

Press Clippings 9/25/2018

---Daily Herald—9/25/18

U-46 seeks to launch five new career academies; Existing academies to become magnet schools

By Madhu Krishnamurthy



Elgin Area School District U-46 officials said students can choose any of the five pathways -- like welding, shown here at Elgin High School -- even if it is not conducted at their home school. *Rick West | Staff Photographer*

Elgin Area School District U-46 plans to offer five new college and career academies at each of its high schools beginning with the freshman class of 2021-22, officials said at Monday night's school board meeting.

The five academies would focus on the arts, humanities, liberal arts, business, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). They would comprise several [educational pathways](#) -- a multiyear sequence of courses -- allowing students to explore a field of interest as elective courses their sophomore, junior and senior years while taking core classes and meeting rigorous college admission requirements.

<https://www.dailyherald.com/assets/PDF/DA149612925.pdf>

Each academy would house multiple educational pathways, some offered at all schools and others unique to one or two buildings based on site or equipment requirements. Students would have the opportunity to earn industry certification, dual credit and gain internship experience.

"This updated approach offers the flexibility that parents said was important to them," U-46 CEO Tony Sanders said. "Any one of the career pathways can lead you to college or

career. It's not going to limit you. The benefit to it is ... that smaller learning environment for students."

Parents and community members expressed concerns about the move toward pathways at town hall meetings in May and June.

"Some examples of what we heard are: "The timeline is rushed. We need more time to plan middle school. More flexibility is needed for students. There needs to be equitable placement. Access for all students. And all students should be able to attend their home school," Bartlett High School Principal Michael Demovsky said.

To address these concerns, officials are taking another year to plan and implement the academies in 2021-22, rolling up each subsequent year.

"We will create entry and exit points as well as create a liberal arts academy to allow for maximum flexibility," Demovsky said. "The same five academies will be housed at each site. Students will have access to pathways not housed at their schools. And students are guaranteed enrollment at their home school."

For instance, students could choose pathways such as welding or precision manufacturing offered at select sites, even if it is not conducted at their home school.

U-46's existing high school academies would become unique magnet programs: STEM at Bartlett; International Baccalaureate Studies at Elgin; Visual and Performing Arts at Larkin; Beacon Academy of Media and Digital Arts at South Elgin; and a yet-undetermined academy at Streamwood, which currently houses a program focused on world languages and business. The programs would acquire Magnet Schools of America certification.

Officials did not provide any estimates for how much the conversion to new academies and magnet schools would cost.

The new academy structure includes adoption of Naviance, a web-based college and career readiness platform for use in middle school and high school; a partnership with the Alignment Collaborative for Education; the addition of guidance counselors this year at the district's eight middle schools; and Explore, the annual curriculum and career expo recently hosted at the Sears Centre in Hoffman Estates.

Future steps include forming committees to develop specific pathways and course sequences and to determine entry and exit criteria for pathways not offered at each school. Capital improvements and training for teachers, administrators and staff members also would be needed.

The district will host town hall forums seeking community feedback in the coming months. Sessions will begin at 7 p.m. on: Oct. 30, Larkin High School, auditorium; Nov. 6, Streamwood High School, Lecture Hall; Nov. 14, Kimball Middle School, auditorium; Nov. 15, Ellis Middle School, auditorium; Nov. 28, Elgin High School, auditorium; and Nov. 29, Bartlett High School, auditorium.