

Press Clippings 10-03-20 to 10-05-20

---Press Clippings---10/05/2020
There are no U-46 related news stories.

---The Courier-News--- 10/04/2020

Parents angered by U-46's back-to-school plan rally outside district offices in Elgin

By: Karie Angell Luc



Bartlett resident Kori Duncan, mother of a third-grader, holds a sign Friday at the Reopen U-46 rally she helped organize outside the School District U-46 offices in Elgin. (Karie Angell Luc / Pioneer Press)

About 80 people demanding all District U-46 schools reopen for in-person classes rallied Friday outside the district's central offices in Elgin.

Standing on the parkway and sidewalk in front of the 355 E. Chicago St. building, children and parents held signs and responded to honks from passing motorists.

"My children, and many I know, are struggling," said rally co-organizer Dawn Martin, an 18-year Bartlett resident whose children are in eighth grade and a junior in high school.

"They are struggling to learn by staring at a screen six hours per day. Their social-emotional health has taken a hit. Education is not only book learning," she said.

Martin's private ReOpen U46 Schools Facebook page for parents has nearly 1,000 members.



Bartlett resident Dawn Martin, far left, stands with other parents and students Friday at a ReOpen U-46 Rally she helped organize outside School District U-46 offices in Elgin. (Karie Angell Luc / Pioneer Press)

"I have gotten to the point that in order to help my children continue to thrive, I need to speak up," she said. "School District U-46 can and needs to do better. ... They need to make changes now."

District U-46 representatives met with the group early into the rally, asking them to remain on the sidewalk and maintain safety precautions.

“We share their enthusiasm for getting back into the classroom and indeed we are working toward that,” district spokeswoman Mary Fergus said. “We want our students back in the classrooms too.”

Fergus, who stood outside to observe the rally, said district officials were aware of the parents' concerns and doing their best to keep everyone informed about the decisions being made and why.

“I think we’ve continued to update our parents almost weekly since March,” she said. “We try to be very transparent.”

Under the current U-46 back-to-school plan, pre-kindergarten through second grade students and children with special needs will return first under a schedule in which they’ll attend in-person classes on a part-time basis starting later this month.



A parent participating Friday in a Reopen U-46 Rally in Elgin holds a sign so East Chicago Street drivers can see the message. (Karie Angell Luc / Pioneer Press)

They will be followed by third- to sixth-graders, who will move to a similar hybrid schedule of in-person and remote learning sometime later this fall. Middle and high school students won’t be back in the classroom until January.

Parents can also opt to keep their children in remote learning if they don’t want them returning to school while the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

Protester Traci Wiberg, of Bartlett, said she’s “mad as hell” about how the district has handled the return-to-school efforts. Her 10-year-old son, a fourth-grader, has autism and sensory challenges.

“Our district has let us down,” Wiberg said. “There is no reason for our schools to be shut down.”

Kori Duncan, a Bartlett resident and rally co-organizer, said remote learning isn’t sustainable and often causes her third-grader to have meltdowns.

“My daughter totally broke down. And she is (normally) a happy, well-adjusted child, so I know it was serious,” Duncan said.

“She loves school, she loves it. I feel like a failure as a parent because I’m pushing her to continue in a situation that’s not good for her mental health,” she said.



Dawn Martin uses a megaphone Friday to speak to about 80 people who participated in the Reopen U-46 Rally she helped organize outside the Elgin offices of School District U-46. (Karie Angell Luc / Pioneer Press)

Ingrid Fitzpatrick is the parent of a 15-year-old South Elgin High School sophomore.

“What’s drawing me here is (the district is) are not following through with their plan,” the Bartlett resident said. “The board promised that they would get small groups into the high school, little by little.

“(My daughter) came to us a couple weeks ago on a Saturday night and just said, ‘Mom, I’m lonely,’” Fitzpatrick said. “She misses the social part of school and that is a big part of school.”

Michele Neidlinger, also a Bartlett resident, said she’s frustrated that it doesn’t feel like district officials are listening or concerned about her children — a fourth-grader, seventh-grader and high school sophomore — or anyone else’s.

“We need to reopen now as soon as possible,” Neidlinger said. “Other schools around us are opening and it’s time for us to open as well.”

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