

Press Clippings 08/20/20

---The Courier-News--- 08/20/2020

U-46 handing out computers, class schedules this week so students are ready Monday for e-learning at home

By: Rafael Guerrero

Computers and iPads will be distributed and student schedules sent out this week in preparation for District U-46's return to remote learning Monday, district officials told the school board Monday.

The last board meeting before the start of a new school year is typically a chance for administrators to provide one last look at back-to-school preparations, which this year are unlike any other thanks to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The board has seen the work of this team – the cabinet, the administrators, the teachers, the paraprofessionals, bus drivers," Superintendent Tony Sanders said. "There is no shortage of work, and there's not one person that has not stepped in and leaned into the work when it was necessary.

"I know my team has not slept since March 13," he said, referring to the last day in-person classes were held.

Suzanne Johnson, deputy superintendent of instruction, said families were notified to pick up district-issued Chromebook computers or iPad tablets this week. Anyone who was not alerted is asked to call their child's school immediately, she said.

In order to assist low-income students, the Elgin-based district has extended its partnership with Comcast to provide \$10-per-month internet access to qualifying families, Johnson said.

Deputy Superintendent of Operations Jeff King said school computer servers are well equipped to handle an increase of students and staff doing live instruction or accessing online materials.

"Basically, we were preparing three or four years ahead of time for when we would be (one device per student). I am confident that we will handle the volume," King said.

Schedules and teacher assignments will be released before the end of the week, a subject the district has heard a lot of complaints and questions about in the last week, Johnson said.

A typical elementary school day will involve live, simultaneous instruction in the mornings and pre-recorded lessons, independent learning activities, and assignment and exercise completion time in the afternoon, she said.

Middle school and high school students will spend four of their eight daily class periods in live, synchronous instruction. The other periods will be spent in pre-recorded lessons, group activities and activities/lessons.

Elementary school days are to start at 8 or 8:30 a.m. and run until 2 or 2:30 p.m., depending on the school. Middle schools will start at 9 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. and high schools will start at 8:30 a.m. and end at 2:25 p.m.

The district still has 60 vacant teaching positions to fill, although they have made offers to 11 applicants, Human Resources Assistant Superintendent Ann Chan said. Most of the vacancies are in special education and dual-language programs, she said.

Since June, U-46 has hired 400 people across all departments, Chan said.

Several organizations have stepped up to provide childcare services for families who cannot stay home with their children, with programs being offered by the city of Elgin, the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA and other groups, King said.

"It's still evolving but there's at least 15 sites right now that have something out there that parents can sign up for," he said.

Some childcare services are being provided inside the district's high school buildings, which will largely remain closed through the end of 2020.

Sanders said rumors that the daycare services are preventing high school students from returning to their buildings or limiting access are not true.

"Our challenge is size. You're seeing this not just in U-46 but the entire northwest suburbs," Sanders said. "We have 2,000 to 2,800 students typically coming through your doors on a daily basis ... the ability to monitor and protect the health of students when we're told that six feet of social distance, mask wearing and limiting congregating areas to less than 50 people is nearly impossible.

"We don't want to keep them out of our high schools. We will find ways to bring them into our high schools," he said.

---The Patch--- 08/20/2020

Project Backpack Delivers For Students This Fall

The community effort provides backpacks and supplies for families of District 509.

By: Press Release Desk, News Partner

Press release from Elgin Community College:

Project Backpack, a community effort to provide backpacks and supplies for families of District 509, looked a little different this year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Elgin Community College was unable to host the event as in years past. The committee worked to develop an alternative plan for supply delivery to those in need.

For the safety of families and employees, backpacks will be distributed through the local school districts, until supplies last. Proof of fall enrollment and a photo ID may be required.

For students in the Elgin Area School District U-46, some schools have received backpacks and will distribute them at their discretion. If your school does not contact you to pick up a backpack by September 7 and your U-46 student needs one, please call (847) 888-5000 ext. 4211 or ext. 6768.

For other qualifying K-12 districts, parents are asked to reach out to their child's school social worker for information on backpack availability and distribution.

"While we could not host our event this year, our community truly rallied around students and their families," said Megan Highland, student life coordinator, and Project Backpack committee chair. "Thanks to donations from business sponsors and individuals, we were able to fill 1,512 backpacks for the 2020-21 school year."

If you are a Fall 2020 ECC student and need a backpack, visit the ECC Spartan Food Pantry on campus in Building B, Room B175, between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays starting Tuesday, August 18. Proof of fall enrollment and a photo ID are required.

The food pantry will also have pre-assembled food package options available for ECC students in need.

The Project Backpack Committee is made up of individuals from Elgin Community College, ECC Faculty Association, Community Crisis Center, ECCP3, Kane County Regional Office of Education, KCT Credit Union, School District U-46, and Centro de Información. For the most up-to-date information on Project Backpack, like the project on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ECCProjectBackpack/> and visit project-backpack.org.