

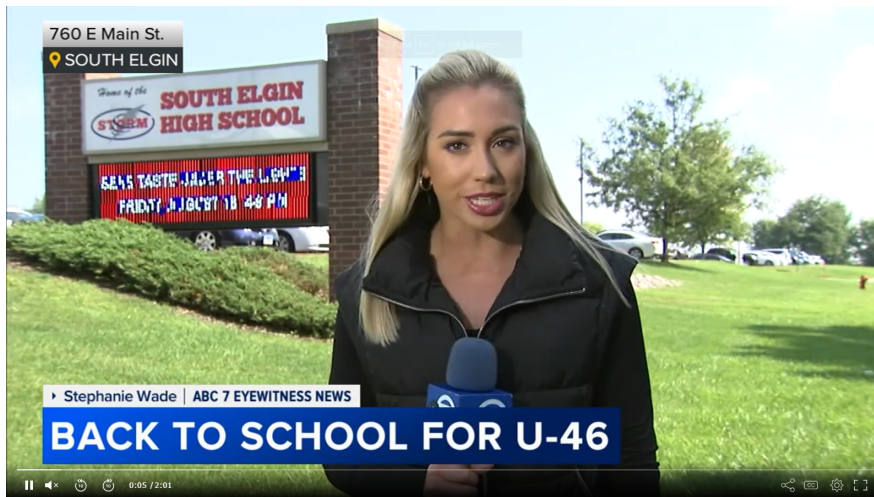
Press Clippings - 8/15/2023

- ABC7 -

Back to school: Elgin students return to class with new superintendent

By: Stephanie Wade

Tuesday, August 15, 2023



Elgin, Illinois students at School District U-46 went back to school with a new superintendent on Tuesday

[Click here to watch segment](#)

ELGIN, Ill. (WLS) -- It was back to school on Tuesday for more than 35,000 students across Elgin's **School District U-46**.

And, with the new school year comes new leadership. For the first time in nearly a decade, U-46 has a new superintendent.

"I'm super excited to be back. I miss the school atmosphere so much," said Kyla Bradford, a junior student.

It was all smiles as students walk through those doors for a fresh school year.

"I get a little jittery because I'm so excited. I love being back and meeting more of my teachers, meeting, new people," Bradford said.

Bradford said she's ready to take on the new year, hoping it's one of normalcy after COVID-19 issues.

"COVID definitely was a crazy year. Swinging back into everything. It was a little bit harder just because we were so used to being at home. But, I'm happy to put on regular

clothes again, I'm happy to have a reason to go outside, I'm happy to be able to go outside," Bradford said.

A new district leader at the helm, Dr. Suzanne Johnson, is not unfamiliar with these halls.

A U-46 graduate herself, this is her first year as superintendent.

"I am a graduate of U-46, so I'm actually graduate of Elgin High School," Johnson said.

As a teacher and prior building administrator at Bartlett High School, she said this district is special.

"It's hard to put into words the feeling. I am so very proud to be able to return, and to provide service to the community that I feel has always given me so much," Johnson said.

Her focus this year is on ensuring every day is a safe day for students, and that they feel they belong.

"Welcoming our students back, welcoming students who are new, welcoming new staff members, and households and families. Some of our families haven't had the opportunity to necessarily connect and participate and engage with our schools in the way that they would have pre-COVID," Johnson said.

District officials said they're working on plans to replace or renovate some of the older school buildings. The superintendent said that work will take place over the next several years.

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- WBBM News Radio -

New school year begins for District U-46 as administrators attempt to fill vacancies

Aug 15, 2023



[**Listen to article**](#)

ELGIN, Ill. (WBBM NEWSRADIO) --Summer is over for more than 35,000 students in Elgin **District U-46**, as the state's second largest school district began classes this morning.

The new year is beginning with more than 160 new teachers fresh from orientation earlier this month. New Superintendent Suzanne Johnson told parents in a recorded message they have a lot to look forward to.

"This year is full of promise for us all," she said. "Our schools are buzzing with anticipation and I'm eager to witness the achievement of each and every one of our students."

The Elgin Courier News reported last week the district still has dozens of teaching positions to fill and is challenged by low unemployment. The district is also short about a dozen bus drivers, but has more than last year.

- Courier News - Students head back to U-46 schools after the summer break, happy to see old faces, meet new ones

*By Mike Danahey
Aug 15, 2023*



Leah Wagner, 7, poses for a photo with Amanda Zyrek, her second-grade teacher at Huff Elementary School in Elgin, on the first day of the new school year. Wagner was excited that Zyrek, her teacher in kindergarten, was now teaching second grade. (Mike Danahey/The Courier-News)

The start of the new school year at Elgin's **Huff Elementary School** was a whirlwind of activity Tuesday as students and staff greeted familiar faces, met new ones and said hello to District U-46's new superintendent.

"We have about 500 students this year and another 60 or so in our pre-K program, which starts next week," Principal Paula Ek said. "We're welcoming about 100 students here today who came over from Garfield (Elementary School)."

As part of the district's five-year facilities master plan, the 134-year-old [Garfield building was closed at the end of the 2022-23 school year](#) and some of its students moved to Huff. The rest now attend Channing Elementary.



Parents and students gather outside Huff Elementary School in Elgin Tuesday for the first day of classes in the new school year. (Mike Danahey/The Courier-News)

Some of the new faces were students just coming into the district, including 7-year-old Ian Russell, whose family moved to Elgin from Arizona. His mother, Nana, accompanied him on his first day of second grade.

"The staff here has been super helpful and very responsive so far," Nana Russell said as she waited for Ian's class to be let into the building.

The east side school is within walking distance of the family's home, she said, and the weather — almost fall-like on Tuesday morning — a welcome relief from Arizona's record-setting summer heat.

Not far from Russell stood Kelsey Wagner, who kept watch on her 7-year-old daughter Leah, a second-grader, and Lucas, 10, entering fifth grade, as they waited with their respective classes.

Wagner's family has only been in Elgin three years, having relocated from Aurora, so it wasn't so long ago that she was going through the newcomer process herself.

"It's so great here. We can walk to school with a lot of other kids, and my kids have made a lot of friends," Wagner said.

She also loves that Huff has a diverse student body, giving her children a chance to know people from a variety of backgrounds.

Making the day fun for Leah was that her teacher, Amanda Zyrek, also taught her when she was in kindergarten.



New School District U-46 Superintendent Suzanne Johnson, left, and School Board President Sue Kerr were on hand Tuesday for the first day of school at Huff Elementary School in Elgin. (Mike Danahey/The Courier-News)

Zyrek said that was fun for her as well.

“I’m excited to see my students,” she said.

It was the first day of classes for [Suzanne Johnson in her new role as the district superintendent](#), a job she assumed in July. Huff was her first stop in a day in which she planned to visit a half dozen campuses in a district encompassing about 95 square miles. Outside of Chicago, U-46 is the largest district in the state.

Johnson was being accompanied by School Board President Sue Kerr.

“It’s nice to see that we’re finally moving beyond the COVID-19 pandemic,” Kerr said. “Today seems like a normal back-to-school day.”

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

- Daily Herald -

Marching into the new school year: Classes are returning in some suburban districts this week

By: Eric Peterson

August 14, 2023



Drum Major Tanya Gerdzhev wears a "Seniors" T-shirt as she and fellow drum major Anika Tsau lead fellow Palatine High School seniors on their traditional march from the campus football stadium into the school building on the first day of the new academic year Monday morning. *John Starks | Staff Photographer*)

The 2023-24 school year in the suburbs kicked off Monday morning with the return of students to the five schools of Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211, as well as to the schools of St. Charles Unit District 303.

Several other school districts across the suburbs will resume classes this week. Among them is Elgin Area **School District U-46**, which will welcome back more than 35,000 kindergartners through 12th-graders to its 53 schools Tuesday.

The state's second-largest school district, for the first time in nearly a decade, has a new superintendent: Suzanne Johnson, a U-46 graduate and previously deputy superintendent of instruction. Johnson replaced Tony Sanders, who in February became the state superintendent of education.

Also, roughly 1,200 students collectively are returning to Batavia Unit District 101 and Geneva Unit District 304 schools Wednesday.

Seniors at Palatine High School honored tradition Monday by starting the new year with a triumphant march from the campus football stadium to the school building.

The year ahead promises to be a big one at all five District 211 campuses, including at Hoffman Estates High School, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary over the next nine months.

Members of the Class of 2024 are those whose freshman years began amid ongoing COVID-19 mitigations like remote learning, social distancing, upended extracurricular and sports schedules, and masks in the classroom.

- Daily Herald -

District 204 divvies up its final \$8.5 million in federal COVID-19 funding

Kevin Schmit

8/14/2023



Indian Prairie Unit District 204 received \$8.5 million in the final round of federal COVID-19 relief funding. (Daily Herald file photo)

Through three rounds of disbursements, Indian Prairie Unit District 204 received a total of \$13.4 million in federal COVID-19 relief funding.

While that may seem like an immense amount of money, officials said it equates to an allotment of \$497 per student in the state's fourth-largest district. By comparison, the three larger districts -- Chicago Public Schools, **Elgin Area School District U-46** and Rockford 205 -- received an average of \$6,200 per student.

Because of the low allotment per student, District 204 officials said they needed to be mindful in spending the final \$8.5 million of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funding earmarked for fiscal years 2023 and 2024. The money will go toward everything from reducing elementary school class sizes to home-use books and supplies for students.

District 204 serves nearly 27,000 students in Aurora, Bolingbrook, Naperville and Plainfield.

In addition to the federal funding, the district also received \$871,000 from a state reserve fund. Of the federal money, 20% must address learning loss, as must 71.4% of the state funding.

According to officials, District 204 spent \$6.3 million of the funding to support learning loss. The money went toward after-school and summer learning, academic support staff, transportation and other initiatives.

"As a point of pride, we are well above that 20% that we've used to address learning loss," said Louis Lee, the district's deputy superintendent.

A big question going forward, Lee said, is how the district plans to continue programs and staff positions currently funded by the grant money. He said he's confident three of the top priorities -- a mental health coordinator, literacy and math coordinators, and the reduction in elementary school class sizes -- will remain in place.

Those three areas account for about \$2.6 million of the funding for the next two fiscal years.

"We've already been able to secure some confirmations in the budget process that we believe those top three will definitely remain," Lee said.

Lee said there's also a goal to maintain full-time nursing positions, which will cost \$544,310 in federal funding over the next two years. But the continuation of books and supplies for home use in the summer -- which will cost \$1.5 million in 2023 and 2024 -- may not happen.

"This will continue to be a challenge for us that we'll continue to talk through the year about," Lee said.

