

Press Clippings 10/5/2021

---Elgin Courier-News---10/5/2021

U-46 proposal: move 6th grade classes to middle schools, pre-K to elementary schools, close three elementary schools
By Mike Danahey: Note – this story also ran at chicagotribune.com.



School District U-46 has a proposed building master plan that's designed to address enrollment declines and changes while also updating some buildings and expanding others. (Karen Sorensen / The Courier-News)

School District U-46 is making no small plans for its schools.

An ambitious plan laid out this week by Superintendent Tony Sanders calls for:

- Moving 6th-grade classes out of grade schools and into middle schools;
- Adding pre-kindergarten programs to elementary schools;
- Converting Hawk Hollow Elementary in Bartlett to into a middle school;
- Closing Illinois Park and Garfield elementary schools in Elgin and Hanover Countryside Elementary in Streamwood;
- Renovating Lowrie and Century Oaks elementary schools in Elgin, Glenbrook Elementary in Streamwood and Parkwood Elementary in Hanover Park;
- Building additions onto Washington and McKinley elementary schools in Elgin.

“These are long-term projects for the district,” Sanders said Monday. “It will be a 5-year plan to bring this vision to life, and it will take 10 to 15 years to get to everything.”

U-46 has been working with DLR Group, a Chicago-based architecture, engineering and design consulting firm, since 2020 to create an Educational Facilities Master Plan, which will be presented to the school board by year’s end, he said.

Working with them has been a steering committee made up of parents, teachers, former students, park district representatives and nonprofit officials who work with children and education, such as the Boys & Girls of Elgin and Centro de Informacion.

Each of the district’s 57 buildings has been evaluated with an eye towards condition and usage as well as enrollment declines and enrollment shifts based on where student population has increased or decreased, Sanders said.

A “snapshot” of each school has been can be found at www.u-46.org/Page/17871. An overview each stage of the process they’re undertaking is at www.u-46.org/Page/15447.

Sanders said the top priorities have been identified as moving 6th-grade classes into the middle schools and bringing pre-K programming into grade schools, something that will take at about two years to accomplish.

That would involve making Hawk Hollow a middle school, revamping grade schools to accommodate preschool children, and redrawing boundary lines for elementary and middle

schools, he said.

Putting early childhood programs into elementary schools allows children to attend classes in their own neighborhoods, he said.

Garfield, McKinley and Lowrie elementary school buildings date back to the late 1800s and Century Oaks, Glenbrook and Parkwood were built in early 1970s. None of them have what's needed for 21st century learning, Sanders said.

“(The latter three) look like the Millennium Falcon from Star Wars,” he said. “They have libraries with classrooms fanning out from there, and students and teachers have to walk through the library and some classrooms to get to other classrooms. It’s like a Trivial Pursuit pie wedge.”

With a game plan in place, public meetings are being held to gather input. One held by the Board Facilities Committee on Sept. 27 can be viewed on the district’s YouTube page.

At that session, DLR Group project manager Keri VanSant reviewed their findings and recommendations and said a primary goal is to provide equitable educational opportunities for all U-46 students.

Going to a U-46 school could be “a vastly different experience based on where you are,” school board member Eva Porter said at the meeting.

The district has been setting aside money to pay for the work needed, Sanders said. If the

board reviews the costs and prefers new construction, voters would have to vote on referendums to pay for it, Sanders said.

What they still need to do before the proposal goes to the board is develop project timelines, determine what work will be needed at each building and obtain estimated building costs, he said.

---Daily Herald---10/5/2021
Suburban Mosaic Report by Madhu Krishnamurthy

Women leaders

Three suburban women leaders will talk about equity and inclusion during the Illinois Business Education Association's 59th annual virtual conference, Nov. 4-5.

Speakers include Toya Webb, chief marketing and communications officer for Elgin Community College, state Rep. Janet Yang Rohr of Naperville and **Traci O'Neal Ellis**, chief equity and human resources officer for Aurora-based Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy.

Webb, a former news reporter, recently published a study on racial microaggressions outlining the impact of stereotypes in the workplace and amplifying the voices of Black women in leadership. She received the YWCA Leadership Award in communications and technology and was recognized as a "40 under 40" leader by the American Association for Women in Community Colleges. She will speak from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. Nov. 4.

Ellis is author of "The Exceptional Negro: Racism, White Privilege and the Law of Respectability Politics." A graduate and former school board member of **Elgin Area School**

District U-46, she won Elgin's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Humanitarian Award in 2018. She will speak from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. Nov. 4.

Rohr represents Illinois' 41st House District and formerly served on the Naperville Unit District 203 school board. She will speak from 4 to 5 p.m. Nov. 4

Register for the conference at ibea.org. Early bird deadline is Friday.

---Patch---10/5/2021

Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce: Explore 2021 to Showcase Curriculum to Career Pathways Released by the Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce

More than 2,500 8th graders and teachers in School District U-46 will participate on Thursday, Oct. 7 in a virtual version of Explore 2021. Explore is the District's annual expo designed to expose students to various careers and demonstrate the connection between academic curriculum and future careers.

Traditionally, Explore was held inside a large sports arena. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the event for the 2020-21 school year was held virtually. Feedback was so positive that organizers decided to keep it as a virtual field trip for this fall, with students participating via Zoom webinars from their classrooms.

"Explore 2021 promises to be an engaging, personalized way for our 8th graders to explore careers and industries and to visit with community professionals specializing in those job fields," said U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders. "No matter what the format, Explore is always an important part of our efforts to strengthen our work around educational pathways that will serve students in both college and career preparation."

In advance of attending Explore 2021, each 8th grader has utilized Naviance — a digital college and career planning system — to learn which career clusters align with their interests and aptitudes. Using this information, they have worked with counselors to select up to six

career exploration sessions on Oct. 7.

Each session will be hosted by an industry representative and will showcase several career options within that industry cluster. The middle school counselors have also created pre-lessons and a post-lesson so students better understand how their career exploration, interests and insights can be applied to their coursework at U-46 as well as planning for their future.

Parents of 8th graders were invited to attend a webinar on Sept. 23 to learn what their children would experience during Explore 2021. The webinar was recorded and can be found in English [here](#) and in Spanish [here](#).

The [Alignment Collaborative for Education](#), a non-profit local organization that brings together community resources and initiatives to support District priorities, is once again partnering with U-46 to organize the event and has recruited local professionals, companies, organizations, and educators to place a spotlight on careers representing a wide range of industry clusters from business to building sciences, engineering to education, and healthcare to hospitality.

"Explore is an introductory opportunity to career exploration that begins a comprehensive approach to preparing students for college and careers," said Nancy Coleman, executive director of Alignment. "We are very appreciative of how our businesses, organizations, and nonprofit partners have come together to support this virtual event in the most creative way possible to offer something special for our students."

Starting this fall, Alignment plans to host quarterly career panels for high school students, as well as college and university admission events featuring representatives from the 12 universities most-attended by U-46 students.

The Community Advisory Council, then called the Citizens' Advisory Council, helped the District launch the first expo in the 2015-16 school year. The Alignment Collaborative for Education has since helped expand the expo, first as a weekend event at Elgin Community College and then in 2018 and 2019, as a school-day event at what was then called the Sears Centre.

