

Press Clippings 1/19/2022

Chicago Tribune

COVID-19 pandemic worsens hiring woes at Illinois schools, with 88% of districts reporting teacher shortages in new survey --- 1/19/2022

By Karen Ann Cullotta

Nearly 90% of Illinois school districts statewide are struggling with an alarming teacher shortage that has reached a crisis level during the COVID-19 pandemic, officials with an organization of regional superintendents said Tuesday.

The escalating statewide teacher shortage, which officials said is expected to worsen in the coming years, was reflected in the results of a fall survey of more than 660 Illinois school districts by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools.

With the organization's study of the teacher shortage now in its fifth year, the most recent survey data illuminate how during the pandemic, Illinois schools are increasingly struggling to recruit qualified teachers, while also witnessing veteran educators retiring earlier than anticipated because of "tremendous stress," said Mark Klaisner, IARSS president and executive director of a regional office known as West40, which serves school districts in West Cook County.

"At first teachers thought the pandemic was going to last six months, then a year, and now we're knocking on the door of 24 months, so I can't blame them," Klaisner said.

"But I almost weep when I talk to some of the most phenomenal teachers we have, who still love the job, but who tell me they can't afford to take the risk anymore. ... It's understandable, but it's making this situation 10 times worse," he said.



Parents and students arrive at Budlong Elementary School in Chicago on Jan. 12, 2022. Chicago Public Schools students returned to class after the resolution of another dispute between the district and the Chicago Teachers Union that prompted four canceled school days. (Jose M. Osorio / Chicago Tribune)

A critical shortage of school employees, including teachers, was evident earlier this month when dozens of suburban school buildings were temporarily shuttered following winter break in the wake of surging COVID-19-related absences.

Illinois school districts in rural, urban and suburban communities alike report the teacher shortage problem has become a crisis, with 88% of school districts confirming they have a teacher shortage, 77% saying the shortage is getting worse, and 93% saying they expect the shortage will accelerate in the coming years, according to the survey.

School districts also report more than 2,000 positions are either not filled or are assigned to someone who is not qualified — more than double the amount of unqualified workers school districts reported during the last school year, Klaisner said.

A substitute teacher shortage was reported at 96% of school districts — a hardship that forced the cancellation of more than 400 classes and required that instruction be moved online “because schools simply had no one to teach (students) in person,” according to the survey.

The survey found shortages of district administrators are less severe, but they are expected to climb due to retirements and the challenges of finding qualified candidates.

Last fall, officials at **Elgin-based School District Unit 46** — one of the largest districts in the state — struggled to fill hundreds of open positions at its 57 school buildings, including dozens of teachers, 24 food service workers, 17 health services positions and 79 paraprofessionals who assist students in the classroom, Superintendent Tony Sanders said.



At **Laurel Hill Elementary School** in Hanover Park, music teacher Lynne Schefke, who normally works at Huff Elementary School in Elgin, dismisses her students after substitute teaching in a dual language kindergarten

classroom on Jan. 4, 2022. A surge of COVID-19 cases forced Elgin-based Unit School District 46 to close five of its 57 schools due to staffing shortages, including Huff Elementary. (Chicago Tribune)

But while the pandemic has exacerbated hiring needs, the study's findings revealed the "effects of COVID-19 on day-to-day school instruction goes much deeper."

District administrators reported their teachers and staff "are burned out," their substitute teacher pools are decimated as more educators choose to retire or not return to the classroom, and "very public battles over mask and other education mandates are taking a heavy toll."

The survey, which ensured the confidentiality of the participating educators, included a response from one elementary school administrator from northwest Illinois who commented: "Anyone 'on the fence' about becoming or staying an educator is likely not going to be around."

And while the teacher shortage is evident statewide — and across the U.S. — the state's rural school districts reported "the most significant problems and the worst outlook ahead," according to the survey, with the most severe shortages found in West Central and East Central Illinois, each of which has more than 90% of schools reporting shortages.

Illinois State Board of Education spokeswoman Jackie Matthews said Tuesday that officials had not yet reviewed the IARSS survey, but "look forward to continuing to work with IARSS to make policy recommendations to strengthen the teacher pipeline and supports for current teachers."

The number of licensed educators employed in Illinois has grown year-over-year since 2018, Matthews said, and Illinois has "added more than 5,000 teachers to the profession."

"The state's historic investments in school funding have provided school districts with the resources they have needed to create more teaching positions," Matthew said, adding that ISBE has "also focused intently on eliminating barriers to licensure, such as the basic skills test; expanding pathways to licensure for career changes and industry professionals; recruiting and retaining teachers of color; and strengthening the pipeline for current high school students to get a head start on becoming teachers."

"We still have work to do, and we look forward to continuing to engage stakeholders and lawmakers in uplifting this incredible profession," she said.

ISBE officials delivered a more optimistic snapshot of the state's education workforce in October when they released the state's report card for the 2020-21 school year, citing progress made hiring educators of color and improving average teacher salaries across the state.

Illinois school districts added 1,251 more Hispanic teachers and 184 more Black teachers to their ranks, increasing their representation from 5.6% and 5.8%, respectively, of the teacher workforce in the 2016-17 school year to 7.9% and 6% of the teacher workforce last school year, the state reported.

According to ISBE, teacher pay and teacher retention also increased, with teachers earning \$70,705 on average in 2021 — 3.9% more than in 2020 — and remaining in the profession at a rate of 87.1% — a 1.4 % increase over 2020.

State Superintendent Carmen Ayala said at the time that school districts can use portions of the \$7 billion in federal pandemic relief funding allocated to the state's schools to pay parent mentors and tutors, hire additional staff and offer current teachers' stipends and retention bonuses.



State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen Ayala speaks on March 31, 2021, at South Elgin High School during a news conference announcing Illinois K-12 school districts will receive \$7 billion in federal funding to support students as they return to the classroom after distance and hybrid learning due to COVID-19. (Stacey Wescott / Chicago Tribune)

Officials with the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools said the survey on teacher shortages is an important tool to help education leaders and policymakers “identify cracks throughout the educator pipeline and develop a series of short-term and long-term solutions.”

They recommend legislative proposals making it easier for retired teachers to return to the classroom, more scholarships for students hoping to teach in subject areas with the largest teacher shortages, enhanced mentoring programs and licensure processes, and increased benefits, officials said.

“It’s a high-stress job that does not offer a whole lot of pay, and then you put a pandemic on top of it,” said Klaisner, with the state superintendents organization, adding: “We have to be focused on what’s best for our students, because they are getting close to two and a half years of these struggles.”

Elgin Courier-News

City, U-46 working with consultant to find ways to make Larkin Avenue safer for pedestrians, drivers --- 1/18/2022

By Gloria Casas



Students going to and from **Larkin High School** in Elgin can pose safety issues on Larkin Avenue in Elgin, something city and School District U46 officials hope to alleviate by possibly adding such things as flashing lights and a pedestrian island. (Gloria Casas / The Courier-News)

The city of Elgin has earmarked \$250,000 to fund improvements to Larkin Avenue designed to increase pedestrian safety near **Larkin High School**.

Larkin Avenue, which runs in front of the high school, can be a heavily traveled vehicle road, and safety concerns emerge when large groups of students arrive during the morning rush hour and leave mid-afternoon.

An engineering consultant is working with city and School District U-46 officials to determine what should be included in the final plan, city spokeswoman Molly Gillespie said.

Improvements could include such things as multiple rapid flashing beacons, a pedestrian refuge island on Larkin Avenue and fencing along Larkin Avenue extending onto McLean, which would prevent students from crossing in the middle of the block, Gillespie said.

In a joint state, the city and school district said improving safety for both students and drivers is a priority.

“Both the city and School District U-46 are equally committed to instituting whatever measures are needed to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety,” the statement said.

If all goes as planned, the improvements will be in place before the start of the 2022-23 school year in August, Gillespie said.

Money for the work is coming from the riverboat tax fund, which has a \$1.3 million surplus this year.

That surplus is also funding a \$400,000 study of the North Grove Redevelopment Area, which some have suggested could be a good location for a skateboard park. No decision on whether a park will be built has been made, Gillespie said.

Another \$20,000 from the fund will be used to purchase items for what's being described as "block-party-in-a-box." An initiative proposed by Councilman Dustin Good, tables, chairs and other items needed to host block parties will be purchased by the city and made available to residents wanting to hold neighborhood gatherings.

With the three expenditures made, about \$630,000 will remain in the riverboat fund for future discretionary funding, officials said.

There's also a \$1.5 million surplus in the city's general fund budget. The council has set aside \$350,000 of that money for a possible purchasing practices/staffing study, officials said, while the rest will be held in reserve.

Daily Herald

Elgin Community College looking to fill board vacancy ---

1/18/2022

Daily Herald report

The Elgin Community College District 509 is accepting applications through Jan. 21 to fill a vacancy on its board of trustees due to the resignation of Jeffrey A. Meyer.

The appointee will fill Meyer's until the next consolidated election on April 4, 2023.

The candidate must be a citizen of the United States; age 18 or older; and a resident for at least one year immediately prior of the state and the community college district area, which is comprised of **school districts U-46**, 300, 301, and 303.

Those interested can send an up-to-date resume, references, and a letter explaining your knowledge of, or interest, and experience in public community colleges and in particular why you wish to serve as a trustee at Elgin Community College. All submissions must be received by 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 21.

Submit electronically to boardoftrustees@elgin.edu or dkerruish@elgin.edu, or in hard copy, to Board of Trustees, Building B, Room 235.04, Elgin Community College, 1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin, IL 60123.

If you have any questions, contact ECC President David Sam or Diane Kerruish, board recorder, both at (847) 214-7374.

Candidates may be invited to the college for interviews Wednesday, Jan. 26. The board plans to fill the position no later than Feb. 11.

The Examiner of Bartlett

Board vote looming for Dist. U-46 expense items ---

1/19/2022

By Seth Hancock; Note – this story also ran in The Examiner of South Elgin and in The Examiner of Streamwood

The **Board of Education in School District U-46** is set to vote on \$3.4 million in expenditure items at its upcoming meeting on Monday, Jan. 24. The items were presented on Jan. 10.

Included is \$88,000, an increase from \$51,000 last year, to Alignment Collaborative for Education (ACE). U-46 will continue to be the largest individual contributor to the organization despite original promises the district taxpayers wouldn't be funding it at all.

ACE, comprised of business and government entities with a stated purpose to serve U-46, was founded in 2013 under former Superintendent Jose Torres. In 2016, Superintendent Tony Sanders said ACE "is all paid for through fundraising" with the exception of a "portion to kick it off."

Last year, ACE had \$220,000 in revenue with 65 percent going towards two full-time staff, and U-46 represented 23 percent of the funding. This year's increase request would mean 35 percent coming from U-46.

There are no plans to stick to that original promise, and ACE could seek future increases.

Nancy Coleman, ACE's executive director, said "what we are running into is that we do not have program support to be in all the high schools" as the reasoning for the increase.

Asked if this will be a one-time increase, Coleman said "with the more students that we serve, the more funding that we're going to need," and Peter Sikorski, ACE's chairman, said "it really depends."

There are six new programs ACE wants to use the added funding for, the proposal states, including \$6,000 for a freshmen experience program for Larkin and Streamwood high schools' AVID students, \$8,000 for internship preparation, \$4,000 for teacher pipeline job shadowing, \$7,500 to expand dual credit at Elgin Community College, \$5,000 for summer outreach and \$3,000 for a youth empowerment program.

Education fund items include \$1.5 million for network switches from Sentinel Technologies, \$209,808 to the Crisis Prevention Institute for training and materials and \$72,500 for community engagement, surveys and communications with Creative Entourage, LLC.

Operations and maintenance fund items include \$1.2 million for lintel and window replacement at Elgin's Ellis Middle School with Northwest Contractors, Inc., and a three-year agreement with Cintas, Inc. for annual fire alarm inspections and testing costing \$67,988.

From the nation's taxpayers through grant funds, the district is asking for \$144,750 for a consultant through Gorbold Behavioral Consulting. The proposal states: "This is a supplementary contract to the \$85,000.00 approved by the Board of Education in August 2021."

The Examiner of Bartlett District U-46 pondering debt refinancing option --- 1/19/2022

By Seth Hancock; Note – this story also ran in The Examiner of South Elgin and in The Examiner of Streamwood

The **Board of Education in School District U-46** was presented with a debt refinancing proposal at its meeting on Monday, Jan. 10.

Two resolutions were presented allowing the issuance of general obligation (GO) bonds in not-to-exceed amounts of \$96 million and \$44.8 million which are set for a vote on Jan. 24.

The proceeds would be applied to a 2015A GO limited school bond series which has \$44.3 million in outstanding principal and a 2015D GO refunding school bond with \$101.6 million in outstanding principal. They are part of five outstanding bonds for the district, and both have an average interest rate of 5 percent.

Robert Lewis, with PMA Securities, said the 2015A bond was non-referendum and "those were issued through the authority that's in the School Code but is limited by the property tax extension limitation law. The 15D bonds were originally authorized by referendum. So, because there's two different sources of authorization, you have a separate resolution for each."

"This does not impact the operating funds," Lewis said. "It would go directly towards a lower tax bill."

If locked in now, Lewis estimated a savings of \$18.7 million on the 2015D bond and \$9.7 million on the 2015A bond.

Lewis said the issuance would be through a competitive market which is different from previous refunding bonds issued by the district.

“We wouldn’t be going to the public market like we did before,” Lewis said. “We’re directly bidding to the potential investors.”

Term sheets have been distributed to potential purchasers with bids due by Jan. 20. Lewis said that will allow for a report prior to the Jan. 24 vote to provide more accurate savings estimates.

Lewis said he didn’t see much changing before the Jan. 24 vote but did note an announcement of inflation rates would be released, which could affect it. The U.S. Labor Department did release December price inflation rates which showed it at 7 percent, the highest rate in nearly four decades.

If approved, delegates would sign-off on Jan. 24, but the bond wouldn’t close until Oct. 2 of 2023.

Daily Herald

Wheeler-Thomas scores 38, leads Larkin by Bartlett ---

1/19/2022

By Craig Brueske, Daily Herald Correspondent

Larkin senior standout Damari Wheeler-Thomas is highly regarded as a slashing guard who can take the ball to the basket or stop on a dime for a pullup jumper.

You can add potent 3-point shooter to his ever-growing repertoire.

Wheeler-Thomas scored a game-high 38 points, connecting on all 6 of his 3-point attempts, to help lift the Royals (19-2, 10-0) to a convincing 69-53 Upstate Eight Conference victory over host Bartlett (13-4, 7-2) Tuesday night.

"I told him after the game I was glad that I don't have to see him again -- unless it's in the supersectional," said Hawks coach Jim Wolfsmith. "If I have that, I'll be a very happy man to see him one more time.

"He's that kid. He's the most unguardable player in our conference."

After Bartlett grabbed an early 2-0 lead on a right-handed baby hook shot by 7-foot-3 senior center Conrad Luczynski (24 points, 16 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 blocked shots), Wheeler-Thomas answered with a 3-pointer from the wing.

The 6-foot-1 dynamo scored 11 of his points in the first quarter as the Royals took an 18-14 lead.

"I got hot early and just stayed with it," said Wheeler-Thomas. "It was me being aggressive and opening things up for the rest of us."

Larkin led 37-31 at halftime, as Wheeler-Thomas and Luczynski battled to an offensive standoff -- both players had 18 first-half points.

While the Hawks earned a 19-7 rebounding edge during the first 16 minutes, the Royals played turnover free basketball in the opening half.

"I thought we played well in the first half," said Wolfsmith.

Bartlett whittled a 10-point deficit to 44-40 on a scoop layup from Keegan Kunzer (6 points) with 2 minutes left in the third quarter.

Larkin, however, closed out the quarter with a 9-0 run to extend its lead to 53-40 heading into the final stanza.

Once again, Wheeler-Thomas was at the forefront, igniting the surge with a 3-pointer while adding a high arching shot over Luczynski, and closing the quarter with a driving layup while landing on his back near the side wall.

"The key was staying aggressive," said Wheeler-Thomas. "They (coaches) told me to stay aggressive through every quarter. I wanted to bring it from both ends for the team."

Wheeler-Thomas, who finished 13 of 15 from the field, drained two more 3-pointers in the fourth quarter, and capped the night with a burst to the basket for a layup in the final minute.

"Damari was special," said Larkin coach Deryn Carter. "He is what he is. I'm proud of him -- very happy for him and for our guys. It was a great team win."

Carter wasn't surprised by Wheeler-Thomas' outside shooting display.

"He can shoot it," said the coach. "He's as good a shooter as there is in the area. Is it his strength? Maybe not because of how quick and strong he is with the ball, but he can shoot it with anybody in the league."

Jamarion Stubbs and Fernando Perez added 10 points apiece for the Royals.

"We had a whole bunch of breakdowns in the second half," said Wolfsmith. "It showed us what we have to work on if we want to be a sectional-level team."

The Examiner of Bartlett

Hawks show growth in beating Tomcats 54-49 --- 1/19/2022

By Seth Hancock

The **Bartlett** girls' basketball team battled but came up short in a 37- 32 Upstate Eight Conference game against Glenbard South on Tuesday, Jan. 11 at Glenbard South.

The Hawks fell behind 8-0 at the start and never led, but that was the furthest behind they would be all game rallying to tie it three times.

Bartlett struggled to hit shots shooting 23 percent from the field and was out rebounded 48-32. Both teams struggled at the freethrow line, but Glenbard South got to the line more finishing 9- for-22 compared to 3-for-9 by the Hawks.

"That's kind of been the story of the season, we're getting looks but not everything's falling," said Bartlett coach Tanner Gardon. "I told them before the game we're never going to stop shooting. To stop shooting means almost giving up as a shooter. So, we're going to keep being aggressive, but that's part of the learning process."

Gardon added: "We've been in close games. We're still learning how to finish. A couple shots went in for them, and a couple shots didn't for us."

Laney Stark, who led with 18 points, hit a bucket with 5:47 left to play for the final tie at 29-29. Trailing 33-29, Stark completed a three-point play to pull to 33-32 with 4:32 on the clock, but the Hawks rally ended there.

Samantha Blanchard hit a pair of three-pointers and Amadea Montijo had five points.

The young Hawks squad has struggled in the win column, but Gardon said his team continues to get better.

"It may not show in the win-loss column, but we're getting better," Gardon said. "I know it, the girls know it and the coaching staff knows it. I love where our team's at right now. We're better than where we were at the start of the year."

Bartlett showed that growth with a 54-49 UEC win over East Aurora on Thursday, Jan. 13 at Bartlett. The Hawks overcame a one-point deficit at the half to earn the victory. Bartlett fell 50-35 at East Aurora in their conference opener.

The Hawks are now 4-17 overall and 4-7 in the UEC.

The Examiner of Streamwood

Sabres boys' hoops earn win over Wildcats 54-48---

1/19/2022

By Seth Hancock

The **Streamwood** boys' basketball team got a much-needed confidence boost with a 54-48 Upstate Eight Conference win over West Chicago on Friday, Jan. 14 at "Rosner Arena."

The young Sabre squad, entering with just two wins this season, fell behind early before controlling the rest of the contest.

Cris Calderon, who led with 15 points and three three-pointers, hit a couple key treys in the first half, including an early three for an 8-6 lead which put Streamwood up for good. Saul Zamudio (12 points) scored eight points in the first quarter, including two threes, as the Sabres led 14-6 at the end of the frame.

"We had a couple nice possessions, enough to win," said Streamwood coach Kent Payne. "We made some shots, important shots. Cris made some shots and kind of got us going. Saul did some nice things for us."

Payne added: "It's nice for the kids to get a win. It's been a tough season. Getting a win helps their spirits a little bit." Streamwood led 31-22 by halftime. Although the Sabres didn't lead by more than 12 in the game, they also staved off any attempts at a West Chicago rally with the visitors needing multiple possessions to rally most of the night.

James Donato (eight points), Nicholas Trybulec (seven points, two threes) and Jack Jeschke (five points) all contributed.

The Sabres are 3-16 overall, 2-7 in the UEC, after the win.

"We've been inching and getting better," Payne said. "We've played some good competition this season. We've had our moments where we've been pretty good. We just need to be more consistent."

Streamwood was coming off a 65-29 conference loss at Larkin on Tuesday, Jan. 11.

The Sabres fell behind 25-2 after one quarter and were chasing the rest of the night. The deficit grew to 37-11 at halftime and 58-19 after three quarters.

Elgin Courier-News

After watching Damari Wheeler-Thomas score 38, Bartlett coach Jim Wolfsmith says he's be 'a very happy man' to see the Larkin senior again – in a supersectional-- 1/19/2022

By Paul Johnson for the Aurora Beacon-News



Larkin's Damari Wheeler-Thomas takes the ball to the basket during a game at **Bartlett** on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Courier-News)

When **Bartlett** coach Jim Wolfsmith sees **Larkin's** Damari Wheeler-Thomas, the player that comes to mind as a comparison is former East Aurora star Ryan Boatright.

And Wolfsmith has seen a lot of basketball.

It just so happens that Wheeler-Thomas gave a Boatright-like performance against the Hawks on Tuesday.

The senior guard scored 38 points on 13-of-16 shooting, hitting 6 of 6 from 3-point range, in the visiting Royals' 69-53 Upstate Eight Conference win.

"Since Christmas, he has been playing as well as I've seen him play since he's been there," Wolfsmith said. "I told him after the game I'm glad I don't have to see him again unless it's a supersectional. If I have that, I'll be a very happy man to see him one more time. He's that kid."

Wheeler-Thomas got it started right away for Larkin (19-2, 10-0). He scored 11 of the team's first 14 points and didn't slow down against the Hawks (15-5, 8-2).

“That’s just me staying with it, being aggressive for my team and opening things up for the rest of us,” he said. “They told me to keep staying aggressive every quarter, bringing it on both ends of the court for the team.”



Larkin's Damari Wheeler-Thomas (10) gets past **Bartlett's** Ian Smith during a game in Bartlett on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Courier-News)

The North Dakota State recruit scored 16 points in the first half, but Larkin led just 37-31 at halftime. Conrad Luczynski, a 7-foot-3 senior center, kept the Hawks in it with 18 points in the half.

“I thought the first half we played well,” Wolfsmith said. “Conrad had a good game. I thought everything was solid. We were right there.”

Larkin started to pull away in the third quarter, however, and Wheeler-Thomas was in the middle of it. The Royals ended the quarter on a 9-0 run to take a 53-40 lead, and Wheeler-Thomas scored seven of those points, including a driving layup at the buzzer.

“Damari was special,” Larkin coach Deryn Carter said. “He was just special. He kind of is what he is. I’m very proud of him, very happy for him.”



Larkin's Jamarion Stubbs (5) drives past **Bartlett's** Jacob Magnanao during a game in Bartlett on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Courier-News)

Wheeler-Thomas hit two 3-pointers in the fourth quarter as the Royals led by as many as 16 before closing out the game and taking firm control of the Upstate Eight race. Senior guards Fernando Perez Jr. and Jamarion Stubbs each added 10 points for Larkin.

Wheeler-Thomas is known for his ability to get to the basket, but his 3-point shooting didn't surprise Carter.

"He can shoot it," Carter said. "He's as good a shooter as there is in the area. Is it his strength? Maybe not, just because of how quick he is and how strong he is with the ball. He can shoot it with anybody in the league, and we're living with any of those shots. They were in rhythm, on balance."

Luczynski finished with 24 points and 16 rebounds.



Bartlett's Conrad Luczynski puts up a shot during a game against **Larkin** in Bartlett on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Courier-News)

"He did a heck of a job," Carter said. "He was a horse, and he was everything we think he is. He carried them for a long stretch of time. I just think our guard play wore him down. To play 32 minutes, that's a lot to ask of any high school kid."

Larkin's season has gone as Wheeler-Thomas and his teammates had envisioned.

They had another reason to celebrate Tuesday.

"We're definitely enjoying it," Wheeler-Thomas said. "I'd say we're getting better every single day. That's the main goal, to improve as best we can."

"This was a pretty big statement. We needed this one."

Daily Herald

Kimball Middle School Tigers win basketball championship

--- 1/18/2022

Submitted by Kelly Tuggle



The **Kimball Middle School** Tigers team includes: back row, from left, Daniel Morales Navarro, Thomas Akemann, Lawrence Sallis, and David McFadden; second row, Andrew Saldivar, Anthony Pulgar, Elijah Walker, Xavier Rosas, Jahvion Sowers, Julian Rendon, Ziayre Young, Aden Mora, and Coach Kelly Tuggle; and front row, Juan Patino. *Courtesy of Kelly Tuggle*

Kimball Middle School's Tigers boys' basketball team won against the undefeated Eastview Middle School Wolves in the championship game 46-33.

This is the first time the Elgin Area School District U-46 championship trophy has ever been to Elgin.

These boys, led by coach Kelly Tuggle, worked diligently throughout the season with a record of 9-2, ultimately bringing home the championship trophy.

Geneseo Republic

Geneseo takes team title in home conference meet ---

1/19/2022

By Melissa Pischke

The Geneseo High School gymnastics team hosted Riverside Brookfield and U-46 in a home conference match up on January 12, 2022. The last of two home meets for the season, the team honored their four seniors (Triston Highton, Reagan Lommell, Mallory Setser, and Taylor VanDeVoorde) prior to the meet. At the end of the night, the varsity team won the team title with a season-high team score.

The varsity team took home 4 of the top 6 podium finishes in the all-around competition. Caidence Kies was second in the all-around with a 32.25. Addison Pischke was third with a 31.85 all-around performance. Alexa Jolly (31.45) placed 5th and Emily Wilshusen (31.35) was 6th to join their teammates on the all-around podium. Amelia Henkhaus added valuable points for her team with a 29.55. All five gymnasts reached the podium for their strong floor performances taking 2nd-6th places; Pischke was 2nd, Jolly 3rd, Wilshusen 4th, Kies 5th, and Henkhaus 6th. Kies (1st) and Pischke (2nd) took home the top two finishes on beam. Jolly placed 2nd on vault and Kies was 5th. Kies was 3rd on bars and Wilshusen 6th.

Following in the footsteps of the varsity squad, the junior varsity team placed individuals in 4 of the top 6 all-around. Jaelynn McCann won the all-around (29.5). Reagan Lommell (28.95) was 2nd, Taylor VanDeVoorde (28.7) was 3rd, and Keely Roberts (28.25) was 6th. Roberts won floor and Brooke Boone tied for second. McCann, VanDeVoorde, and Lommell were 2nd-4th on beam, respectively. McCann was 3rd on bars and Lommell was 5th. VanDeVoorde tied for first on vault, Lommell tied for 3rd, and McCann was 6th. The junior varsity team competition was not fully contested.

In the junior varsity-2 competition, Clara Huddleston (24.7) was the top finisher. Jordyn Sedlock was 2nd (22.1), Aubrey Brumbaugh (21.0) was 3rd, Mallory Setser (20.35) was 4th, Leah Roemer (19.3) was 5th, and Skylar Wainscott (18.1) was 6th. Jules Lococo competed on vault.

Coaches Chris and Larry Ward were thrilled with the outcome of the meet; they noted floor was the highlight of the night with all 5 varsity gymnasts hitting their routines. They said each gymnast has been working hard to improve their difficulty in tumbling & dance skills. "It was a great night with wonderful team effort at each level," Ward said. The team travels to Glenbard South and Riverside Brookfield in the upcoming week.