

Press Clippings 08/11/21

---Daily Herald---08/11/2021

Back to school, and to normal? Not quite: What some suburban school districts are planning
by Madhu Krishnamurthy



Claudia Popovic, who teaches dual language for first grade at Ridge Circle Elementary School in Streamwood, prepares her classroom Tuesday ahead of the start of classes next week. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer*

Posted 8/11/2021 5:30 AM

Suburban students heading back to school this week for the first day of classes will see some semblance of normalcy restored.

Of course, the biggest change is the resumption of full, in-person classes for all students, except those seeking medical exemptions for continuing with remote learning.

Yet, it's still not quite a typical school year amid ongoing COVID-19 restrictions with the highly contagious delta variant spreading rapidly statewide.

Some pandemic remnants -- universal masking, social distancing, and hand washing/sanitizing -- persist. And still no high-fives, fist bumps, hugs or handshakes allowed for students reuniting with teachers and peers.

"The big excitement is we are going to have students back in school," said Peter Gill, spokesman for Mundelein Elementary District 75 and Mundelein High School District 120.

Nearly 3,700 students in both districts will resume classes Thursday.

"Our goal was to try to get as many students as possible in the buildings," Gill said. "We don't know the exact numbers of enrollment. Most of them are expected back."

Gill said the focus this year is to "restart, restore and reconnect."

"You might not see the high-fives and the hugs, but I think you will see a lot of people excited to see each other," he said. "Of course, there's mitigation. (But) there will be opportunities for the kids to get outside (for a mask break or classes)."

Mundelein High School will have an open campus policy for students to go home or off campus for lunch.

"That may alleviate some of the concerns about (having) all these kids in the cafeteria," Gill said.

There are several silver linings this year, including the resumption of fall sports, after-school activities and clubs, and visitors being allowed back into schools.

Students also will be able to again share materials, use lockers and playgrounds, enjoy 30-minute recesses and eat hot meals served in cafeterias.

"We're planning to have meals indoors," said Ben Grey, assistant superintendent of innovative learning and communications for Elk Grove Township Elementary District 59. "We obviously are working to follow the guidelines of physical distancing as much as possible when kids eat. We do have a little bit more freedom this year than we did last year."

Classes begin Wednesday for the district's roughly 6,400 students.

Revised health guidelines for schools recommend 3 to 6 feet of physical distancing between students' bodies -- with maximum separation urged for when they are unmasked during lunch periods.

"It gives us clarity," Grey said of the state's masking mandate and distancing guidelines.

Quarantining requirements also have eased, with health officials redefining what constitutes a close contact. Anyone within 3 to 6 feet of a student who tests positive for COVID-19 doesn't automatically have to quarantine, provided all parties were masked. Students who come into close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID can "test to stay" in school; they must test negative.

Many districts, including **Elgin Area School District U-46**, are eliminating self-certification requirements for students and employees and asking them instead to monitor their health before coming to campus.

U-46 and many other districts will provide SHIELD COVID-19 testing for families who are unvaccinated or whose children are not yet eligible for vaccines.

Families are requested to share vaccination status, but it is not mandatory, U-46 spokeswoman Mary Fergus said.

"Just about everyone is coming back," Fergus said of the district's roughly 37,000 students who begin classes Monday.

Parents and students are excited about the resumption of full athletic programs and after-school extracurricular activities, said Lisa Small, superintendent of Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 where classes begin Thursday for nearly 12,000 students.

"Our numbers are looking really good for fall sports," Small said.

There, school assemblies likely will be smaller or held outdoors, students will be more spread out during lunch periods across open areas in buildings, and cafeterias will serve a greater variety of foods for lunches, she said.

"To the student, it is going to feel very normal, and that's what we're shooting for," Small said.

---Examiner Publications---08/11/2021

U-46 mask mandate controversy continues

by Seth Hancock

Parents continued to express their opposition to the mask mandates and other measures regarding COVID-19, as well as opposition to controversial curriculum items, in **School District U-46**.

During public comments at the Board of Education meeting on Monday, Aug. 9, 17 people addressed their concerns with more there in support, relegated to an overflow room as the district continues to restrict access to meetings. The meeting began 30 minutes late due to a tornado warning, and the district would not allow the public access to the building for safety if they were not wearing a mask.

The public comments concluded with Superintendent Tony Sanders and Sue Kerr, the board's president, disputing public commenters on a sex-education bill, waiting a signature from Gov. JB Pritzker, causing a contentious back and forth with the audience.

That interaction helped to strengthen claims from some speakers that Sanders is causing divisions, including Melissa Varner who suggested Sanders should stop making social media posts that "mock parents who want their kids unmasked." Varner also asked the board and administration to start providing their own data on why they continue mandates rather than hiding behind state and health agencies.

No public comments were made supporting the district's plans, but some emailed comments were made for and against. One supporting Sanders came from Debbie Caruso who wrote: "Please do not listen to the horrible humans that do not care one bit about kids."

Others opposed the district's propagating for the COVID-19 shots, Maciej Dluzniewski noting a comment on CNN this past weekend by Rochelle Walensky, the CDC director, who said "what they (the shots) can't do... is prevent transmission."

Mask mandates for all is the plan which Sanders expects "for the fore-seeable future," while the district also announced taxpayer-funded meals, which the district called "free," would be given to all students throughout the year.

Lori Kelly said she was "speaking on behalf of hundreds of U-46 employees who are afraid to speak up in fear of retaliation from you, the board." She asked: "If we do not comply to this tyranny, are you prepared to fire us all?"

The board did approve of a resolution that evening expressing their support of the district following what they are told to do by state and local agencies. The vote was 6-1, Dawn Martin voting no because the resolution states the district will be helping develop the health metrics which she said is not the district's work.

---Examiner Publications---08/11/2021

Series of various expenses approved by District U-46

by Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in **School District U-46** unanimously approved of \$19.9 million in expenditure proposals over its last two meetings, on July 19 and June 21.

The largest item was a July 19 approval of \$10 million, from the operations and maintenance fund, for a three-year contract with RNA Facilities Management for cleaning services.

As previously reported, the district admitted that ABM did not fulfill its contract with the district for cleaning services and it could legally terminate its five-year contract, which was in the second year, but instead decided to keep ABM and add RNA for joint cleaning services increasing the costs to taxpayers by \$2.1 million over the next three years.

There were \$3.6 million in expenditure items that were presented and approved the same evening.

At the June 21 meeting, \$204,807 (education fund) was approved to buy 2,703 desks from Warehouse Direct (\$174,371) and 1,040 chairs from Frank Cooney (\$30,436). The proposal stated the purchase was needed "in order to abide by the three-foot social distancing... with all students returning in the upcoming school year."

Also at that meeting, \$231,499 (education fund) was approved with Storcom I.T. Intelligence for district storage area network replacement.

On July 19, the board approved a \$3 million amendment to a contract with Right at School (\$1.1 million) and Boys and Girls Club of Elgin (\$1.9 million) "specifying that the district will pay program costs for participating students," the proposal states, for before and after school program. The cost will come from the education fund and COVID-19 relief funds.

Also approved was \$159,449 (operations and maintenance fund) with CertaPro Painters of North Shore, Inc. for a painting project at Streamwood High School. The board approved a \$112,800 contract with BP&T Construction in January for the contract, but "was unable to

reach an agreement with district administration regarding their start date,” the proposal stated.

Various curriculum items and resolutions were also approved as were \$24.4 million in itemized bills on July 19 and \$9.5 million in itemized bills on June 21.

---Examiner Publications---08/11/2021

Bartlett teens perish in one-vehicle crash in village

The Bartlett Police Department has reported that on Tuesday, Aug. 3, at approximately 9:15 p.m., police responded to the intersection of New-port Lane and Devon Avenue to investigate a fatal motor vehicle crash involving a single vehicle. Police alleged a 16-year-old male was driving a 2021 Honda Civic westbound on Devon Avenue from Newport Boulevard when his vehicle struck a curb, a speed limit sign and then a utility pole before it rolled over on its roof. The driver and three occupants needed to be extricated from the vehicle. A 16-year-old male who was sitting in the front passenger seat died at the scene as a result of the injuries he sustained from the crash. The driver suffered non-life-threatening injuries and was transported to St. Alexius Medical Center in Hoffman Estates. A 16-year old male who was sitting in the rear passenger seat suffered life-threatening injuries and was transported to Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield. Another 16-year old male who was sitting in the rear passenger seat suffered life-threatening injuries and was also transported to St. Alexius Hospital.

The Cook County Medical Examiner’s Office reported that Alex E. Czerwik, 16, died at the scene of the accident. The DuPage County Coroner’s Office later reported that Cameron Kelly, 16, died at Central DuPage as a result of the injuries he sustained from the crash. Both the victims were students at **Bartlett High School**.

Devon Avenue was closed between Newport Boulevard and Prospect Avenue for approximately six hours while the police department and DuPage County MERIT (Metropolitan Emergency Response & Investigation Team) investigated the motor vehicle crash. ComEd was contacted and shut down electrical power to the utility pole that was struck by the vehicle. ComEd restored power to the residences near the crash scene at approximately 7 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 4.

The cause of the crash is still under investigation. Anyone with information regarding this motor vehicle crash is asked to contact the police department at (630) 837-0846.