

Press Clippings for 10/05/2022

---The Daily Herald---

Oct. 05, 2022

U-46 to close Garfield Elementary School at the end of this school year

By: Alicia Fabbre



Elgin Area Unit District 46 says this will be the last year for Garfield Elementary School in Elgin. Rick West | Staff Photographer

Garfield Elementary School in Elgin will close at the end of this school year.

Elgin Area Unit District 46 officials have informed Garfield families of the looming closure. Students who would normally attend Garfield next year will attend either Channing or Huff elementary schools.

A recommendation to close the school, which dates back to 1887, was part of a five-year plan approved by board members in January. But a Friday letter was the first time the district publicly stated this would be the school's last year.

"This was a difficult decision based on the age and condition of the building, a declining enrollment down to only 266 students at Garfield this year, and available capacity at neighboring schools," Superintendent Tony Sanders wrote in the letter to parents.

No parents spoke about the school closing at Monday's board meeting, and a district official said there has been little feedback since Friday's letter.

District officials said they will work for a smooth transition and to honor the school's long history.

"It has been a U-46 school for more than 100 years," said Brian Lindholm, chief of staff for U-46. "We have families in the area who have sent generations of children to the school. We want to make sure they get a chance to get acquainted with the new schools this year and give some time to help with the transition."

District officials propose to send Garfield students who live north of Bent Street, or roughly 65% of the Garfield school population, to Channing Elementary. Students who live south of Bent Street, or about 35% of Garfield's enrollment, would go to Huff Elementary.

Most Garfield students still will live close enough to walk to their new schools next year, Lindholm said.

Board members are expected to vote on the proposed boundaries at their Oct. 24 meeting.

Lindholm said once boundaries are approved, families will receive letters indicating which school their children will attend next year, and principals at those schools will begin outreach efforts such as school visits. Garfield teachers may follow the district's reassignment process and apply for open positions in other areas of the district, Lindholm said.

District officials also are closing Hawk Hollow Elementary School in Bartlett this year to transition it to a middle school.

Prairieview Elementary School will take in roughly 80% of the students from Hawk Hollow next year. The remaining students will attend Spring Trail Elementary School.

Parents last year learned this would be Hawk Hollow's final year as an elementary school. Lindholm noted that there currently is no middle school serving that area of the district and that Hawk Hollow sits on 20 acres, making it easier to transform. The new middle school is slated to open for the 2024-25 school year.

Though Garfield will close at the end of this school year, Lindholm said the building may be used as a transition school as other aging schools in the district are rebuilt or refurbished.

A districtwide committee is reviewing the possibility of seeking voter approval to address repairs to the district's aging buildings. The committee is expected to provide a recommendation to the school board later this year. The earliest U-46 could put a referendum question on the ballot would be the April 2023 election.

---Chicago Tribune---

Oct. 04, 2022

U-46 confirms decision to close 133-year-old Garfield Elementary in Elgin at end of current school year

By: Mike Danahey



Garfield Elementary School at 420 May St. in Elgin will close at the end of the current school year and its students transferred to either Huff or Channing elementary schools depending on where they live. Garfield is one of District U-46's oldest schools, having opened in 1889. (Mike Danahey / HANDOUT)

Garfield Elementary, one of the oldest schools in Elgin, will close at the end of the current school year because of decreasing student enrollment, District U-46's chief of staff confirmed at Monday's School Board meeting.

The decision was part of the district's five-year facility master plan, which was preliminarily approved by the board in January, Brian Lindholm said. Staff made the recommendation after reviewing enrollment trends at the 420 May St. school on the city's east side as well as trends at neighboring Huff and Channing elementary schools.

"We made the difficult decision that we should close Garfield after this school year," Lindholm said. "A few weeks ago we shared this information with Garfield staff. Last Friday we shared it with Garfield families in advance of making these boundary proposals tonight."

The Garfield attendance area will be divided at Bent Road, he said. Students who live north of Bent will attend Channing Elementary at 63 S. Channing St. and students who live south of Bent will go to Huff at 801 Hastings St.



May Elementary School at 420 May St. in Elgin, which opened in 1889, was rechristened Garfield Elementary nine years later to honor assassinated President James Garfield. (Mike Danahey / HANDOUT)

Both schools have adequate capacity to absorb Garfield's 266 students in the 2023-24 school year, Lindholm said. About two-thirds will go to Channing and the rest will attend Huff.

Bus service will be offered to those who qualify based on distance but the vast majority will be able to walk to their new schools, Lindholm said.

"If the board approves the the new boundaries at the (Oct. 24) board meeting, we will work to quickly send a personalized letter to each Garfield family which would confirm their student's

new school for next year and then we'll follow up (with) open houses and other opportunities for them to get acquainted with their new schools," he said.

Dual language students at Garfield will not have a problem because both Huff and Channing also offer the program, he said.

Garfield families have not offered any feedback since being notified last week, Lindholm said, but they may not have been surprised because it was announced last year that closure was likely and staff have know about it for several weeks.

Any student who would ordinarily enroll at Garfield in the middle of the current school year will be given the choice of enrolling at the school they will attend next year instead, he added.

Garfield opened in 1889 as May Street School and was renamed nine years later for President James Garfield. The school, which is the alma mater of Elgin Mayor Dave Kaptain, celebrated its 130th anniversary in 2020.

The building will remain in use as a "transition space" should the district need to relocate students while work is being done at other schools as part of Unite U-46, a district memo said.

Unite U-46 is the name of the district's five-year facility master plan. As part of that, forums are being held to inform the community of pending changes and to obtain feedback.

For more information or to complete a survey on proposed changes, go to www.u-46.org/uniteu46.