dame, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The top two percent graduates are being showcased daily through the months of May and June on the District's Facebook page and appear in a section on the [Class of 2023 website](#).

One of the students graduating in the top two percent of his class, Bartlett High School's Ronin Shah, noted that the end of his freshman year coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and an abrupt shift to online learning.



“High school made me understand that life will have its challenges. Moments of adversity do not define who you are, it is how you respond and learn from these struggles that allow you to become the person you strive to be,” said Ronin, who will be studying finance and business analytics at Indiana University.

Streamwood High School’s Daniel Nevarez, who also is graduating in the top two percent of his class, said in addition to this academic success, he’s proud of himself for trying out some new sports and joining new clubs in his senior year.

“I became more confident and put myself out there. I have met a ton of people that I normally wouldn’t have, if it weren’t for the sports and clubs that I joined. I have learned more about the world and different cultures by learning about my new friends,” said Daniel, who plans to major in psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, with the ultimate goal of attending medical school to become a psychiatrist.

In order to continue to run five smooth and efficient high school graduation ceremonies, School District U-46 is requesting students and families ride together in the fewest possible number of vehicles to the NOW Arena, 5333 Prairie Stone Parkway in Hoffman Estates. Graduates, families, and guests are also asked to arrive 45 minutes prior to their graduating ceremony. More details about the graduation ceremonies can be found at u-46.org/graduation.

Class of 2023 Graduation Facts

Total number of graduates: 2,773*

Number of Bartlett High School graduates: 588

Number of Elgin High School graduates: 613

Number of Larkin High School graduates: 483

Number of South Elgin High School graduates: 665



Number of Streamwood High School graduates: 424

**Numbers are not final until Graduation Day*

Total Graduates in the Full-Time Dual Credit Program: 68

Total Graduates in the Dual Language Program: 595

Graduates who earned Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy: 404

Languages: Spanish, Polish, Korean, Italian, Turkish, German, Gujarati

Total Top Two Percent Graduates: 50

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School District U-46 serves families in 11 communities: Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood and Wayne, as well as portions of Carol Stream, Hoffman Estates, St. Charles, Schaumburg, and West Chicago. In total, the District encompasses 90 square miles within the Fox River Valley, approximately 45 minutes west of downtown Chicago, and includes communities within Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. More than 35,000 preschoolers through 12th graders attend the 57 District schools and programs. To learn more, visit the U-46 [website](#), or like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).