

## Press Clippings 03/21/20 to 03/23/20

### ---Kane County Connects---03/23/20



School District U-46 — the second-largest in Illinois after the Chicago Public School District — will begin online learning on March 31.

U-46 is keeping families informed about that and other issues through new website section devoted to keeping families, staff, and community members updated on all the developments related to COVID-19 is located at [u-46.org/covid](https://www.u-46.org/covid).

“I know you have many questions. We will answer them,” Superintendent Tony Sanders said. “We will post all information on our website here: <https://www.u-46.org/covid>. This includes our information about Phase II of our Distance Learning Plan, what this means for all students, especially our Class of 2020, our food distribution, helpful community resources and more.

“We will begin online learning in earnest beginning March 31,” he said. “Next week, we will distribute Chromebooks to families who do not currently have a U-46-issued Chromebook.”

The district will be sending more information about that distribution plan and our Phase II Distance Learning Plan this weekend but some of those details are already posted on our COVID website: <https://www.u-46.org/learning>

The district also has a “Let’s Talk” feature, using the **COVID** button.

So far, the district has distributed more than 76,000 meals and 25,000 snacks to families at 26 sites.

Below are some helpful resources to our online information:

- **Main section:** [u-46.org/covid](https://www.u-46.org/covid)
- **Resources:** [u-46.org/resources](https://www.u-46.org/resources)
- **Food Distribution:** [u-46.org/food-distribution](https://www.u-46.org/food-distribution)
- **Distance Learning:** [u-46.org/learning](https://www.u-46.org/learning)
- **Free internet service:** [u-46.org/freewifi](https://www.u-46.org/freewifi)

- How to contact us: [u-46.org/contact-us](http://u-46.org/contact-us)

## **---The Courier-News---03/22/20**

### **Superintendent: U-46 student tests positive**

First confirmed case in district at early learning center

**By: Rafael Guerrero**

School District U-46 has its first confirmed COVID-19 case, Superintendent Tony Sanders said.

The Cook County Department of Health notified the Elgin-area district Thursday that a student who attends the Independence Center for Early Learning in Bartlett has a confirmed case of the coronavirus, Sanders wrote in a letter to the community.

Independence Center families were notified of the confirmed case prior to Sanders' update Thursday evening; the superintendent has been writing daily districtwide updates. The student has been isolated and is expected to remain in isolation/self-quarantine to prevent the spread of the virus, Sanders said.

The district did not release the student's name and other details, citing health privacy laws.

"Please keep this student in your thoughts and prayers and please respect the student and his/her family during this incredibly difficult time. We will provide you with as much information and updates as possible," Sanders said.

Sanders repeated the advice from health experts that washing your hands regularly, practicing good hygiene and social distancing, and not touching your face, eyes and mouth are the best methods to avoid picking up the virus or spreading it.

"The symptoms of coronavirus are similar to the regular seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing," he wrote. "Some people with coronavirus have reported additional symptoms, such as a runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. In some situations, the virus can develop into pneumonia."

Sanders also mentioned Chicago Public Schools' decision to close its schools through April 20. U-46 officials are making plans "in the event we need to remain closed beyond March 30," he said.

## **---Ph117---03/22/20**

### **'You can only imagine the stress level': Mother of Illinois' youngest COVID-19 patient speaks out**

**by: Judy Wang and WGN Web Desk**

BARTLETT, Ill. — A 3-year-old boy in northwest suburban Bartlett is the youngest person in Illinois to be diagnosed with COVID-19.

The boy's mother told WGN it all started a month ago with a fever and a cough. The family made three visits to the emergency room, and pleaded multiple times for a coronavirus test. On Wednesday night, the test came back positive.

“You can only imagine the stress level, especially at night,” the boy’s mother Diana told WGN. “Nobody’s sleeping, we were all up monitoring him, monitoring his breathing, monitoring his fever. There were two occasions where the fever got so high, he started shaking.”

The boy attends Independence Center for Early Learning in Bartlett. The preschool is in School District U-46, the second largest school system in the state. Until now Illinois health officials had reported the youngest patient in the state was a 9-year-old.

The boy’s mother Diana, who only wants to be identified by her first name, said her son was born premature, suffered respiratory issues his whole life, and was still denied a COVID-19 test.

She said all the other tests for all other illnesses came back negative, and she has no idea how he contracted the virus. As far as she knows, he is the only case at the preschool.

He remains at AMITA Health St. Alexius Medical Center in Hoffman Estates.

“He’s still not eating, he’s drinking very little and we’re just worried he’s getting rushed out of there too soon, and that he may have a downfall again in the future because he hasn’t been given the opportunity to get healthy at his own pace,” she said.

Diana said she and her husband both have symptoms now and there are no arrangements for them to get tested.

**---Daily Herald---03/21/20**

## **U-46 launching plan for distance learning**

**By: Madhu Krishnamurthy ([mkrishnamurthy@dailyherald.com](mailto:mkrishnamurthy@dailyherald.com))**



Elgin Area School District U-46 students soon will be able to begin remote learning as the district unrolls its plan for maintaining education continuity while schools remain closed through April 8 during the coronavirus pandemic.

U-46 is not equipped to provide e-learning for its nearly 38,400 students. That’s why officials have created a new distance learning plan in collaboration with teachers utilizing personal Chromebooks and available portable devices.

Roughly 26,000 one-to-one devices have been issued to students in fifth through 12th grades.

Administrators have pooled 5,800 communal devices from all school buildings. They will be available for pick up next week for families that need them, Superintendent Tony Sanders said.

“The households that do not have a child in grade fifth and up, we are trying to get them a device so their children can continue to learn,” Sanders said. “There are so many teachers that are already engaging with their students from home, doing Zoom meetings (and) other types of learning.”

The district recently purchased a learning management system for teachers allowing them to provide remote instruction, resources and lessons for students. It also allows for video conferencing. Teachers will be trained on how to use the system for distance learning.

“This is on top of systems that they are already utilizing to push lessons to students,” Sanders said. “It’s another platform teachers could use.”

Teachers will decide just how much time students spend on distance learning.

District families also have been asked to engage their children in distance learning lessons offered by grade level on the district website, [u-46.org](http://u-46.org).

“Our role is changing in this world right now,” Sanders said. “Providing for continuity of education for our students is important, but providing food and care is our top priority.”

U-46’s commissary has prepared and distributed thousands of bags of food — more than 76,000 meals — to district families three days this week. Next week’s distribution will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 26 sites. For pickup locations, visit [u-46.org](http://u-46.org).

**---Naperville Sun---03/21/20**

## **Students and parents go through learning curve as school districts make switch to at-home e-learning**

**By: Suzanne Baker**



Valerie Elgohary's 5-year-old daughter works on math problems at home while school is closed for the coronavirus outbreak. The Aurora mother of four said it's taken a few days for her and her children to fall into an e-learning routine in the first week of Oswego School District 308's remote education program. (Valerie Elgohary)

While the first day of e-learning for Kristin Kirchner's children wasn't without hiccups Wednesday, she expects the coming days will proceed more smoothly as teachers and families navigate how to instruct students remotely.

Kirchner said she didn't know what to expect. "After day one, I realized this is manageable," she said.

The Naperville woman's three children were among the nearly 26,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade receiving e-learning activities through Indian Prairie School District 204 after schools statewide were closed by the governor to curb the spread of coronavirus.

With public schools in Chicago and Rockford giving kids the next few weeks off and Elgin District U-46 not quite ready to execute its remote education plan, Indian Prairie is the largest school district in the state to implement e-learning.

Naperville District 203 also rolled out its e-learning program this week to 16,500 students from preschool through high school and Oswego School District 308 is doing remote learning for its 17,000 students.

Inspired by the events of the polar vortex of 2019, Indian Prairie Chief Academic Officer Kathy Pease said teachers have been thinking about e-learning for more than a year. "We intended to use it in place of a snow day," Pease said via email.

Last fall the district received permission from the Illinois State Board of Education to implement e-learning instead of using emergency days. District officials never imagined teachers would have to prepare lessons for more than a few days.

"We feel very fortunate to be in a place to be able to provide continuous learning to our students," Pease said. "Our whole staff has worked together to make this happen today. It is amazing to see their dedication, creativity and hard work being implemented today."

District 203 spokeswoman Sinikka Mondini said Naperville 203 was in the early stages of developing an e-learning program and exploring its options to get state approval when it became apparent the timetable would need to change.

"Our curriculum department ramped up very quickly over the last week. The goal had been to have each building train staff Monday but we ended up keeping all staff at home," Mondini said via email.

The only blip, she said, was making sure the district could meet technical support demands remotely. "We have IT (information technology) staff available to troubleshoot. I think that was worked out by the end of the first day," Mondini said.

Things went smoothly, she said. "Twitter is full of examples of teachers and students at work," she said.

Overwhelmed parents trying to juggle work and school also took to social media for support and catharsis initially. Many became less weary as the week progressed.

Jen Barak, a working mother with a kindergartener and second-grader, appealed to others with jobs on a Facebook forum for Naperville moms for advice on how balance life and received roughly 150 responses.

“It’s just tough for everyone so it’s important now more than ever that as moms we share and work together to provide support,” Barak said via private message. “It’s just tough times, and balancing both can be a challenge when it’s not your normal routine.”

Barak said she appreciates what the district has done. “Teachers have called all of us personally to check in and are available all day to provide help. That’s really impressive knowing they have their own children in many cases,” she said.

A mother of four, Aurora resident Valerie Elgohary said the biggest challenge was the amount of time in the day to complete all the assignments and dealing with her kids’ many meltdowns.

“It’s taken a few days to get the routine down,” she said via private message.

Elgohary on Wednesday said she’s still tinkering with her schedule to fit the needs of each child individually.

Kirchner said she appreciates the forward-thinking of Indian Prairie to develop an e-learning plan and communicate with parents about what was going to happen. She has three kids remote learning at three different grade levels: a son at Graham Elementary School, a daughter at Crone Middle School and a son at Neuqua Valley High School.

“So much uncertainty can lead to anxiety for kids. The district did a lot to allay their fears,” Kirchner said.

Her middle school daughter initially was in a bit of a quandary when she received an assignment from a teacher in a class she had in the previous quarter, which ended March 13.



Valerie Elgohary's 2-year-old son practices his coordination skills with the help of spaghetti noodles, Cheerios and play dough so he doesn't bother his siblings while they're doing their e-learning lessons at home. The Aurora mother of four said she's relying on a routine to prevent chaos and meltdowns while Oswego District 308 schools are closed.(Valerie Elgohary)

Kirchner said the mix-up was corrected by midday and her daughter received the assignment from her fourth-quarter teacher.

Because her high school son was up early, he finished his work first, Kirchner said, adding, “He’s used to working independently.”

She said her elementary schooler needed a little more time to be shepherded into a routine.

That said, the assignments and the amount of work seemed age-appropriate, Kirchner said.

“It’s a manageable chunk of their day,” she said.