

## Press Clippings 1/5/2022

### ABC-7 Eyewitness News

#### **Elgin District U-46 closes several schools due to COVID-related staffing issues --- 1/4/2022**

By John Garcia

<https://abc7chicago.com/illinois-covid-elgin-school-closures-u-46-schools-closed/11425581/>

ELGIN, Ill. (WLS) -- Five schools in **Elgin U-46 school district**, the second largest school district in the state, are closed Tuesday due to COVID-related staffing shortages.

Patty Galiotos was looking forward to seeing her classroom full of second graders again after holiday break. Instead she was surrounded by empty desks and had plenty of time for lesson planning.

"I look forward to it as much as the kids do, so I was disappointed," she said.

Galiotos teaches at Highland Elementary School, one of the five schools closed for the day. With nearly 400 teachers out sick, mostly with COVID, the district was able to replace fewer than half of them with substitutes.

"Today was exceptionally difficult because of the number of absentees of staff," said Tony Sanders, U-46 superintendent.

Fifty-two other schools in the district remained open Tuesday. Sanders said he intends to do everything possible to keep kids in the classroom and keep as many schools open as possible. He said last year's experience with remote learning was a failure for most students and teachers, and the district does not intend to bring it back this year.

"When they're here, they're learning best. Especially our younger children," said Highland Principal Steve Johnson.

District officials said they are taking it day by day and hoping to reopen schools as quickly as possible, even as soon as Wednesday. They said much of the increase in COVID cases is likely from holiday gatherings, and school may be among the safest places to be.

"School is the right place to be and the safest place to be for students and staff because it is the one place where we do follow the protocols," Sanders said. "We wear masks, social distance to the best of our ability."

That includes on school buses. Roughly two-thirds of District U-46 students take bus transportation to get to school. District officials said they're learning it's almost as difficult to replace bus drivers as it is teachers.

Plainfield District 202 Tuesday also warned parents to prepare for major bus delays because of COVID-related staffing issues.

## **Kane County Connects**

### **School closing update: Five U-46 schools closed Jan. 4 due to staffing shortages --- 1/4/2022**

**Five U-46 schools** are closed today (Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022) due to staffing shortages.

According to a website update from U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders, Highland Elementary, Huff Elementary, Independence Early Learning Center, Parkwood Elementary and Ridge Circle Elementary would be closed today.



Scroll down or [visit the U-46 website](#) for details.

Monday (Jan. 3, 2022) was a non-attendance day for students in Algonquin-based [School District 300](#). According to the district's website, officials extended winter break by one day due to elevated positive COVID-19 cases resulting from the Omicron variant.

The School District reopened for classes today.

## [School District U-46](#)

- [U-46 Facebook Page](#)
- [U-46 Twitter Site](#)

Students are to resume classes on Tuesday, Jan. 4, according to the [U-46 website](#).

## Website Statement from Superintendent Tony Sanders

Dear U-46 Families:

I look forward to our return to in-person learning tomorrow, Jan. 4, 2022. Unfortunately, due to staffing shortages, the following schools will be closed tomorrow:

- Highland Elementary
- Huff Elementary
- Independence Early Learning Center
- Parkwood Elementary
- Ridge Circle Elementary

I apologize for the inconvenience for these families. No remote instruction will be provided at these schools.

We will be reviewing staffing levels day-by-day in making determinations of whether these, or other, schools may have to be closed in the coming days and weeks.

While we have had contact tracers working all of winter break, their priority has been to clear staff members who have tested positive or reported suspected cases. If your student is ill, please ensure you keep them home tomorrow. If your student has tested positive for COVID-19, or is suspected of having COVID-19, please notify your [principal](#) or [school nurse](#) and have your student remain at home until cleared to return to in-person learning.

We are aware that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued updated guidance for the “general public” as it relates to quarantine, they have yet to release guidance specific for school districts. As such, the Illinois Department of Public Health is requiring school districts to follow their guidance from August 2021. The updated guidance could be released any day, and once we receive it we will begin to update our procedures.

As a reminder, masks must be worn in all U-46 facilities by students and staff. Social distancing is encouraged to the extent possible. We also will continue to discourage visitors at this time. If you or your child is unvaccinated, I strongly encourage you to speak to a healthcare provider about the benefits of being vaccinated. If you are vaccinated, but have yet to receive a booster, please do so.

While I regret the need to close five schools due to staffing shortages, I ask for patience as we all deal with the latest surge in COVID-19 cases. I feel so fortunate to live and work within this community where we extend grace in the midst of trying circumstances.

Sincerely,

Tony Sanders

Superintendent, School District U-46

## **Elgin Courier-News**

### **Five elementary schools in District U-46 closed Tuesday because of COVID-related staff shortages --- 1/5/2022** **By Mike Danahey**



Highland Elementary School in Elgin was one of five school building kept closed Tuesday because it didn't have enough staff due to COVID-19 illnesses. (Rafael Guerrero / Courier-News)

**School District U-46** was forced to close five elementary schools and an early learning center Tuesday because of staff shortages caused by COVID-19 illnesses, Superintendent Tony Sanders said.

“There were positions we couldn’t fill across the district because of reported absences,” Sanders said.

The district notified families Monday night that Highland and Huff elementary schools in Elgin, Independence Early Learning Center in Bartlett, Parkwood Elementary School in Hanover Park and Ridge Circle Elementary School in Streamwood would not open Tuesday.

Across the district’s 57 schools, 525 staff called in sick for Tuesday, which was students’ first day back in class following winter break. Of the total number out, 394 were teachers, Sanders said.



School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders (School District U- / HANDOUT)

While substitutes could be found for many classes, 178 positions remained vacant, he said. In some cases, they were able to merge classes or have other staff members fill in, but opted to close those buildings where four to 10 teaching positions couldn't be covered, he said.

As of noon Tuesday, U-46 was seeing its highest number of reported COVID-19 cases since the spike that occurred in late August/early September, Sanders said. Between staff and students, there were 450 suspected or confirmed positive cases, he said.

The district has more than 4,500 full-time employees and almost 2,200 part-time staff. In September, student enrollment stood at 36,090.

Sanders said the district would be taking a day-to-day approach to the situation in determining what schools, if any, need to be closed.

Families will be updated on plans sometime after 5 p.m. daily via email, social media and other means, he said.

"I'd like to thank families for their grace and patience," Sanders said. "Our goal is to do what we can to remain open. Schools are the safest place for kids to be. And there is evidence to show that schools are not spreaders of COVID, particularly compared to other situations.

"In December, a study published by the Education Policy Innovation Collaborative at Michigan State University, using information from Michigan and Washington schools, concluded that in places where the COVID infection rates were under control, in-person learning did not contribute to the spread of the virus."

The district does not have the option of switching to remote learning because it does not have an e-learning program on file with the state that can be used on emergency days.

Sander said the deadline to file such a plan was Sept. 1 and it would have required approval from the U-46 School Board, regional offices of education and the Illinois State Board of Education.

Setting up such a plan wasn't feasible because the district has a large number of students from low-income families and no system through which to outsource services for special needs students, who don't adjust well to remote learning, he said.

E-learning on emergency days would also require negotiating with several employee groups, Sanders said.

Beyond that, he said he believes students and staff have had their fill of time spent on Zoom after using it for months during earlier stages of the pandemic.

"I also believe in the magic and the power of the snow day," Sanders said.

## **Chicago Tribune**

### **More suburban schools close as COVID-19 surge hits teachers. At one district, more than 500 employees are out sick --- 1/5/2022**

**By Karen Ann Cullotta; Note – this story also ran at Yahoo! News**



At Laurel Hill Elementary School in Hanover Park, music teacher Lynne Schefke, who normally works at Huff Elementary School in Elgin, high-fives student Angel Herrera in a dual language kindergarten classroom while working as a substitute on Jan. 4, 2022. A surge of COVID-19 cases forced Elgin-based Unit School District 46 to



close five of its 57 schools because of staffing shortages, including Huff Elementary. (Terrence Antonio James / Chicago Tribune)

Even remote learning is not an option for some students at a growing number of suburban schools, where the spike in COVID-19 cases this week has sidelined teachers and staff, suspending classroom instruction amid a critical statewide shortfall of school employees.

At **Elgin-based Community Unit School District 46** — the second largest school district in Illinois — officials announced that five of its 57 schools were closed Tuesday because of staffing shortages, which unlike previous classroom shutdowns, does not include pivoting to online instruction.

A total of 525 District 46 employees were absent Tuesday, including 394 teachers, with 178 positions left unfilled by substitutes, Superintendent Tony Sanders said. The district employs about 6,000 people, including full- and part-time workers, certified, and non-certified staff.

“We’d rather get as many kids as possible in school safely, because with COVID-19, they’re certainly safer in school than out in the community,” Sanders said.

“We are disappointed we had to make the call to close five schools, but we had too many unfilled positions, and not enough substitutes to stay open,” Sanders said.

In a letter to parents, Sanders apologized for the “inconvenience” caused by the school closures, and advised that “no remote instruction will be provided at these schools.”

The northwest suburban district enrolls around 36,000 students in prekindergarten through 12th grade, nearly 60% of whom are from low-income families.

Teachers and other staff who are not ill at the closed schools, which include Highland, Huff, Parkwood and Ridge Circle elementary schools, and Independence Early Learning Center, were asked to volunteer to fill in at schools that reopened Tuesday, 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 subbing in a dual language kindergarten classroom on Jan. 4, 2022. (Chicago Tribune)

“We will be reviewing staffing levels day by day in making determinations of whether these, or other, schools may have to be closed in the coming days and weeks,” Sanders added.

Staffing shortages due to COVID-19 also forced officials at Niles Township School District 219 to halt their plans to resume in-person, classroom instruction this week, and instead, the district will move to a remote learning, adaptive pause through Jan. 14.

In a letter to parents posted on the district’s website, officials said Tuesday was designated as “an asynchronous, independent remote learning day,” which is intended to “provide students, teachers, and staff the flexibility to get tested for COVID-19 if needed.”

SHIELD testing will also be conducted at the high school buildings for staff and students, officials said.

“Throughout this period of remote learning, we will strongly encourage cameras on for all students to maximize learning and engagement for all,” officials said.

The district is also planning to distribute meals for pickup by students on Tuesdays and Thursdays for the next two weeks at Niles North and Niles West high schools.

Staffing shortages across New Lenox-based Lincoln-Way Community High School District 210 also prompted officials to close buildings, and switch to online instruction through Friday.



In a parent letter posted on the district's website, officials said the district's "difficult decision to transition to remote learning" and follow the district's emergency e-learning plan through the end of the week is "only a temporary disruption to in-person learning."

A state law that predates the pandemic allows Illinois school districts to use preapproved e-learning plans for a maximum of five school days in the case of emergencies, including snow days.

But officials at the Illinois State Board of Education said Tuesday that school districts should not declare an adaptive pause due to staffing shortages.

"If the school is following guidance regarding masking, testing, and identifying and excluding COVID-19 cases and their close contacts, then an adaptive pause should not be necessary to mitigate an outbreak, and students are best served by continuing to provide in-person instruction," ISBE Superintendent Carmen Ayala said in a Tuesday statement.

"Please note that an adaptive pause means a temporary shift to remote learning for attendance days," Ayala said. "Alternatively, schools may choose to take nonattendance days at any time for any reason and make up those attendance days later in the year. A school or school district may only enter into an adaptive pause with remote learning in consultation with the local health department and consistent with guidance or requirements from such local health department."

Dan Montgomery, president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, said the union remains hopeful school districts can get through the next few weeks with as much in-person student learning as possible, but remote learning at some schools might be needed for the short term.

"No one thinks it's better to have remote instruction than in person, and our teachers, students and parents hate it, but we might need to tolerate it for a week or so until we get this latest wave of the omicron down, and are on the other side of it," Montgomery said.

Educators say the trajectory of the latest virus spike will likely determine the severity and longevity of the current school staffing shortages.

"The big question right now is, 'when will this latest surge go down?' " said John Burkey, executive director of the Large Unit District Association, and the former superintendent of Huntley Community School District 158.

“But it’s not just educators that are dealing with this, but the whole society,” Burkey said. “It looks like we’re all going to be facing a tough couple of weeks, but I think we’re all hoping this latest surge will go down as quickly as it went up.”

## **The Examiner of Bartlett District U-46 monitoring ‘fluid’ natural gas pricing--- 1/5/2022**

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

Supply chain issues are causing prices to soar in the natural gas market as **School District U-46** is presenting a procurement contract for approval by the Board of Education.

The proposal, which would allow the district to sign a contract with either Constellation Energy or Mansfield Power and Gas, was presented at the Monday, Dec. 13, 2021 board meeting with a vote planned for Jan. 10.

The district entered into a natural gas contract three years ago at 27 cents per therm, that contract ending this coming April. Sheila Downs, director of plant operations, said the price was 38 cents per therm a month earlier.

“Unfortunately, the current climate is vastly different,” the proposal states. “In fact, natural gas and electricity prices have soared over the past five months as traders focus on a significant year-over-year natural gas storage deficit and concerns of tight natural gas supply ahead of the upcoming winter.”

Sue Kerr, the board’s president, said it sounds “very fluid” and it’s uncertain where prices will be.

Downs said: “That’s correct. It’s a very volatile market currently, and so we’re obviously watching the market.”

Under the current contract, Downs said that “rates change daily” but “it would be very minimal. Now, if we did that and waited for two board meetings, it could be substantial.”

Board member John Devereux asked if it will be affected by waiting until January. Downs said there are still several months on the current contract which gives them months to watch the market and lock in a rate, and she clarified this is to authorize the district to sign a contract and the final rate would be brought back once it’s secured.

“Once we get a rate we feel is competitive, we will lock it in,” Downs said, adding the district works with a consultant.

Board member Veronica Noland asked if the rates are just going up or if they could go down. Downs said “it fluctuates,” but there’s “not a perfect science.”

## **The Examiner of Bartlett Contract renewals up for District U-46 board vote --- 1/5/2022**

**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 \$296,709 in contract renewals at its upcoming meeting on Monday, Jan. 10.

The items were presented on Dec. 13, 2021.

Included is a curriculum and instruction renewal with Renaissance-MyON costing \$256,459, to be paid through the education fund if approved.

The proposal states that MyON’s “an online book database that provides each student, PreK-12, with a personalized digital library.”

It includes English and Spanish fiction and nonfiction books, about 7,000 in total.

“Since last summer when we began to use MyON, students have accessed over 67,000 books through the resource,” the proposal states.

The initial contract, costing \$86,752, was between June 1 and Aug. 31, 2021. This contract would run between Jan. 1 to Aug. 31.

Also ready for a vote is a \$40,250 (education fund) contract renewal with Panorama Education for an “equity and inclusion” survey.

“Conducting this survey of our students helps us to address feedback provided by the Board of Education to ensure we are capturing student voice in our equity work,” the proposal states. “Panorama presents the results through a flexible reporting dashboard, allowing us to disaggregate by school, grade, gender, race/ethnicity, income status, and program participation to identify important patterns in our data. The proposal also includes two interactive ‘data inquiry workshops’ led by Panorama staff that have been valuable opportunities for our teams in previous years.”

## **Aurora Beacon-News**

# **North Dakota State recruit Damari Wheeler-Thomas is ‘a big-time leader.’ Larkin knows it. East Aurora knows it. It pays off again. --- 1/5/2022**

**By Rick Armstrong**



Larkin's Damari Wheeler-Thomas drives to the basket against East Aurora during an Upstate Eight Conference game in Aurora on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022. (Jon Langham / The Beacon-News)

**Larkin** coach Deryn Carter knows what he has in four-year starting guard Damari Wheeler-Thomas, a difference-maker extraordinaire.

Carter said his star player just keeps getting better.

“He looks like a Division I guard playing high school basketball,” Carter said. “He’s just so physical. He’s phenomenal defensively, and today he added rebounding because Dontrell (Maxie) was in foul trouble.

“Damari is just a big-time leader.”

The North Dakota State recruit demonstrated that Tuesday night at East Aurora as the teams met with first place in the Upstate Eight Conference standings on the line.

Wheeler-Thomas had game highs of 23 points and 12 rebounds and made 6 of 6 free throws in the fourth quarter as the Royals held off the Tomcats down the stretch for a 65-58 win.



Larkin's Damari Wheeler-Thomas (10) shoots a 3-pointer against East Aurora during an Upstate Eight Conference game in Aurora on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022. (Jon Langham / The Beacon-News)

It was the first game for Larkin (15-1, 6-0) since winning the holiday tournament title at Jacobs.

On the flip side, it also was the first game back for East Aurora (8-4, 4-1), which opened the season with eight straight wins but has lost four in a row after closing its holiday tournament on a three-game losing streak.

Carter knew it would be a challenge.

“East Aurora plays hard and I knew they were going to play real hard against us, especially with everything that was riding on this one,” Carter said. “If they get the game going the way they had it going there for a while, that’s a huge advantage for them.”

Larkin bolted to a 10-2 lead but the Tomcats answered, buoyed by nine points off the bench in the first half from guard senior Nate Robinson that led to a 28-24 halftime lead.

Senior guard Jullian Acosta, also a four-year varsity starter for East Aurora, praised Robinson.

“We’ve been waiting on Nate,” Acosta said. “We expect a lot more from him. He has been in a bit of a funk. I think that was the best game he’s had.”

Acosta nearly matched Wheeler-Thomas, finishing with a double-double of 17 points and 10 rebounds while adding six steals.

Acosta’s younger brother Jabian added eight points, three blocked shots and three steals.

“These guys have been playing that way since third grade,” East Aurora coach Rick Robinson said. “They’ve always been scrappy pressers like that.”

Jullian Acosta’s 3-pointer with 6:13 remaining in the third quarter gave the Tomcats their biggest lead of the game at 33-24 but it didn’t last long.



East Aurora's Nate Robinson scores a layup as Larkin's Fernando Perez Jr. defends during an Upstate Eight Conference game in Aurora on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022. (Jon Langham / The Beacon-News)

Wheeler-Thomas got help from senior guard Fernando Perez Jr. and sophomore guard Jakob Blakley, a transfer from Marmion. The Royals responded with a 21-4 burst to close the third quarter for a 44-37 lead.

Perez Jr. and Blakley each finished with 17 points.

“Turnovers and missed free throws,” Jullian said, explaining what led to the Larkin spurt. “We have to slow down and be more poised.”

East Aurora stormed back to within two points in the fourth quarter, but Larkin shot 14 of 15 from the free-throw line to salt away the win. The Royals finished 17 of 21 from the line.

“My confidence is probably the highest it’s ever been, on both ends of the floor,” Wheeler-Thomas said. “I knew they were going to come at us.

“Coach said in the huddle in the fourth quarter free throws were going to decide this game.”





East Aurora's Jullian Acosta (23) drives past Larkin's Damari Wheeler-Thomas to scoop in a layup during an Upstate Eight Conference game in Aurora on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022. (Jon Langham / The Beacon-News)

Robinson, the East Aurora coach, pointed to his team's six turnovers in the third quarter.

"We're a better team than we exhibited," Robinson said. "Not to take anything away from Larkin. They're 15-1 for a reason. Deryn's a good coach. He'll get them ready to play."

Robinson also has been impressed with the development of Wheeler-Thomas over the past three seasons he's coached at East Aurora.

"Two years ago, Damari was a sophomore and we had Amarion Savage giving it to him," Robinson said. "Now, he's the senior and sees our sophomore guards and does what Amarion did to him."

## **Daily Herald**

### **Boys' Basketball: Larkin trio too much for East Aurora --- 1/5/2022**

**By Kevin McGavin, Daily Herald Correspondent**

The Tuesday night boys' basketball game had all the trappings of a showdown between two teams undefeated in their conference.

There were invariable runs by both teams, hard-fought possessions and multiple shots each side would like to have back.

In the end, however, **Larkin** escaped East Aurora by amplifying one of the oldest -- yet undeniable -- cliches in the sport: games are truly won -- and lost on many other occasions -- at the free-throw line.

Larkin used a dominant run to close out the third quarter and converted 14 of 16 shots from the foul line in the fourth to secure a 65-58 Upstate Eight Conference victory over the Tomcats in Aurora.

"Our coach told us that if we hit our free throws we would win the game," said Larkin senior standout guard Damari Wheeler-Thomas, who had game-highs of 21 points and 11 rebounds.

The North Dakota state recruit drained all 6 of his free throws in the fourth quarter as Larkin twice had to fight off the Tomcats' reducing the contest to a one-possession game in the last 43 seconds.

"He is Division I guard playing high school basketball," Larkin coach Deryn Carter said of Wheeler-Thomas.

But Larkin (15-1), coming off a holiday championship run at Jacobs, would never have secured its sixth consecutive league victory with the supporting performances by Jakob Blakely and Fernando Perez.

The Royals' duo scored 17 points each.

"No disrespect against anyone else who comes in here, but I knew (the Tomcats) were going to play real hard against us," Carter said. "The league is a little top-heavy right now, so it was a really important game. Those guys (from East Aurora) play so hard."

East Aurora won its first eight games of the season, only to suffer three straight defeats at its holiday tournament last week.

The Tomcats (8-4, 4-1) fell behind early as Wheeler-Thomas triggered an 8-0 run to open the game.

The Tomcats, behind guard Jullian Acosta and Nate Robinson as well as twin reserves Nate Robinson and Stephen Dorsey, rallied with a quarter-closing 16-6 run.

Both teams squandered seemingly easy chances in the second quarter as the Tomcats retained a 28-24 advantage at the intermission.

Acosta then opened the third with five straight points to give the Tomcats a 33-24 lead, the largest for either team on the night.

But the Royals returned the favor with the truly game-altering blitz of the evening.

Twenty-five points later, Larkin nearly monopolized the combined scoring with 21 of the points.

Suddenly, the Royals had a 45-37 lead entering the fourth quarter.

Wheeler-Thomas, in a manner of only seconds, had a field goal in transition and proceeded to steal the inbounds pass for another quick deuce.

Blakely and Perez later added field goals to give Larkin the cushion not only never to be relinquished but also a necessary spread to survive one final East Aurora run.

"We have been focusing on rebounding," Wheeler-Thomas said of a season-long key. "My confidence is probably the highest it has ever been, on both ends of the floor. I knew they were going to come after us."

The expected East Aurora final flurry certainly did materialize as the Tomcats scored seven consecutive points on second-chance rebounds spanning two possessions as Savage drained a long 3-pointer to complete a 5-point possession.

But Perez matched the six Wheeler-Thomas fourth-quarter free throws to keep the Tomcats at bay.

Adrian York scored 7 points for the Royals, meaning their top-four players accounted for all but one of the 65 points.

Acosta finished with 17 points, and Savage added 12 for East Aurora.

"We were never out of the game," East Aurora coach Ricky Robinson said. "When it came time for a crucial basket, we didn't complete it. We were there (during the Royals' decisive third-quarter run) and then they just took off."

## **The Examiner of Streamwood SHS boys' hoops ends skid, win final tourney game --- 1/5/2022 By Seth Hancock**

The **Streamwood boys' basketball team** capped the Jacobs Christmas tournament with a thrilling overtime win over Rockford Jefferson, a 54-48 victory in the Consolation C third place game on Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021.

The game came down to hitting shots in the clutch, which the Sabres did.

"The key was we had a good fourth quarter and hit some big shots from Nick (Trybulec) and Cris (Calderon)," said Streamwood coach Kent Payne. Both Calderon and Trybulec led the Sabres with 14 points and four each of the team's 13 three-pointers.

The Sabres trailed 44-40 going into the final minute of regulation when Richard Santiago (13 points) hit his second trey of the night to pull to 44-43 with 54.4 seconds left. Later trailing 45-43, Calderon hit the tying shot with 1.1 seconds left to send the game into overtime.

In the extra period, Trybulec hit a pair of threes in less than 40 seconds for a 51-45 lead. Calderon later capped the game's scoring with a three.

Dakota White finished with seven points.

Streamwood was coming off a tough 74-71 loss in the Consolation C semifinals against Johnsburg on Monday, Dec. 27, 2021. The Sabres did have some big games from Santiago (30 points, nine rebounds, seven steals, four assists), Trybulec (15 points, four assists), White

(nine points, 16 rebounds, five assists, two steals, two blocks), Calderon (nine points, seven rebounds) and Jacob Rubio (seven rebounds, two steals).

The Rockford Jefferson win snapped a seven-game losing streak as the Sabres are now 2-13 overall heading into the second half of the season.

The focus is going to be consistency, Payne said.

“We had spurts of playing solid basketball on offense and defense,” Payne said of the Jacobs tournament. “The key for us is to get more consistent at both ends of the floor.... “Our focus for the second half of the season is to keep growing at both ends of the floor.”