

Press Clippings 01/15/2019

---Daily Herald---01/15/2019

Students caught in middle of popular app's billing dispute with Verizon

By: Jake Griffin

Every day, students in South Elgin High School math teacher Allison Ozog's classes get a text message alerting them to what's in store for the next day or coming weeks.

"Each class gets at least one a day, but then I use it to send out reminders for everything about upcoming tests or even spirit days as well, so it can be maybe as much as 10 messages during the week," Ozog said of her reliance on Remind, a communications platform for smartphones that is popular with teachers, school administrators, students and parents.

But some of her students and parents may no longer have access to the messages due to a billing dispute between California-based Remind Inc. and telecom giant Verizon Wireless.

Remind officials sent out a notice to users Monday morning warning the company would no longer be sending text messages or SMS alerts to Verizon customers because the fee imposed by the carrier was going up 11 times the current charge.

"Remind pays a fee now that costs hundreds of thousands a year to be able to allow users to send messages without them incurring charges and Verizon wants to increase that to several million dollars a year," said Remind CEO Brian Grey. "That's why you're seeing so many educators get so frustrated over the actions Verizon has taken."

The tech company urged users to tweet Verizon about their need for the app as an educator, parent or student with the hashtag #ReverseTheFee. By midday Monday, the movement was trending on Twitter after thousands had tweeted the hashtag.

Teachers from several suburban school districts took up the cause. Grey said there are 97,000 regular users of the app in Illinois and 22,000 in Cook County alone.

An anatomy teacher from Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire tweeted about how she uses the app frequently, including issuing mundane reminders for upcoming "lab days" when students should dress in long pants and "no open-toed shoes!"

St. Margaret Mary Catholic School in Algonquin sent out a notice to all parents that Verizon customers would be affected.

Verizon spokesman Andy Choi said the increase to app companies like Remind pay for systemwide safety upgrades.

"We agree that schools and education-related institutions should not receive any fees for sending or receiving public service text messages," Choi said. "A small fee ... is intended to share costs incurred to help protect students, parents and teachers from spam and dangerous text messages over the Verizon network, while reducing fraud. The very small fee will be charged only to major text messaging aggregation companies such as Remind."

Choi said Remind sends 1.6 billion text messages a year to Verizon customers. He said Verizon was "working through plans with" companies like Remind "so they will not charge students, parents, educators or schools for this fee."

Remind officials said Verizon customers still could get notifications by downloading the app themselves instead of relying on teachers to input their students' phone numbers. Verizon customers also could have messages emailed to them through the Remind app, Grey said.

U-46 officials discuss school safety efforts

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy

Elgin schools officials say they are working on reducing incidences of students disrespecting teachers and disorder in the hallways -- among the concerns identified in the district's annual school safety and security report.

One strategy is targeting more resources to empower employees helping them cope with such situations, said John Heiderscheidt, Elgin Area School District U-46 director of school safety and culture.

Heiderscheidt told the school board Monday night how security systems have been improved providing local police departments 24/7 access to school buildings through key fobs. School employees also have been provided key fobs with personalized access.

A network of more than 600 cameras monitoring the interior and exterior of buildings, more than 100 panic buttons and about 2,000 handheld radios are protecting district schools, he added.

The district's visitor management system has logged more than 188,000 visitors at the schools over two years. That includes 34 registered sex offenders, nearly all parents with children at district schools, who were flagged upon entry. School resource officers are in place at all district middle and high schools, per the report.

Alignment Collaborative for Education, with help from the Illinois Education Association, has put in place trauma-informed care systems at select schools training 26 resiliency teams in two years, Heiderscheidt said.

"Our resiliency teams are there to help staff understand three objectives. ... We are asking them to focus on raising the awareness of adverse childhood experiences, grow the expertise in trauma-informed care and develop a plan to address caregiver compassion fatigue," Heiderscheidt said. "It's a paradigm shift of our thinking. It is helping us hold people more accountable for their actions."

U-46 now is part of a new regional partnership -- the Northern Illinois School Safety Administrators Association, formed in December. It's a collaborative among local school districts, the DuPage County Regional Office of Education and the College of DuPage Homeland Security Training Institute. Its goals are creating a common language in safety immediate response terms and procedures, common emergency operation plans, school safety training programs, and developing methods to provide mutual aid and cooperative peer evaluation.

Heiderscheidt was tapped to serve as inaugural president of the association.

---The Courier-News---01/15/2019

Elgin U46 educator among inaugural fellows addressing early childhood education in Illinois

By: Rafael Guerrero



- Erin Jackle, a transition facilitator for early learners in Elgin Area School District U46, is among the inaugural class of participants in a Teach Plus statewide early childhood practices and policy fellowship. Twenty participants were chosen for 2019.

An early learning facilitator in Elgin Area School District U46 who specializes in the transitions from preschool to kindergarten will spend the next few months on early childhood policy-making efforts in Illinois.

U46 educator Erin Jackle is part of the inaugural group of Illinois early childhood fellows through Teach Plus, a nonprofit of more than 15,000 teachers in the U.S. She is among 20 in the state to receive the fellowship, a first-time venture for the national group.

“I’m hoping to be able to use my experience to help explain early childhood practices to policymakers on what it means to educate a young child and how to best support our kids and families,” said Jackle.

The 20 fellows will be split into smaller groups, said Jackle. Her focus will be on student data-enforced practices in early childhood.

Over the next seven months, her workgroup of Chicago-area fellows will meet monthly. The meetings may include training, crafting and writing articles, talking with policy makers, or visiting Springfield during the legislative session. The fellowship includes a \$1,600 stipend, she explained.

“The focus of the fellowship is not only to better understand how policy works, but working to make policy changes happen (in Illinois),” Jackle said.

Other areas the fellows may explore include how to provide adequate funding for early childhood programs and teaching staff, professional development and training for professionals in the field, according to program officials.

“The (Early Childhood Educator) Fellows are focused on ensuring that all Illinois children from birth to second grade have access to high-quality child care programs,” Ty Jiles, Teach Plus Illinois Policy Manager, said in a news release announcing the 2019 fellowship recipients.

Jackle is a veteran of U46 schools, having started with the district in 2004 as a special education teacher. In 2013, she took over as an instructional coach, and in 2016 she transitioned to her current facilitator role.

An early learners facilitator assists families and teachers in the transition from preschool to kindergarten — assisting those families whose children never enrolled in preschool or never had any classroom exposure — and attends Individualized Education Program meetings with families of students with specialized needs, Jackle said.

The workgroup Jackle is a part of has already begun meeting, she said.

Already, she is hearing of stories over the inequities in early childhood education and how programs and services vary by communities. Play-based education in U46 early childhood programs, English and Spanish instruction and development is not a guarantee in other districts, she said.

“This idea of developmental practices for the youngest students is not always the case,” she said.

Elgin High School to host screening of WTTW documentary featuring U46 kindergarten classrooms

By: Rafael Guerrero

A School District U46 classroom is one of the subjects in a new WTTW Chicago documentary about play-based kindergarten.

Just days after “Kindergarten: Where Play and Learning Can Meet” airs on one of the WTTW channels, U46 will host a free screening of the documentary Jan. 22, followed by a panel discussion with those interviewed.

The screening will be 7-8:30 p.m. at the Elgin High School auditorium. Those wishing to attend are asked to RSVP at relmidwestwttwu46.eventbrite.com.

The 30-minute documentary addresses the topic of play-based instruction and curriculum in kindergarten, a model used in U46 classrooms since 2016. Lincoln Elementary School in Hoffman Estates was chosen as one of the subjects of the documentary, along with classrooms in Valley View School District in Romeoville. According to a U46 news release, the documentary also addresses the cognitive and social-emotional advantages of a play-based kindergarten structure.

Filmmakers spent a day in October at Lincoln Elementary School interviewing kindergarten teacher Kristin Bayer, Early Learners Initiatives Director Peggy Ondera, and kindergarten teacher leader Colleen Pecucci. The crew also spent hours in Bayer’s kindergarten classroom filming and interviewing some students, according to the release.

“As a district, we are very proud of our play-based approach to kindergarten because we know that young children learn best through an active exploration of their environment,” Ondera said. “Our kindergarten students are allowed the time to be young children and to develop their knowledge and physical, academic, and social skills through play and appropriate activities.”

The documentary was produced by the Midwest Early Childhood Education Research Alliance at Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest in collaboration with WTTW Channel 11, according to the release.

After the free screening, Ondera, Bayer and Pecucci and other documentary participants will be part of a panel discussion.

For those who cannot attend the screening, “Kindergarten: Where Play and Learning Can Meet” will air on WTTW Chicago’s Prime channel at 6 p.m. Tuesday and at 10:30 p.m. Friday. The documentary will air on the main WTTW Channel 11 later this year.

U-46 Educational Foundation Awards Mini-Grants to Eight U-46 Staff

Recipients awarded \$500 for innovative projects to enhance student learning

ELGIN - The U-46 Educational Foundation typically funds Districtwide initiatives and events but earlier today awarded mini-grants of up to \$500 each to eight teachers across the District to support their bright new ideas in teaching and learning. U-46 Educational Foundation Board members throughout the school day Thursday surprised teachers in their classrooms with the awards, called Innovation Mini-Grants.

The Foundation funded projects such as the start of a family book club, a mentoring program for students, and high school biotechnology experiments. The Foundation Board selected the winning projects from 27 proposals.

“Each of these grants will provide activities that enhance, enrich, and complement existing opportunities in U-46 for students, families, and staff,” said U-46 Educational Foundation Board President Bud Wilson. “We are excited to continue supporting innovative programs in U-46 in the years ahead.”

The U-46 Educational Foundation was initiated in 2006, when a group of community leaders and district supporters came together to recruit board members, establish by-laws, and seek non-profit status as a 501 (c) (3) organization. The mission of the U-46 Educational Foundation is to acquire and dedicate resources to enhance the quality of education for U-46 students. The Foundation’s impact to date has largely been on Districtwide projects.

The list of winning recipients are as follows:

Grant Recipient	Position	School	Project
Philip Church	Science Teacher	Bartlett High School	Biotechnology
Sarah Rabe	Principal	Centennial Elementary School	Sensory Paths
Lisa Holbrook	MTSS Lead Teacher	Elgin High School	Maroon Mentoring Program
Heather Flick	Science Teacher	Eastview Middle School	Eastview Science Olympiad Team Supplies
Rachel Pinkepank	Title 1 Teacher Interventionist	Hillcrest Elementary School	Hillcrest Families Read! A Parent-Child Book Club

Michelle Esmenda	Secretary	Glenbrook Elementary School	Glenbrook Elementary Outdoor Marquee
Haley Levitan	School Psychologist	Ontarioville Elementary School	Flexible Seating
Martha Laskus	Early Childhood Teacher	Horizon Elementary School	Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program: Table and Manipulatives

SPORTS

---Daily Herald---01/15/2019

St. Edward edges Elgin in double OT

By: Allen Oshinski

St. Edward began a second overtime against Elgin with two starters on the bench. But the Green Wave still had Samantha Ottinger on the floor.

The senior guard scored 8 of the Wave's 11 points in the second extra period to lead St. Edward past the Maroons, 62-56, at Chesbrough Field House.

Ottinger finished with a game-high 24 points as St. Edward won its second straight game at the Elgin City Classic Girls Tournament.

Mia Castro added 18 points off the bench for the Wave (9-12 overall), including a tying 3-pointer with 6 seconds left in the first overtime.

Elgin's Dajha Cooper narrowly missed her second triple-double in 3 nights, finishing with 19 points, 22 rebounds, and 7 blocked shots.

Sarah Moskow and Kamiya Harvey added 10 points apiece for Elgin.

St. Edward led 41-29 on Ottinger's transition layup to open the fourth quarter, but the hosts outscored the Wave 12-2 the rest of the way, finally tying the game on Cooper's free throw with 32 seconds left.

The Green Wave opened a 5-point lead in the first extra session only to watch Elgin score 8 in a row to go up 3 before Castro's shot forced the second OT.

Ottinger hit a 3-pointer to open the scoring in the second overtime. After the teams traded free throws, Ottinger's second 3 made it 58-53.

Elgin got as close as 59-55 on Harvey's layup but could get no closer. Ottinger and Madalynn Duffy combined for 3 free throws in the closing minutes to keep Elgin at bay.

The Wave finished the game without Madeline Ellsworth, who fouled out, and Brooke Biggins, who left with an injury in the second quarter.

"These girls came up huge," said St. Edward coach Michelle Dawson. "With Maddie (Ellsworth) and Brooke (Biggins) on the bench, we had girls put into positions on the court that they haven't had to be in all year. Sam's consistent for us, Mia's really consistent for us, but down the stretch to hit those baskets was huge. I'm really proud of my girls for keeping their composure tonight."

"We started to run a little bit low on gas," said Elgin assistant Scott Stewart. "We started missing some free throws and that was the difference in the game. It's hard to win a double overtime game when you miss 11 free throws. But hey, the effort was awesome, I thought that everybody from the starters all the way to the end of the bench played a great game. Tons of energy, we improved on a lot of things."

Sabrina Chen added 8 points for Elgin. Moskow had 17 rebounds and Emily Graves added 7 points and 13 boards.

Ellsworth scored 8 points for St. Edward before fouling out. Hailey Niehaus grabbed 10 rebounds for the Wave.

Larkin tops Harvest Christian with 22-0 second quarter

By: Allen Oshinski

Eight minutes can make a big difference.

After one quarter, Larkin trailed 4-time defending champion Harvest Christian 20-12 in the 7th annual Elgin City Classic Girls Basketball Tournament at Chesbrough Field House. Then came the second quarter, in which the Royals outscored Harvest 22-0.

The Lions never seriously threatened in the second half as Larkin cruised to a 62-47 victory.

Ashley Miller scored 18 points and Aaliyah Dixon added 12 for the Royals. Miller also grabbed 12 rebounds as the Royals outrebounded the Lions 55-25.

The Royals shot just 32 percent from the field, but they attempted 100 shots -- 75 field goals and 25 free throws -- thanks to the huge rebounding margin and 21 Harvest turnovers.

Janelle Clements added 9 points and 12 rebounds and Karina Villa 8 points and 11 boards for Larkin.

Harvest's Maddy Martin was nearly unstoppable in the first period, scoring 12 points on a variety of inside moves and often off-balance shots. Larkin switched its defense to a box-and-one on Martin and slowed her down, but she still finished with a game-high 22 points. Madison Ellett added 8 for Harvest.

The Royals took the lead for good at 21-20 on a putback by Miller. Dixon scored 8 points and Villa 6 during the big second-quarter run.

"I think the first quarter's as bad as we could have played defensively and the second quarter was the best," said Larkin coach Steve Knapp. "We worked the ball around, got some shots inside and we finally came out and played a little defense."

The Royals, who beat Elgin in their first game of the tournament last week, didn't want to see their chances of winning the whole thing diminished with a loss.

"We felt we had a good chance of winning this tournament," said Miller. "We knew if we lost to this team our motivation would be down."

The Royals prevailed in a battle of undermanned squads. With several rotation players, including starter Brianna Young, out of action, they dressed just 10 players. Still, Larkin's bench was deep compared with Harvest, whose 6-player roster includes 4 freshmen. When Raja Tilian briefly left the court after being injured in the fourth quarter, the Lions had no reserves available and 1 starter playing with 4 fouls.