

The purpose of the "WE ARE 401" video series is to highlight individuals who have a connection with Elmwood Park Community Unit School District 401, past or present, and whose stories help illustrate who we are. The series began in 2022-23, and for that inaugural year we wanted to focus on the sense of community that people in EPCUSD 401 feel toward their schools, their district and Elmwood Park as a whole. For that reason, many of the videos in that first year told the stories of alums whose involvement with District 401 has continued into adulthood, sometimes spanning decades and generations. For 2023-24, the second year of the series, we wanted to focus on current students and staff whose pursuits of excellence in their fields of interest have made our district such a fascinating and dynamic community of learners. For 2024-25, we have retained the focus on current students and staff in each of our new videos, but in several of them we have also called back to our initial interest in alums whose connection with District 401 began as students and continued into adulthood.

Video 1: Alex Cardona (EPHS Class of 2003) and Family Building on a Legacy The story of an Elmwood Park High School graduate who excelled as a drummer in the marching band and an athlete on the soccer field, and whose two oldest children are continuing his EPHS legacy as drummers and soccer players.

Video 2: Elm's Hailey Smith-Young, Softball Star in the Making The story of an Elm Middle School 8th grader whose pitching and hitting led the Elm girls softball team to three conference title game appearances in as many years, culminating in this year's undefeated season.

Video 3: Elm Middle School's Frank DeRosa DJ on the Side The story of a 1988 EPHS grad who works as a custodian for the district's middle school and has a DJ business on the side with his younger brother, a 1990 EPHS alum.

Video 4: Beanie Martinico, EPHS Class of 2026 From Dance Student to Dance Teacher The story of a current EPHS junior who is now in her fourth year as a dance instructor at Turning Point Dance Studio in Elmwood Park.

The videos are produced and distributed several times a semester to our community via District 401's YouTube channel, our social media accounts (X, Facebook, Instagram) and our electronic newsletters. The videos have resulted in a significant increase in our YouTube subscriber base, which now exceeds 1,100 from only a few hundred when the series started. The video series supports our mission of effective communications by showing our community the extraordinary

people who make up District 401. "Show, don't tell" is the basis of all good storytelling, and that's what "WE ARE 401" tries to do with each episode.