

Press Clippings 03-18-21

---Daily Herald---03/18/2021

Editorial: Emails show CTU playing games while kids languish out of school

By: The Editorial Board



Manley High School in May 2020 while CPS schools remained closed due to the coronavirus. (Abel Uribe / Chicago Tribune)

Under pressure from parents, suburban schools are beginning to set reopening dates to offer kids in-person learning before the school year ends. **Elgin-based School District U-46**, Illinois' second largest, **will bring** all students who have been hybrid learning back to school full time beginning April 7.

Gee. Wonder which group of kids still is missing out? Chicago Public Schools, where high-schoolers are stuck between the district, which wants them back in person, and a teachers union that throws up every available roadblock to making it happen. CPS' kindergarten through eighth-grade students already returned to hybrid in-class instruction, and private schools have demonstrated it is safe to resume in-person learning for older grades too.

But even as both sides in this fight appeared to agree on a target return date of April 19 for Chicago high school hybrid learning, and the district sent a note to parents letting them know, CTU President Jesse Sharkey slammed the brakes and fired off his own email, claiming the district jumped the gun.

“Let me be clear: We have no agreement on returning to in-person learning in high schools on any date, nor will there be an agreement until we know our school buildings can reopen safely,” Sharkey countered Tuesday night after the district's email went out. “The CPS email is unfortunately more unilateralism from the mayor's handpicked Board of Education — a way to publicly roll out a boilerplate plan created behind closed doors with no educator support, stakeholder engagement, parent input or student agency.”

What he didn't mention was that the union has been directly involved in the reopening plan, and he personally was included on at least one back-and-forth email discussion about the announcement rollout, including the date of April 19 — and he did not object. According to a correspondence provided to the Tribune, Sharkey basically signed off on the CPS announcement that included the tentative date. He asked for some tweaks to ensure it was understood to be tentative. It was phrased as a “target” date.

So why the sharp reversal when he has been included in the discussions? Did district officials not type exactly what he wanted? Did he get pushback within CTU after negotiating the return date?

We wish there was no need for us to get in the weeds on the tedious negotiations between CPS and CTU. But teachers, parents and the taxpaying public deserve to know the games that are getting played, the posturing and the impossible demands from CTU while Chicago high school students continue to languish out of school. This is just one small example.