

Press Clippings - 3/6/2023

– Chicago Tribune – U-46, ECC board candidates talk about their positions at League of Women Voters' forums

March 3, 2023

By Mike Danahey - The Courier-News



*Candidates running for the **District U-46 School Board** speak Thursday night at a forum held by the League of Women Voters of the Elgin Area at the Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)*

The six candidates running for four open seats on the **District U-46 School Board** were given a chance to speak directly to voters Thursday in a public forum held by the League of Women Voters of the Elgin Area at the Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin.

Each was given time to make opening and closing statements and to speak on four topics: the district budget; catching up past the COVID-19 pandemic; diversity and special needs students and programming; and trends/who should be involved in decision making.

Here are some highlights of what each had to say:

Sue Kerr

While acknowledging a lot remains to be done, incumbent **board member Kerr** said the district has made a lot of progress in the last 20 years.

She touted its strong financial footing and the initiatives currently being implemented, including the transition to a middle school system encompassing sixth through eighth grades, the **U-46 Rising program** to bring rigor and equity into classrooms, and the creation of a high school career pathways system.

Like students all over the country, those in Elgin-area schools continue to make up for what was lost during the pandemic, including with social emotional learning and adequate staffing in the wake of a national shortage.

Samreen Khan

Khan said the district has done a tremendous job on its budget and she's proud of the administration and what they're working to accomplish.

If elected, she would like to see the district strengthen its efforts in hiring a more diverse staff so students see more people who look like them as teachers, administrators and in other roles, she said.

Diversity also should also be added to curriculum offerings, Khan said, so that students become more global in their thinking.

Heather LH Manzella

Manzella, an educator, said she is running to put children and families first and because of the number of failing schools in the district.

"We can do better," Manzella said.

Coming out of the pandemic, the district needs to hire more personnel to address student

needs, she said.

Maureen Morris

Morris, who does direct support for people with disabilities, said she is running because there are too many failing schools in U-46, even prior to the pandemic, and that her main priority is proficiency levels in ELA (English Language Arts) and math.

She said she does not support social emotional learning.

“It’s indoctrination into ideology, when academics should be the priority,” Morris said.

Chandra Schwartz

Schwartz, chair of the U-46 Community Advisory Council, said more people should get involved with the council and with the district in general.

The pandemic was eye-opening in that it showed that the district has large technology and food gaps, which the district is addressing, and that it’s important that district students have access to counseling services.

Kate Thommes

An incumbent board member, Thommes said the district has built a “solid foundation” that they need to which they need to keep adding.

Its successes include a strong budget, career and technical education programs, a baccalaureate program for high school students, and the Canvas learning management system that helps parents know about what their children are studying and doing at school, she said.

Like Schwartz, Thommes urged more people to do more to get involved with the many different aspects of the district.

ECC Trustee candidates

Incumbent Elgin Community College Board members Jennifer Rakow and Sergio Rodriguez participated in the forum but their challenger Lucio Estrada did not respond to the invitation and Patricia Arroyo was unable to attend because of a death in her family.

There are three open board seats to be decided in the election.

Rakow and Rodriguez said they believed Elgin Community College is on the right track, citing the college's financial stability, high ranking and work to provide technical and certificate training.

All of the candidates in these races and others in the Elgin area were sent questionnaires. Those who responded have their answers posted at lwvelginarea.org/2023/02/16/questionnaire-responses-from-2023-consolidated-election-candidates-and-event-information. Videos from League forums can be viewed at the same website.

Mike Danahey is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

— ABC7 Chicago News —

'This is a crisis': Gov. JB Pritzker announces new proposal to address shortage of teachers

Pritzker revealed \$70M proposal at Streamwood HS

March 3, 2023
By Diane Pathieu

STREAMWOOD, Ill. (WLS) -- Illinois is short thousands of teachers, and the problem is only expected to get worse.

On Friday morning, Gov. JB Pritzker announced more money to bring educators on.

Pritzker visited **Streamwood High School**, and the state's second-largest school district, Friday to announce a new proposal that would put millions of dollars toward hiring educators.

"This is a crisis," said Daniel Montgomery, president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers. "In Illinois, there's classrooms right now, where there is not a teacher in the room, and so students might be sitting in a gym, in a room, in a library, in front of a television, in front of an adult, who isn't qualified or certified to teach the subject."

It's an alarming number: Thousands of teaching jobs are vacant in Illinois.

So, Pritzker is proposing a plan to change that.

"I am proposing that we address teacher shortages head-on, and dedicate an additional \$70 million annually specifically targeted at attracting new teachers to the profession and retaining the quality educators that we already have," he said.

This announcement comes as the Illinois Education Association released a study showing concerning numbers of teacher and education employee shortages.

Additionally, 83% of Illinois schools are underfunded, and these concerns could potentially impact student performance.

"Persistent vacancies in under-resourced schools still exist, and we need to do something about it now," said **Tony Sanders, state superintendent of education**.

The study also showed Illinois residents support policy changes to help turn things around, including changing the pension system, loan forgiveness for educators and higher pay.

"For most, this is not just a job. It's a calling, and our commitment is to support you as passionately as you support our parents and our kids," Pritzker said.

Right now, there are 3,500 open teaching positions across the state.

– Chicago Tribune –

Pritzker announces teacher pipeline initiative to address chronic shortages across state

March 3, 2023

By Zareen Syed - Chicago Tribune

Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced a new initiative aimed at alleviating chronic teaching staff shortages across the state. His proposed Teacher Pipeline Grant Program would give \$70 million per year over the next three years to 170 school districts with the most needs and teacher vacancies, Pritzker said at a news conference Friday at **Streamwood High School**.

Those districts represent 80% of the unfilled teaching positions in the state. Filling them would improve the student-teacher ratio for over 871,000 students, Pritzker said.

“When it comes to our kids, we can always do more. And when it comes to our schools, that means not just more funding, but more resources — and most crucially, more educators,” Pritzker said. “All across the nation, school districts are fighting the impact of teacher shortages — as education professionals struggle to weigh their passion for their classrooms with their own mental, financial and personal well-being.”

Pritzker said he wants to bring in new teachers while retaining the current workforce.

Tim Kosiek, an education prep teacher at Buffalo Grove High School, said trying to attract young people to a teaching career can be complicated because although many students are passionate about the field, there’s a lot of hesitation.

“One thing that is a challenge — and I teach education classes — is coming out of COVID, there’s not a lot of kids going ‘oh yes, that was awesome, I want to be a teacher,’” Kosiek said. “I asked kids recently, ‘What would be a reason you wouldn’t want to be a teacher?’ They said salary. There is a stigma that teachers don’t get paid well, and there’s a truth to

that.”

Kosiek said one of his classes this year took a look at the public education system in countries like Finland that have a big pool of money that gets equally distributed to each school. “So I ask my kids how they think our schools get funded, and they didn’t know,” he said. When he explained to his class how property taxes work, they immediately started talking about how unfair that is for students, Kosiek said.

What he finds encouraging in Pritzker’s plan is that funding is targeted toward the schools and students that need it most, Kosiek said.

Pritzker talked about how the teacher pipeline initiative builds on efforts over the past four years that have helped Illinois defy national teacher shortage trends by increasing enrollment in educator preparation programs.

“Districts all across Illinois are already using innovative ways to bring people into this profession,” he said. “And we want to help them pay for it and expand what already works.”

Elgin-based **District U-46**, for example, has more than 60 support staff employees using a “grow your own” program to work toward their teaching credentials.

Upon legislative approval, the teacher pipeline program would allow districts flexibility in how they use the funds, such as offering signing bonuses, housing stipends, down-payment assistance or loan repayments. The money can also be directed toward paying tuition and fees or providing residencies or apprenticeships, as well as sustaining current teachers by providing materials, supplies, coaching and school culture supports.

Recent Illinois State Board of Education data points to 3,558 unfilled teaching positions across Illinois as of October. Pritzker said the vacancies are concentrated in under-resourced schools.

Pritzker was joined by new State Superintendent **Tony Sanders**, who returned to **U-46**

Friday in his first official appearance since beginning his tenure as head of ISBE a week ago. For nearly a decade, Sanders served as superintendent of U-46.

“The experience of teaching is incredible,” Sanders said. “It’s not teaching itself that’s causing a teacher shortage; it is the systemic inequities present in our most under-resourced districts. The Teacher Pipeline Grant Program provides these districts with the resources they need to solve local challenges to recruitment and retention and remove barriers preventing aspiring educators from pursuing the calling to teach.”

State Sen. Karina Villa, D-West Chicago, said she hopes the program will expand opportunities for more diverse educators.

“It is important for students to see themselves reflected in their teachers by their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or by other relevant identifiers,” Villa said Friday at Streamwood High School. “As a former social worker, I know firsthand that students come to school with a wide array of different struggles, and having teachers who can relate through lived experiences can improve our children’s education experience.”

Illinois’ 2021-2022 Report Card shows that 81% of teachers in the state identify as white, whereas 47% of public school students are white.

Out of 134,888 total teachers, 6% are Black, 8% are Hispanic, 1.8% are Asian and 0.2% identify as American Indian, according to the most recent data.

Illinois Federation of Teachers President Dan Montgomery discussed the real-world consequences a lack of teachers creates.

“The shortage of teachers and staff is real,” Montgomery said Friday. “In Illinois, there are classrooms right now where there is no teacher in the room — students might be sitting in a gym, in a room, in the library, in front of a television (or) in front of an adult who isn’t qualified or certified to teach the subject.”

Montgomery added that teachers often are asked to cover other classrooms, which means they're left with little or no time to prepare for their own classes. For communities with a more dire need, those scenarios exacerbate the stress and difficulty of trying to provide students with appropriate grade-level education, he said.

ISBE said the state will also use \$6 million in federal funds to hire an advertising and marketing firm to develop and implement a statewide teacher recruitment campaign.

The proposed \$70 million would need to be approved as part of the state budget for the budget year that begins July 1 and would need to be approved again in each of the following two years.

– Capitol News Illinois – Pritzker touts \$70 million plan for addressing teacher shortage

March 3, 2023

By Nika Schoonover - Capitol News Illinois



Gov. JB Pritzker speaks at a news conference Friday to tout his proposal to create a \$70 million grant program to address Illinois' teacher shortage.

SPRINGFIELD – Gov. JB Pritzker on Friday highlighted a proposed grant program that would direct \$70 million per year over the next three years to school districts facing the greatest teacher shortages.

The Teacher Pipeline Grant Program, which Pritzker included in his budget proposal to lawmakers, would target vacancies in 170 school districts that account for 80 percent of all unfilled teaching positions in Illinois. The districts would have “maximum flexibility” to decide how the funds are disbursed, according to a news release.

Funds could be used for signing bonuses, housing stipends, down-payment assistance and providing residencies or apprenticeships, among other hiring incentives. Districts may also use the funding to reimburse tuition and fees or to provide teaching supplies, coaching and additional school support.

“The result will be that over 870,000 Illinois students will see an improved teacher-student ratio, a critical factor in classroom success,” Gov. Pritzker said at a Friday news conference. “Our collective goals are to make sure we have enough great teachers in every classroom.”

The governor touted some of his earlier accomplishments aimed at improving the teaching workforce, including increasing the teacher minimum wage, increasing scholarships and grants for aspiring teachers, and reducing the reinstatement fees for a lapsed educator license.

Pritzker also made a call to other teachers in surrounding states to move to Illinois.

“We have surrounding states where teachers are paid less than teachers in the state of Illinois and I want to formally invite every teacher in every state surrounding us to jump over the border,” Pritzker said, eliciting laughter from the crowd.

He was joined by newly appointed State Superintendent of Education **Tony Sanders, a former superintendent for Elgin Area School District U46,** the second largest school

district in Illinois.

Sanders pointed to Illinois State Board of Education data that shows Illinois schools reported 3,558 unfilled teaching positions as of October 2022.

“These shortages don’t just affect students equally. These vacancies are concentrated in bilingual education, special education and STEM,” **Sanders** said. “This is why the teacher pipeline program will target districts with the resources they need to solve locally the challenges they have for recruitment and retention and remove barriers preventing aspiring educators from pursuing a calling to teaching.”

In addition to the grant program, ISBE will also spend \$6 million in federal funds to hire a multimedia advertising and marketing firm to create a statewide teacher recruitment campaign.

The governor has spent several recent news conferences publicizing his plans on education issues, including his proposed “Smart Start” program to expand access to preschool and child care throughout the state. In the weeks following his budget address, he visited Springfield, Rockford, East St. Louis, Chicago, Mount Vernon, Chicago, Peoria and Macomb to rally support for the plan.

“When I came into office, the state of Illinois was providing nearly the lowest percentage of school funding for K-12 and P-12,” Pritzker said at the Friday news conference. “That was four years ago. But during the last four years, with the General Assembly’s help, we’ve addressed this woeful underfunding of K-12 education with an increase of more than \$1.5 billion from the state of Illinois.”

His proposed plan calls for \$250 million to fund the first year of Smart Start and an additional \$350 million aimed at the Evidence Based Funding formula.

– Chalkbeat Chicago –

Pritzker proposes \$70 million program to hire and retain teachers amid Illinois teacher shortage

March 3, 2023

By Samantha Smylie

Gov. J.B. Pritzker has proposed a three-year, \$70 million pilot program in the state's 2024 budget that would help school districts hire and retain educators amid the state's ongoing teacher shortage.

Pritzker's plan, called The Teacher Pipeline Grant Program, identifies 170 schools across the state with the most vacancies; these districts account for 80% of unfilled teacher positions in Illinois. Pritzker estimates that 870,000 public school students would see an improved teacher-to-student ratio in the future under the initiative.

"Parents and children deserve schools that are fully staffed with quality educators," Pritzker said at a press conference to announce the new grant program on Friday morning.

Pritzker said districts can create their own plans for how funding from the initiative should be used to attract new teachers. Schools could use the funding for sign-up bonuses, housing stipends, tuition assistance, professional development, and other approaches to address the teacher shortage in their districts, he said.

Pritzker said he hopes the program will attract teachers from abroad and surrounding states to join the teacher workforce in Illinois.

Some school districts have also used federal emergency coronavirus relief funds for [programs to attract more teachers](#), since the COVID-19 pandemic heightened staff shortages in schools.

In January, the [Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools](#) released a [survey](#) showing that the teacher shortage has worsened. A majority of school leaders from 690 districts said that the shortage is as bad or worse than last school year and applicants who apply aren't qualified for open positions.

School districts across the state [struggle to fill](#) openings for special education, bilingual education, STEM courses, and support positions. The survey found that districts in towns and rural areas in east-central and west-central Illinois had more vacancies.

State Superintendent [Tony Sanders](#) applauded Pritzker for creating a plan to support teacher hiring.

“The experience of teaching is incredible,” [Sanders](#) said. “It is not teaching itself that’s causing the teacher shortage but the systemic inequalities present in our most under-resourced districts.”

The State Board of Education last year created [a \\$4 million grant](#) to support teachers who wanted to get a bilingual educator endorsement. The state has also expanded the Minority Teacher Illinois Scholarship, which is aimed at increasing the number of teachers of color and bilingual educators, to [\\$4.2 million](#). Under Pritzker’s recent budget plan, he proposed another increase to the scholarship [to a total of \\$7 million](#).

The general assembly will have to approve Pritzker’s new initiative in the 2024 budget at the end of the current legislative session.

Samantha Smylie is the state education reporter for Chalkbeat Chicago, covering school districts across the state, legislation, special education, and the state board of education. Contact Samantha at ssmylie@chalkbeat.org.

– Mix 1069.com –

Pritzker proposes program to address teacher shortages in Illinois

March 4, 2023

ELGIN, Ill. – Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker is proposing additional education funding to address teacher shortages across the state.

Data from the Illinois State Board of Education shows 3,558 unfilled teaching positions as of October 2022.

Pritzker on Friday announced the proposed Teacher Pipeline Grant Program. An additional \$70 million over the next three years will provide support to 170 school districts. Districts that receive funding will have flexibility to spend it however they want.

“Schools have their own unique characteristics. And the Teacher Pipeline Initiative that I’ve proposed is designed to allow districts to hone in on the strategies that work best for their communities,” Pritzker said. “Whether that’s enhancing immediate incentives like signing bonuses, or housing stipends, or tuition assistance.”

The funding could also be used to support current teachers by providing materials and supplies.

Pritzker was joined by **Dr. Tony Sanders**, who started his role as state superintendent on Feb. 23rd. He previously served as **superintendent of School District U-46** in Elgin.

In his time at **U-46**, **Sanders launched Horizons4U**, which was a collaborative effort between the district and neighboring universities and colleges to cover tuition costs for employees in the district, if they pledge to work at **U-46** for at least five years.

“It’s not teaching itself that’s causing a teacher shortage; it is the systemic inequities present in our most under-resourced districts. The Teacher Pipeline Grant Program provides these districts with the resources they need to solve local challenges to recruitment and retention and remove barriers preventing aspiring educators from pursuing the calling to teach,” **Sanders** said.

The ISBE will also spend \$6 million in federal funds to work with a marketing firm on a statewide recruitment campaign.

– The Observer –

Dr. Tony Sanders Farewell Celebration

“You’ve made a lasting difference and a legacy.”

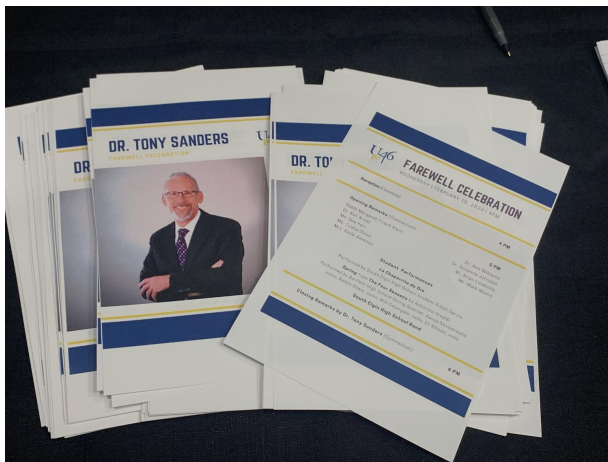
-Rabbi Margaret Frisch Klein

March 4, 2023

By Yesenia De La Torre



Dr. Tony Sanders during the reception shaking hands with an attendee at his farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. Yesenia De La Torre

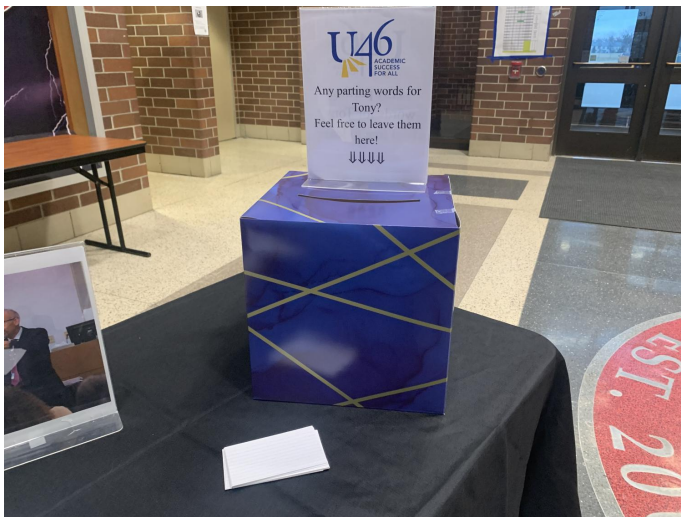


Flyers of farewell celebration situated at the entrance table for guests to grab at **Dr. Tony**

Sanders' farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. Yesenia De La Torre



Photos of **Dr. Tony Sanders** placed on an entrance table at his farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. Yesenia De La Torre



Attendees were able to leave parting words for **Dr. Tony Sanders** at the entrance table at his farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. Yesenia De La Torre



Dr. Tony Sanders posing with attendees during the reception at his farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. Yesenia De La Torre



Dr. Tony Sanders during the reception posing with **Streamwood High's dance team** and mascot at his farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. Yesenia De La Torre



South Elgin High School Band was in attendance providing music while guests were entering the gymnasium at **Dr. Tony Sanders'** farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. Yesenia De La Torre



Dr. Tony Sanders and the Board of Education sitting while Rabbi Margaret Frisch Klein gives her opening remarks at Dr. Tony Sanders' farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. Yesenia De La Torre



South Elgin High School student Xitlali Garcia performing La Chaparrita de Oro at Dr. Tony Sanders' farewell celebration at South Elgin High School on Feb. 15, 2023.
Yesenia De La Torre



Bartlett High School's string quartet performing Spring from The Four Seasons at Dr. Tony Sanders' farewell celebration at South Elgin High School on Feb. 15, 2023.
Yesenia De La Torre



Dr. Tony Sanders addresses **U-46 board of education** during his closing remarks at his farewell celebration at **South Elgin High School** on Feb. 15, 2023. *Yesenia De La Torre*

After 15 years of working for **School District U-46**, **Dr. Tony Sanders** is moving up to be the next Illinois State Superintendent of Education. To celebrate all that work he has done, **U-46** hosted a farewell celebration on Feb. 15 at **South Elgin High School**. During the event, attendees were able to speak with **Sanders** and have their picture taken in the common area.

Opening remarks and student performances were held in the gymnasium. Rabbi Margaret Frishch Klein was the first speaker of the night.

“We’re here today to bid farewell to a friend, to a tireless worker, to someone who really cares about kids and education,” Klein said. “You make it clear that every person in **U-46** counts, the bus drivers, office workers, food service people and the janitors. That is the culture you have set.”

Dr. Suzanne Johnson who was named **interim superintendent of U-46** later explained the story that inspired the scepter that **Sanders** received as a gift from his colleagues. “As members of the executive cabinet of **U-46** we spend a lot of time together, so we started creating games,” **Johnson** said. “And in a short amount of time we needed a

trophy, the trophy was not good enough. We wanted a scepter.”

Johnson further explains that **Sanders** suggested a new name for the scepter calling it the scepter of recognition.

“The rules are really simple, you identify a colleague to recognize for their contributions,” **Johnson** said. “Something they have done to uplift our students, each other, and our system.”

Brian Lindholm, who is **Chief of Staff at U-46**, presented the scepter that was given to **Sanders**.

“We’ve each attached something on the scepter for **Tony**,” said **Lindholm**. “We’d like him to take it for keepsake.”



Gallery|5 Photos

Yesenia De La Torre

*Throughout the column of the scepter, it includes stickers of all **U-46 schools**.*

After the opening remarks, **South Elgin High School student Xitlali Garcia**, also known as

“La Chaparrita de Oro”, performed. Followed by Bartlett High School’s String Quartet performing “Spring” from “The Four Seasons.”

Sander’s accomplishments include expanding the dual language program and working on the dual-credit program at Elgin Community College.

“I hope to address the educator shortage along with coming up with strategies to address that,” Sanders said. “We have a lot of schools not performing at the level that they should be and I’m trying to figure out how we can push support for those schools.”

Sanders has hopes to do a statewide tour and meet with other superintendents across the state along with union leaders and management groups that work in public education.

“First is listening and learning,” Sanders said. “As well as attend board meetings to get to know a new school board.”

Sanders base of operations will be both in Chicago and Springfield.

“It’s exciting, it’s not something I would’ve expected,” Sanders said. “To be honest it has always been my dream job, it’s an honor.”

– Elgin Courier-News –

Bill aims at police ticketing students

New proposal would prohibit procedure for minor misbehavior

March 5, 2023

By Jodi S. Cohen - ProPublica and Jennifer Smith Richards - Chicago Tribune

A new bill in the Illinois House aims to stop schools from working with police to issue students tickets for minor misbehavior, a harmful and sometimes costly practice that many districts have continued despite pleas to stop from the state’s top education officials.

An investigation by ProPublica and the Chicago Tribune revealed last year that school-based ticketing was rampant across Illinois, with police writing

citations that can result in a fine of up to \$750 for conduct once handled by the principal's office.

A 2015 Illinois law prohibits schools from fining students as a form of discipline; school officials instead have been referring students to police, who then ticket the students for fighting, littering, theft, possessing vaping devices and other violations of local ordinances.

The new legislation, introduced last month, would amend the state's school code to make it illegal for school personnel to involve police to issue students citations for incidents that can be addressed through a school's disciplinary process.

"We have to close that loophole and end school-based ticketing," said Rep. La Shawn Ford, a Democrat from Chicago who is sponsoring the legislation.

"There is no place for this type of system to be in our schools."

Ford's legislation deals only with school tickets, which are issued for civil violations of local laws and often are adjudicated in administrative hearings. The bill is not intended to stop police from arresting students for crimes. It would also not prevent schools from seeking restitution from students for lost, stolen or damaged property.

After the Tribune and ProPublica began publishing the investigative series "The Price Kids Pay" in April 2022, then-state education Superintendent Carmen Ayala urged schools to stop working with police to ticket students and "consider both the cost and the consequences of these fines."

The investigation documented about 12,000 tickets written to students over three school years and also found that, in places where information was available on the race of ticketed students, Black students were twice as likely to be ticketed as their white peers.

Some school districts heeded Ayala's plea or scaled back on ticketing, but new reporting shows that many others have continued the practice into this school year.

Over the last seven weeks ProPublica and the Tribune sought new ticketing records for roughly 60 Illinois schools in districts that had some of the highest numbers of citations in previous years. Reporters have been able to obtain ticket records in 37 of those schools so far and found that students in 26 — or

70% — of them have been ticketed this school year, though some districts have scaled back the practice.

Ticketing has continued even in District U-46, the state's second-largest district, where then-Superintendent Tony Sanders had been shocked to learn of the practice and told his administrators and police working in district schools to stop ticketing students. At the same time he tweaked the student code of conduct to limit when schools should involve police in student incidents.

Sanders, who took over last week as the new state superintendent, said Wednesday he was “appalled and saddened” to learn that students are still being cited by school-based police, known as resource officers, in some of the district's schools.

At South Elgin High School in U-46, students have not received any tickets this year, compared with 83 last school year. But police have ticketed students at the district's Bartlett High School, most often for fighting and possession of cannabis, with fines between \$50 and \$250.

At the two U-46 high schools in Elgin, students have been ticketed, but city officials initially assigned them to counseling or another community program instead of a fine.

“I tried to do it by saying, ‘Effective immediately, we’re not doing it any longer.’ That clearly didn’t work,” Sanders said in an interview.

“I think legislation is needed. I think professional development for staff in schools and school resource officers is needed. You can’t just say, ‘No more ticketing,’ and have that be effective.”

The Illinois State Board of Education supports Ford's legislation, Sanders said, and is helping shape the language of the final bill.

U-46 district spokesperson Tara Burghart said administrators have been told they cannot sign tickets as complainants. She said the schools don't decide whether to ticket and fine students; the police and municipalities do.

Ticketing students is also still routine at McHenry Community High School in McHenry, Stagg High School in Palos Hills and Plainfield South High School on the border of Plainfield and Joliet, for example.

At Stagg, police have written students more tickets so far this school year than in all of the 2021-22 school year. Most of the tickets were for tobacco vaping devices or cannabis, records show.

A spokesperson for Consolidated High School District 230, which includes Stagg, said the district believes that school officials “are obligated to inform local police” when a city ordinance is violated.

“If a student is smoking or vaping while at school, they are still breaking the law and there are consequences to those actions,” spokesperson Jennifer Waterman wrote in an email. “Smoking at school does not preclude police from enforcing the law. We take all offenses seriously. We want our halls to be clean, safe and secure.”

In East Peoria Community High School District 309, where students this year have continued to get tickets for theft, fighting and possession of cannabis and vape materials, Superintendent Marjorie Greuter said the school still refers students to police for tickets so the school doesn’t become a place where young people can break the law without consequences.

“This would, in effect, make the school a ‘safe’ zone for breaking an ordinance,” she said.

East Peoria police records show that officers ticket young people at the high school more than anywhere else in the city.

At schools throughout the state, students and their families have continued to pay a high price.

McHenry High School students have been issued more than 50 tickets so far this school year, and the city has imposed at least \$7,500 in fines and fees, records show. High school students in Oswego got more than 40 tickets totaling over \$7,000. At Jacobs High School in Algonquin, police have written 28 tickets at \$100 each, police records show.

In all, at 11 high schools in McHenry, Palos Hills, Oswego, Algonquin and Plainfield, the fines for about 250 tickets totaled more than \$36,000. (Oswego, McHenry, Algonquin and Plainfield school officials did not respond to requests for comment.)

“It is not an effective tool when you write these tickets,” Ford said. “Children are children. They don’t pay. It drives the parents deeper in debt and causes

them to be responsible. It is just a total economic injustice.”

Ayala similarly said in her letter to school officials last April that issuing tickets does not lead to positive changes in behavior.

“There is no evidence that tickets lead to fewer fights or less vaping,” she wrote.

The steep costs associated with ticketing drew the attention of Debt Free Justice Illinois, a coalition of advocacy groups working to end fines and fees for youths in the justice system. That group is behind efforts to change Illinois law in response to the Chicago Tribune-ProPublica investigation.

“There’s an increasing recognition of the financial penalties that go along with this and the impact of those financial penalties,” said Lisa Jacobs, an associate director with the legislation and policy clinic at Loyola University Chicago School of Law who has been working with the coalition.

Some communities have scaled back how often students were ticketed and for what reasons.

Last school year, for example, police in Woodstock, northwest of Chicago, wrote 87 tickets to students in Woodstock Community Unit School District 200, mostly for tobacco and cannabis possession. This school year they have issued 10 tickets, all but one for fights, police records show.

In some places, such as Bloom Township High School District 206 in the south suburbs and Naperville Community Unit School District 203 in the western suburbs, records from the districts and police show no citations issued to students this school year. Last school year police issued nearly 60 tickets to Bloom Trail students and about 30 to Naperville high school students.

Bloom officials said last spring they would end the practice of ticketing, while Naperville police said they have shifted to less punitive forms of discipline.

“While our emphasis was never solely on citations, our policy now focuses even more closely on restorative justice measures, which is likely responsible for the decrease in tickets,” Naperville Police Chief Jason Arres wrote in a statement.

He said police department rules call for “fair and consistent” handling of incidents involving young people, “and we will remain committed to that moving forward.”

But Naperville has continued to prosecute a former Naperville North student

who received a citation for theft in 2019 after she said she mistakenly took another student's AirPods.

Now a college student, Amara Harris has maintained her innocence and refused to pay a fine. Her case is expected to go to trial this year.

Illinois Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford, a Democrat from suburban Maywood, said she supports Ford's legislation. Lightford was the chief sponsor of the 2015 law, known as Senate Bill 100, that broadly overhauled school discipline in the state, including a ban on fining students as punishment.

Lightford lamented that some school districts have found ways to get around the 2015 law, which did not penalize school districts for noncompliance.

"School districts have to be accountable for laws that we pass that they do not implement," Lightford said.

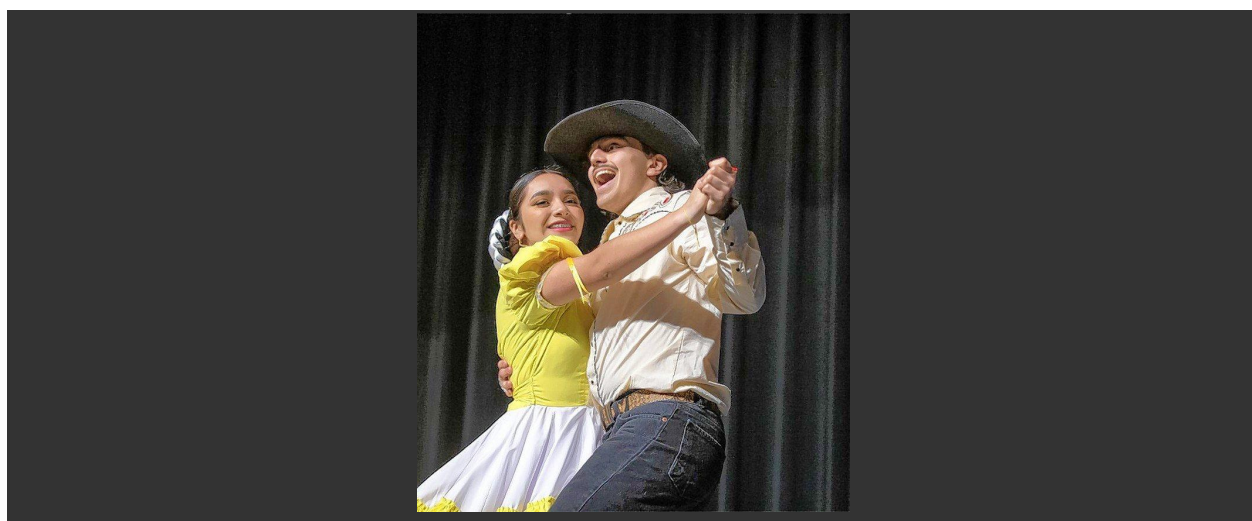
But Ford's new bill includes no oversight or enforcement measures for any districts that continue having students ticketed at school.

This story is a collaboration between the Tribune and ProPublica. Students from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism contributed to this reporting by filing public records requests.

– Daily Herald –

High school finalists to compete in U-46 TalentFest

March 6, 2023



Junior Wendy Hernandez and senior Jonathan Miranda perform a Mexican folklore dance to “El Huarachazo de Sonora” during the **Elgin High School** talent show on Feb. 16. The pair finished in first place and will represent their school in the **U-46 district TalentFest** competition at the Hemmens Cultural Center on Tuesday, March 7. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)



Elgin High School sophomore Sebastian Siwiec plays Chopin’s “Fantasy Impromptu” on the piano at the school’s talent show. Siwiec finished in second place and will represent his school in the **U-46 district TalentFest** competition. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)



*From left, Alegres de Chicago — **sophomore Brian Lara, senior Rodolfo Lopez Jr., and junior Hugo Gonzalez** — perform “Tengo Miedo” and “El Sinaloense” at the **South Elgin High School** talent show Feb. 10. Alegres de Chicago took first place, and is one of the two acts to represent their school in the **U-46 district TalentFest** competition on March 7. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)*



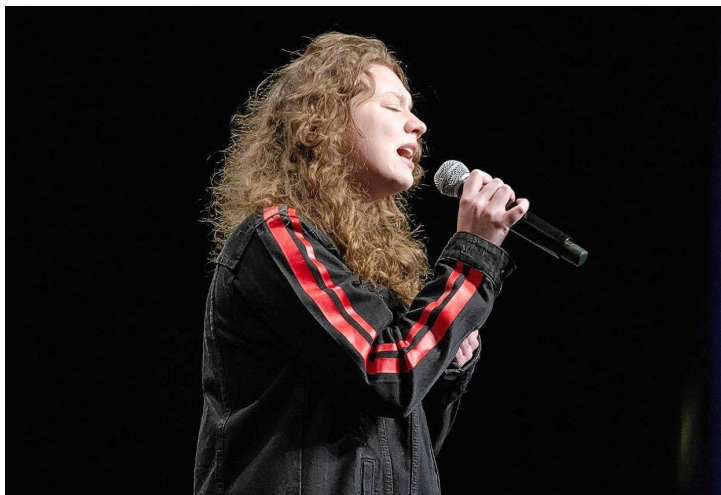
***Streamwood High School sophomore Teegan “Tee” Willey** performs “Mr. Cellophane” from the musical “Chicago” during the school’s talent show on Feb. 9. Willey was one of the two top winners and will represent **Streamwood** at the **U-46 TalentFest** competition. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)*



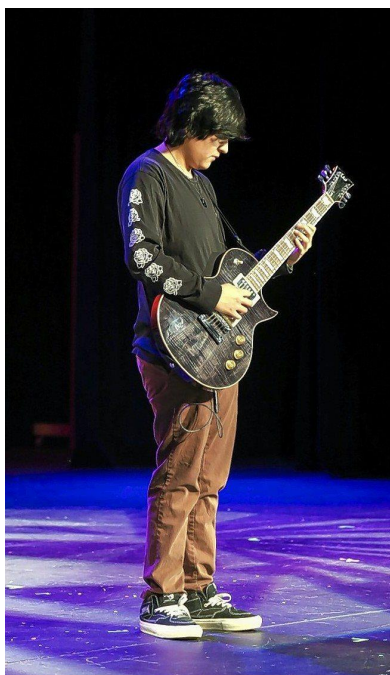
The band DV8, with junior Evander Campbell, sophomore Eduardo Casio, Liam Mayo, Class of 2022, and junior Denis Ulrikas, performs “Please Please Me” by the Beatles and “Breed” by Nirvana at the Streamwood High School talent show. DV8 was one of the two top winners and will represent their school at TalentFest. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)



Bartlett High School senior Angel Salas plays a cuatro as he performs traditional Venezuelan music during the Bartlett High School talent show on Jan. 25. Salas finished in first place and will represent his school in the district-wide TalentFest competition. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)



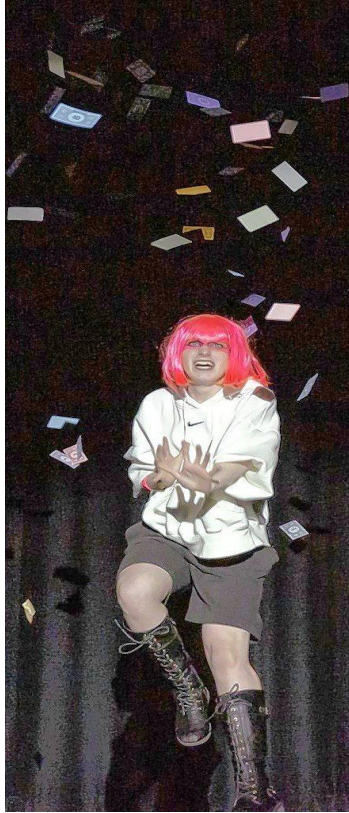
Bartlett High School junior Victoria Smutek sings “All I Ask” by Adele during the school’s talent show on Jan. 25. The second-place finisher will be one of two acts representing **Bartlett High School at U-46 TalentFest** on March 7 at the Hemmens in Elgin. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)



TalentFest qualifier **Ruben Fuentes, a junior at Larkin High School**, performs along to “I Used to Make Out with Medusa” by the metalcore band Bring Me The Horizon. Fuentes will be one of two acts representing **Larkin** at **U-46 TalentFest**. (Courtesy of Christy Lee)



*TalentFest qualifier **Nayeli Wood, a senior from Larkin High School**, performs on Feb. 23. Nayeli sang the Amy Winehouse song “Tears Dry on their Own.” Wood is one of the two top winners and will represent her school in the U-46 TalentFest competition at the Hemmens on Tuesday, March 7. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)*



South Elgin sophomore Colin Fredericks dances to Lady Gaga during the school's Feb. 10 talent show. Fredericks finished in second place and will be one of two acts representing South Elgin High School at TalentFest. (Courtesy of John Konstantaras)

Elgin Area **School District U-46's** talented high schoolers will get to showcase their skills at the 12th annual TalentFest, set for 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 7, on the main stage at the Hemmens Cultural Center, 45 Symphony Way, Elgin.

Each year, TalentFest provides an opportunity for the creativity of **District U-46** students to be showcased on a professional stage in front of family, friends, peers, and community members. The contest features 10 acts made up of two finalists chosen from each of the five district high schools: **Bartlett, Streamwood, South Elgin, Elgin and Larkin**. After these 10 acts perform, the audience will vote for their favorites.

The top five acts advance to the second phase of the night, where they will perform again. A panel of judges will select the first-, second- and third-place winners. In addition, the

school whose two acts receive the most total audience votes during intermission will be awarded the traveling TalentFest Trophy. Last year's winner of that trophy was **Elgin High School**.

This year's celebrity judges are Rise Jones, originator and coordinator of Hamilton Wings; Dianha Ortega-Ehreth, executive director of Centro de Informacion in Elgin; and **Jaimie Giraldo, coordinator of Fine Arts in U-46**. The emcee is Dave Daubert, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Elgin.

Tickets for TalentFest 2023 are \$5 and can be purchased online at [Hemmens.org](https://hemmens.org), by phone at (847) 931-5900, or at the door. TalentFest is made possible with the support of the **U-46 Educational Foundation** and the Elgin Cultural Arts Commission.

– Daily Herald –

School upgrades, term limits and new fire stations on ballot in Cook, Lake counties

March 6, 2023

By Mike Zawislak



McKinley Elementary School is one of several schools in Elgin Area **School District U-46** that could be rebuilt if voters approve issuing \$179 million in bonds to cover a portion of a massive building program. - Rick West | Staff Photographer

Elgin Area School District U-46

Elgin Area **School District U-46** seeks to borrow \$179 million to help cover a building program expected to cost more than \$300 million.

The bulk of the proposed work focuses on replacing five aging elementary schools, including Lowrie and McKinley, both of which were built in Elgin in the 1800s.

Three other schools -- **Century Oaks in Elgin, Parkwood in Hanover Park and Glenbrook in Streamwood** -- also would be rebuilt. Those three schools were built in the 1970s, but the pod-style layout for classrooms no longer is efficient, officials have said.

Though the district is asking for \$179 million, officials stressed approval would not result in a property tax increase, as **U-46** plans to replace retiring bond debt with new debt. However, taxes would go down if voters rejected the request.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

– Daily Herald – In Kane and DuPage counties, ballot questions involve new schools, libraries and police station

March 6, 2023

By Alcia Fabbre and Susan Karkauskas



McKinley Elementary School in Elgin is one of several schools in Elgin Area **School District U-46** could be rebuilt if voters approve \$179 million in bonds to cover a portion of a massive building program. Rick West | Staff Photographer



Century Oaks Elementary School is one of several schools in Elgin Area **School District U-46** could be rebuilt if voters approve \$179 million in bonds to cover a portion of a massive building program. Rick West | Staff Photographer

A previous version was incorrect about what would happen to Central High School, if voters OK building a new high school.

From plans to build new schools and libraries to a park district's proposal to construct a community center, voters in DuPage and Kane counties will weigh in on various referendum questions in the April election.

Here's a look at some of them on the ballot:

Elgin Area School District U-46

One of the larger funding requests comes from the state's second-largest school district, where officials want to borrow **\$179 million** to help cover a building program expected to cost more than \$300 million.

The bulk of the building program will focus on replacing five aging elementary schools, including **Lowrie and McKinley**, both of which were built in Elgin in the 1800s. Three other schools -- **Century Oaks in Elgin, Parkwood in Hanover Park and Glenbrook in Streamwood** -- also would be rebuilt. Those three were built in the 1970s, but the pod-style layout of the classrooms is no longer efficient, officials have said.

"Many of us have toured the older buildings, and they're not conducive to a 21st-century education," **school board member John Devereux** said. "It's really essential to get that work done."

Though the district is asking for \$179 million for the building program, officials stress approval would not result in a property tax increase. The district plans to replace retiring bond debt with new debt. However, taxes would go down if voters rejected the measure. **U-46** will use reserves to pay for the remainder of the building program.

To read the full article, click [here](#).