

Press Clippings 02/29/20 to 03/02/20

---Daily Herald---03/02/2020

No more homecoming queen? Schools advised to consider nonconforming gender identities

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy



Suburban schools might have to consider changing homecoming and prom traditions to be more inclusive of students with nonconforming gender identities, a new state report recommends.



A.J. Pilafas, a special education student at Hoffman Estates High School, celebrated his victory of being selected as homecoming king in 2014. Next to him is the queen, Hannah Greenwalt. A new state report recommends schools do away with traditional labels of kings and queens to be more inclusive of nonconforming gender identities.

Should time-honored school traditions dubbing students as kings and queens for homecomings and proms be changed in favor of more gender spectrum-inclusive titles?

That's among the recommendations of a new state report on inclusivity for students with nonconforming gender identities, which has sparked a conversation among suburban school leaders.

The [report](#) suggests Illinois' public schools drop reliance on traditional male-female gender descriptions and train teachers to use more inclusive language when addressing groups of students.

"The training should include how to ensure things such as inspirational speeches, motivational phrases, locker-room talk, pep rallies, and team chants are inclusive and gender-neutral. Examples of phrases that should be eliminated include 'man up' or 'don't be a sissy,'" the report recommends.

The Illinois State Board of Education this month will issue guidance to schools for creating policies based on the task force's recommendations, spokeswoman Jackie Matthews said.

"It's important to recognize that our society as a whole, not just schools, are in a period of transition," said Mark Kovack, associate superintendent for student services for Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211.

District 211 is well-versed on gender identity debates after recently resolving a nearly 4½-year legal battle on the issue of transgender students' access to locker rooms. Last November, the school board voted to no longer require transgender students to use privacy stalls made available for all students in locker rooms.

"As a school district, we have been responding to students' unique needs forever, long before gender became a focal point," Kovack said.

District 211 schools have homecoming and prom kings and queens, which has been a controversial topic for years before the task force released its report, he said.

"Culture is something that develops over time and it doesn't transform overnight," Kovack said. "Usually, it takes a little bit of time to see a movement. We are engaged in that and trying to determine the best ways to go about bringing about positive change."

Some schools nationwide have opted to recognize a group of students as "homecoming royalty court" instead of singling out individuals.

"Such conversations have been unfolding at public schools over the past several years with increased visibility of trans identities, said Nat Duran, youth engagement manager for Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, which provides training to schools and supports youth in partnership with the GSA (Gender and Sexuality Alliances) Network.

Officials at **Elgin Area School District U-46** soon will review the task force's recommendations and district policies.

The state's second-largest school district weathered controversy a few years ago when administrators decided to allow a transgender middle school student access to the locker room and restroom corresponding with that student's gender identity.

"We, as a district, kind of take things case by case," said school board member Veronica Noland, who served on the state task force.

Beyond titles, the task force report addresses school districts' policies toward providing equal educational opportunities for students of varying gender identities and expression

and preventing discrimination, harassment and bullying, as prohibited by state and federal laws.

Some educators and schools may be less in step philosophically with the state recommendations, but Duran believes it's only a matter of time before practices change.

"Learning new things is just as much about unlearning old things," Duran said, "and that can be a very vulnerable process."

Affirming and Inclusive Schools Task Force recommendations

The Illinois State Board of Education should consider providing guidance on procedures for:

- Changing a name and gender marker in student records that recognizes that a legal name change is not a prerequisite.
- Updating a name and gender marker in data and information submitted to the state.
- Offering a nonbinary gender marker option for submitting data and information to the state.
- Using an affirmed name on standardized testing.
- Under state law, the name and gender marker recorded in a student's permanent record should include both affirmed name and gender, as well as legal name and gender. The legal name and gender shall not be disclosed except as required by law.
- Under state law, directory information should include only a student's affirmed name.
- The Illinois Department of Human Rights should consider issuing guidance to districts on complying with the Illinois Human Rights Act.
- Guidance should include IHRA's requirements on: the rights of transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals; students' participation in sports and other activities; protecting students from bullying or harassment; and respecting students' affirmed names and pronouns, including by updating student records.
- The state should consider: exploring how teacher preparation programs can address issues relating to supporting transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students; working with stakeholders to evaluate the state's comprehensive sexual education curriculum for kindergarten through 12th grade; and promoting greater inclusion in school-based activities, including engaging with Illinois Elementary School Association and Illinois High School Association to review their policies on inclusion.

To view the full report, visit [illinois.gov](https://www.illinois.gov).

---Daily Herald---03/01/2020

U-46 leader swaps CEO title for superintendent

By: Doug T. Graham



Tony Sanders

Tony Sanders, who has led Elgin Area School District U-46 since 2014 as CEO, [announced](#) Friday night on Twitter that he is officially the district's superintendent. "The results are in ... I am now the superintendent of School District U-46," Sanders posted on the social networking platform.

One of the stipulations in Sanders' current contract, approved by the school board in 2019, was that he attain his superintendent certification by spring 2022.

Sanders has been able to lead U-46, the second-largest school district in the state, without a superintendent certification thanks to a law passed in Springfield in 2017. The law said the CEO could lead if they had strong administrative abilities and proven management experience as well as a master's degree. The CEO must have also served as a district employee for a minimum of five years.

Under his current contract, the school board can reimburse Sanders up to \$39,000 for the cost of tuition and coursework to attain his superintendent certification.

His announcement Friday was accompanied by a screenshot of a score report from the Illinois Licensure Testing System.

By Saturday, Sanders had updated his Twitter account [profile](#) to say he was U-46's superintendent.

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U-46 to host informational sessions for Dual Language Program this spring

Submitted by Elgin Area School District U-46

Elgin Area School District U-46 is inviting all families of incoming kindergarten students and first-graders to Dual Language informational meetings hosted at local schools and libraries during March and April.

Dual Language is a form of bilingual education in which students are taught literacy and grade-level academic content in two languages.

The informational sessions will cover details of the U-46 program itself, the application process, and research showing the benefits of bilingualism.

"We strongly encourage kindergarten and first grade families to attend one of these sessions," said Dr. Annette Acevedo, director of the English Language Learners Program. "The Dual Language Program is an excellent opportunity for students to become bilingual and biliterate in a world where those skills are increasingly valuable."

U-46 offers "one-way instruction" for students with a home language background of Spanish who qualify for the English Language Learners services program.

Kindergarten and first-grade students without a home background of Spanish or who are English dominant may enroll in "two-way instruction" to learn Spanish and develop bilingual skills along with English Learners.

U-46 uses an "80:20" program in which the youngest students start out with 80 percent of their instruction in Spanish and 20 percent in English, reducing the Spanish-language portion by 10 percent per year from kindergarten through third grade, until the split is 50-50, where it remains through sixth grade.

In middle school, Dual Language students continue to be focused on developing academic and language skills of high rigor in both languages. The courses were expanded through the sophomore level at all five of the district's comprehensive high schools for this current school year. The courses will be implemented for juniors for the 2020-21 school year, with plans to make the program available through the senior level for the 2021-2022 school year.

The session schedule for parents of incoming kindergarten students and English-dominant first graders is as follows below. Parents can attend the session that works best for their schedule, it does not need to be their neighborhood school:

- Wednesday, March 4: Bartlett Elementary from 6 to 7 p.m. and Illinois Park Center for Early Learning from 5 to 6 p.m.

- Thursday, March 5: Huff Elementary from 6 to 7 p.m. and Otter Creek Elementary from 6 to 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 10: Heritage Elementary from 6 to 7 p.m.; Highland Elementary from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.; and Independence Center for Early Learning from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 11: Gail Borden Public Library from 6 to 7 p.m.
- Thursday, March 12: Glenbrook Elementary from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and Lords Park Elementary from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 17: Channing Elementary from 6 to 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 18: Lincoln Elementary from 6 to 7 p.m.
- Thursday, March 19: Hillcrest Elementary from 6 to 7:30 p.m.
- Thursday, April 2: Gail Borden Public Library from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 8: Timber Trails Elementary from 6 to 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 8: U-46 Educational Services Center from 6 to 7 p.m.
- Thursday, April 16: South Elgin Branch Library from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Students treated to action-packed Windy City Bulls game

By: Colette Harris



Students had fun interacting with their teachers who were on center court for various activities during the Education Day game at the Windy City Bulls.



Windy City Bulls players wore jerseys designed to look like a No. 2 pencil, which were auctioned off to support the U-46 Educational Foundation.



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Students participated at every turn during the Feb. 20 Education Day Windy City Bulls game.



Windy City Bulls mascot Gus T. Bull was in top form for the Education Day game, getting kids involved in the spirit of the day.



Kids had fun making spirit signs at the Windy City Bulls game Feb. 20.



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Kids loved to make signs at the BMO Harris sign area.



Students and teachers ruled the day during the Feb. 20 Windy City Bulls Education Day game, sponsored by BMO Harris.



Beckett Solutions, a company that brings 3D printing equipment and training to schools, demonstrated how a 3D printer works and showcased objects made with 3D printing.



The concourse was filled with activities, fun and information for kids during the Windy City Bulls Education Day on Thursday, Feb. 20.



LEGOLAND brought a build table with Legos for kids to build to their hearts' content.

Windy City Bulls mascot Gus T. Bull wasted no time getting students amped up for the Windy City Bulls Education Day Game against the Erie BayHawks at Sears Centre Arena in Hoffman Estates.

Students from multiple school districts thoroughly and loudly enjoyed cheering for the Windy City Bulls, checking out interactive experiences along the concourse and spending the day with their friends during the Thursday, Feb. 20 game, which celebrated students' hard work in the classroom.

A pregame career panel got kids thinking about future career opportunities in sports and showed them how many people are involved in making game day run smoothly.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to get kids out into the world to learn about the variety of careers in sports as well as enjoy a great basketball game with their school

community," said Maria Bolos, a parent and director of school operations at Plato Academy in Des Plaines.

Students enjoyed flexing their creative muscles at the multiple kid-friendly stations that dotted the concourse. For vendors, game day was all about stretching kids' imaginations and having fun.

Elgin Public Museum of Natural History and Anthropology brought Native American artifacts for kids to see and the Backyard Experience in association with the Chuck Jones Center for Creativity Chicagoland taught kids how to draw Bugs Bunny. LEGOLAND brought a build table with Legos for kids to build to their hearts' content. Beckett Solutions, a company that brings 3-D printing equipment and training to schools, demonstrated how a 3-D printer works and showcased objects made with 3-D printing. DuPage Children's Museum set up a craft station for kids to make pinwheels and Blocks to Bricks brought Plus Plus building toys for kids to construct mosaics and figures.

"Kids can get out there and have a chance to be creative and 'construct imagination' through building mosaics and figures," said Courtney Olson, an associate at Blocks to Bricks.

The Official Kids Club of the Chicago Bulls and Windy City Bulls entertained younger students with kid-sized Connect Four games and Windy City Bulls-themed Tic-Tac-Toe and maze work sheets. Students also received a Windy City Bulls-themed workbook to work on math and English skills.

Windy City Bulls players wore jerseys with a No. 2 pencil theme, which were auctioned off to support the [U-46 Educational Foundation](#). Teachers participated in activities on the court while students held up handmade Windy City Bulls signs, grabbed for tossed T-shirts and enjoyed a halftime performance by [Larkin High School](#) dancers.

"A day like today allowed my students to hear from a career panel about different opportunities. Hearing from these speakers was very motivational for them," said Liz Kraszewski, an eighth-grade teacher at [Abbott Middle School](#) in Elgin. "They got to see a great basketball game and have a good time."

The Feb. 20 game was the second of three Education Days presented by BMO Harris Bank. The final game in the series tips off on March 4 when the Windy City Bulls take on the Raptors 905.