



**Elmwood Park Community Unit School District 401**  
8201 W. Fullerton Avenue  
Elmwood Park, IL 60707

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## Welcome, New Administrators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Her problem-solving focus is among her strengths as an administrator. Ms. Siegel believes that “every child can learn, and every child deserves the best we can give them.”

She enjoys spending time in her yard and in her garden, and playing video games.

### Joseph Sierra, Director of Building and Grounds

Joseph Sierra, the district’s new Director of Buildings and Grounds, has served in the maintenance industry for 34 years, working with school districts for the past eight years. He comes to the district from Arbor Park School District 145 in Oak Forest, where he was the Director of Buildings and Grounds. He attended the UIC School of Business Administration, and has completed a number of work-related programs

His passions have always been maintenance and business administration. He worked as an Operations Manager for an industrial cleaning company for almost 25 years before segueing to the public sector.

In the three school districts in which he has worked, Mr. Sierra’s major accomplishments include overseeing the construction of new roofs, multi-million dollar mechanical projects, and asbestos abatement, while always working within or under budget. He is fluent in English and in Spanish.

Mr. Sierra will work with district administrators in the creation of five-, seven-, and ten-year strategic maintenance plans. His main responsibilities will be the safety of the students and faculty, maintaining all district buildings and grounds, and ensuring the daily operations and cleanliness of the buildings.

Mr. Sierra and his wife have three children. They reside in Tinley Park. He enjoys football, museums, long walks, and time with family.

### Pamela Stutzman, Special Education Coordinator for the District, Grades preK – 6

Pamela Stutzman, a new District Special Education Coordinator, has worked in education for 16 years, most recently as the Assistant Principal at Conyers Learning Academy in Palatine School District 15. She has a BSW in Social

Work from The State University of New York College at Buffalo; an MSW and an Ed.M. (Master’s) in Educational Administration and Leadership from the University of Illinois, Champaign. She worked as a school Social Worker for over 15 years.

After completing her second Master’s degree, Ms. Stutzman was a Peace Corps volunteer, working in a small mountain kingdom in southern Africa teaching Special Education to teachers.

An experienced administrator, she will work with students and staff at the Early Childhood Center, John Mills and Elmwood Elementary Schools, and for students who are placed out-of-district who would attend those schools.

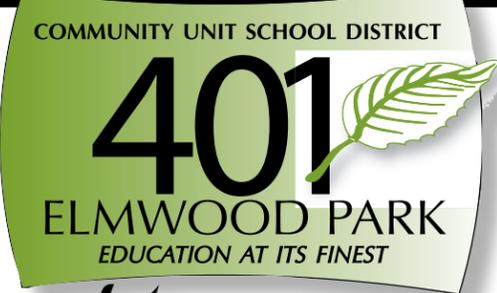
Ms. Stutzman explained, “I hope that this new position will help facilitate good communication between schools, including expectations, services and the problem-solving process. I love knowing that the work we are doing in schools impacts students for a lifetime. We set the foundation for a love of learning.”

She and her husband have two dogs, Daisy and Jethro.

# FOCUS

## on Education

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## Welcome, New Administrators

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### Sara Barrick, District Special Education Coordinator, Grades 7-12

As one of the two new District Special Education Coordinators, Ms. Barrick brings over 12 years of experience as a School Psychologist to her new position.

She earned a Master of Arts in School Leadership from Concordia University, an Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology from Loyola University, and a BS in Psychology from Northern Illinois University. Ms. Barrick comes to the district from Forest View School in Mt. Prospect CCSD 59. This is her first administrative position. She will oversee services, procedures, and communication for Elm Middle School and Elmwood Park High School, and for students who are placed out-of-district who would attend those schools.

As to becoming an administrator, Ms. Barrick remarked, “The School Psychologist role has many leadership components to it, and I found that while I loved my time working directly with kids, I also really enjoyed the leadership roles in my position. After working for 10 years at Forest View, I was ready to continue to grow as a professional and to increase my opportunities to make a bigger impact on a school district instead of just one school.” She believes her strengths as an administrator include being a good listener and a good observer, who stays calm, tries to lead by example and find ways to support people with whom she works.

Ms. Barrick lives in Oak Park. She teaches a dance fitness program to adults through the Park District of Oak Park. She loves fitness and dance, travel, movies, and time spent with family and friends.

### Kyleen Coia, Elmwood Park High School Assistant Principal

For the past two years, Kyleen Coia was an Elmwood Park High School Dean of Students. She is assuming the position of EPHS Assistant Principal. She has worked in education for 11 years, as a school Social Worker, District Supervisor/Behavior Interventionist, and Assistant Principal. She came to EPHS from Cicero District 99. Ms. Coia has a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Aurora University, and earned two Master’s degrees, one in Social Work from UIC, and the other in Educational Leadership from Concordia University.

As an EPHS Dean of Students, she took a strong leadership role in incorporating Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) and restorative justice in the school. SEL helps students learn how to manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, show and feeling empathy, and make responsible decisions. Restorative justice is a philosophical approach to developing community.

As EPHS Assistant Principal, her responsibilities will include student interventions, counseling, social work, teacher evaluations, school climate and culture, new teacher mentoring, school improvement planning, scheduling, and more. “The high school, as well as the district, is embarking on an exciting transitional time where we will be focusing on many new initiatives. This as an amazing opportunity to improve

our instructional practices in supporting our students’ achievements,” Ms. Coia stated.

Ms. Coia is an athlete and a world traveler who has visited many countries. Working at D401 is a family tradition: Her sister-in-law Hilary Coia is a Special Education teacher at EPHS.

### Ashley Groeneveld, Elm Middle School Assistant Principal

Mrs. Groeneveld, the new Elm Middle School Assistant Principal, has taught Physical Education in Illinois and Colorado, and served as a summer school Principal. She began her career in LaGrange District 105, then continued it in Colorado, a move she and her husband made when he relocated for his job. They recently returned to Illinois. Mrs. Groeneveld has worked in education since 2011. She earned a BS in Education, majoring in Physical Education, from Eastern Illinois University. She went on to earn two Master’s degrees, the first in Kinesiology and Sports Studies from Eastern Illinois University, and the second in School Leadership from Concordia University.

Continues on page 2

## EPHS Class of 2018

On May 20, a graduation ceremony was held for the 226 graduates of the Elmwood Park High School Class of 2018. At the head of the class were valedictorian Talia Nuzzo and salutatorian Sarah Ashby.

Among the colleges and universities the graduates will attend are: Purdue University; Loyola University; The University of Colorado; The University of Pennsylvania; New York University; Concordia University; Dominican University; U of I, Chicago; U of I, Champaign; Marquette University; and Valparaiso University.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## Welcome, New Administrators

She has co-organized Physical Education programs, designed and implemented a Physical Education curriculum, and has taken an active role in instructional leadership. Mrs. Groeneveld has coached a variety of teams.

In her new administrative role, she looks forward to forming strong relationships with students, staff and with the community. She will work with athletics, attendance, student issues, staff needs, and "pretty much anything and everything!"

Mrs. Groeneveld and her husband have a young son, and three "crazy" dogs. She enjoys running, weightlifting, yoga, traveling, cooking, watching college football, and spending time with her family.

### Stephanie Hagins, Elmwood Elementary School Assistant Principal

Mrs. Hagins has a very special connection to Elmwood School. Not only has she been a Special Education teacher at the school since 2014, but she attended the school when she was a child. She has worked in education for eight years. Mrs. Hagins first taught in the North Beverly neighborhood of Chicago at Kellogg School, where she assumed many leadership roles.

She earned a Bachelor's degree in Special Education from Northeastern Illinois University, and a Master's degree as a Learning Behavior Specialist 2: Curriculum Adaptation Specialist. Mrs. Hagins recently achieved her second Master's degree in Educational Administration from Concordia College. She participated in a year-long internship with Kevin Seibel, Elmwood School's former Principal, who is now the Principal of the district's Early Childhood Center. It helped prepare her for her new administrative career, and Mrs. Hagins credits Mr. Seibel for going "above and beyond to teach me how to be a great administrator."

"The best part of working at Elmwood School is how inspiring my co-workers and students are. The teachers are the heart and soul of Elmwood; their dedication to their students really inspires me each day," Mrs. Hagins remarked. She and her husband live in Elmwood Park with their young son. She likes to be outdoors, including spending time with her parents in Wisconsin and relaxing on their boat.

### Matthew Lerner, Elmwood Elementary School Principal

Matthew Lerner has 14 years of experience in education, as a Social Studies

teacher, substitute teacher, Assistant Principal, and Principal. He earned a BA in History and Secondary Education from Monmouth College, and a Master's of Education from National Louis University.

A Wisconsin native, he moved to Chicago after college and taught at Roberto Clemente High School. He also coached football. He says working at the school was an amazing experience, which taught him about different cultures.

He comes to D401 from Rockford, Illinois, where he was a Principal at two different schools for a total of six years.

"Being a Principal allowed me the opportunity to grow as an administrator. I was able to learn about new curriculums, understand how students learn, set goals for students and staff, and comprehend the influences on our young students. I learned a great deal while in Rockford, and I am eager to bring my experience and knowledge to Elmwood," Mr. Lerner said.

He looks forward to getting to know the culture of the school, and building relationships with the students, staff and parents. "I need to earn the right to be called their Principal and leader," he commented. **Continues on page 3**



Sara Barrick, District Special Education Coordinator, Grades 7-12



Kyleen Coia, EPHS Assistant Principal



Ashley Groeneveld, Elm Middle School Assistant Principal



Stephanie Hagins, Elmwood Elementary School Assistant Principal



Matthew Lerner, Elmwood Elementary School Principal



Katie Plum, EPHS Dean



Kevin Seibel, Early Childhood Center Principal



Rebecca Siegel, Elm Middle School Principal



Joseph Sierra, Director of Buildings and Grounds



Pamela Stutzman, District Special Education Coordinator, Grades 7-12

Toward that end, the new Principal is off to a good start. He and the new Elmwood School Assistant Principal Stephanie Hagins held an event in May to meet parents and community members.

He enjoys spending time with his wife, young son and daughter, their dog, watching and playing sports, relaxing outdoors, and enjoying the sun.

### Katie Plum, EPHS Dean

Katie Plum has 11 years of experience as an educator. Since 2016, she has been an ESL teacher during the summer at Leyden High School and, since 2010, taught in Hester Junior High in Franklin Park. She has worked with both children and adults during her teaching career. She is fluent in Spanish, which she began studying in seventh grade, and literate in American Sign Language.

Mrs. Plum has a BA in Secondary Education from DePaul University, an MA in Teaching English as a Second Language from Northeastern Illinois University, and an MA in Education Administration from Dominican University. Among her accomplishments is earning a Teaching English as a Foreign Language Certificate from TEFL International, Seville, Spain. She is passionate about languages, and about aiding students who need extra help accessing education through learning the English language.

Mrs. Plum is an athlete and has coached championship boys' soccer teams.

"I will work to make a comprehensive high school education achievable to students with attendance, behavioral, and/or disciplinary problems," Mrs. Plum

stated. "My first priority will be to get to know as much about the EPHS community as I can."

Mrs. Plum lives with her husband, son, and puppy in Chicago. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with family, participating in sports, snowboarding, traveling, and motorcycle racing.

### Kevin Seibel, Early Childhood Center Principal

Kevin Seibel has been an educator for 25 years. But before becoming an educator, he was an athlete.

Among his many accomplishments are four years of varsity football at Vermillion High School in South Dakota, where he was "All State" for two years; competing in high school track, shot put (was the state champion) discus, and wrestling. He was the South Dakota Athlete of the Year and is honored in his high school's Athletic Hall of Fame.

Mr. Seibel went on to earn a four-year football scholarship at the University of Nebraska, where he played for one of the country's best teams. After college, he signed with the NFL Washington Redskins, then with the USFL Chicago Blitz. He began his career in education as a football coach at St. Patrick High School in Chicago. Mr. Seibel earned a BA from Northeastern Illinois University and a Master's in Education from National Louis University.

He taught Biology and Chemistry at St. Patrick's, where he worked for 13 years, was the head football coach for six years, and head track coach for six years. He came to Elmwood School as Assistant Principal in 2006 and was hired as

Principal in 2015. An Elmwood Park resident, he wanted to be part of the school district in which he had lived for nearly 30 years.

"I am a collaborative leader, using the power of the team and not the individual to grow. I have been a part of many successful teams, and I feel strongly that a unified team can accomplish anything it puts its collective mind to using the knowledge and expertise of all to pursue the maximum growth for each student every day," Mr. Seibel said.

Outside of work, he enjoys golf, reading, traveling, gardening, and of course, football.

### Rebecca Siegel, Elm Middle School Principal

Rebecca Siegel, the new Elm Middle School Principal, was the school's Assistant Principal last year. She previously taught literature, writing and English in Chicago schools for five years, and went on to be an Assistant Principal of Culture at a Chicago charter school for three years. She earned a Bachelor's degree from Northeastern Illinois University in Secondary Education and English, and a Master's in Education from Northeastern Illinois University.

In 2000, she enlisted in the Marine Corps. "I was a reservist and started my tour of duty in 2000. I finished my active reserve status in 2006. I received my honorable discharge in 2008 after serving two years of inactive duty," Ms. Siegel stated. "The Marine Corps taught me to strive for excellence. They gave me problem-solving skills and taught me perseverance."

**Continues on page 4**

## Spotlight on Technology

In May 2016, the D401 Board of Education approved the District Technology Initiative, to prepare D401 students to be 21st-century learners capable of thriving in a technology-dependent society. Imbedding technology throughout the curriculum is becoming even stronger through D401's implementation of its long-term 1:1 Technology Initiative, whose goal is to equip every Elmwood Park High School student with an Internet-connected device by the new school year, and every Elm Middle School student with an Internet-connected device by 2019-20.

Meanwhile, Elmwood and John Mills Elementary Schools will benefit from the addition of existing laptop carts previously used in the high school and middle school, giving teachers and students increased opportunities for technology instruction throughout the day. Also, throughout the district, Google educational tools and apps will be in place, with all grade levels operating under Google Classroom by 2019-20. Classroom is a free web service that makes it easy for learners and instructors to connect – inside and outside of schools.

The District Technology Initiative is succeeding. Jessica Iovinelli, the D401 Director for Instructional Technology, explains why:

"The district spent a great deal of time researching other dis-

tricts' technology implementation and learned from them. Because of this, the District Technology Initiative began with a full year of staff and administration training before new devices came into the buildings. Due to the ever-changing nature of technology and the importance of staying ahead of the learning curve, our professional development is continuing. EPHS is preparing for 1:1 soon, while the other buildings are further increasing the number of their technology devices. We are also focused on community outreach and involving many community members and organizations in this process. Some recent community events were Tech Check, where families learned about the technology students are using, and the April 4 Into the Cloud, event, where parents, students and community members discovered how D401 is using technology to transform the classroom experience.

"We recently joined 21 other schools/districts in the western suburbs in using BrightBytes, an educational research organization that helps us better understand the impact that technology is having on teaching and learning. It combines input from students, teachers, administrators, and community members in areas such as skills, access, environmental factors and classroom factors. We are using the results to shape our technology goals and actions as well as to guide the direction of our future professional development."