

## **Press Clippings 07/24/20 to 07/30/20**

**---Daily Herald--- 07/30/2020**

### **A pandemic timeline for schools**

As a superintendent who, in my career, has also held positions at the State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health, I know officials in those agencies are working tirelessly to decipher data and provide the best direction in the moment. My below timeline of guidance is not intended to offend them; rather, to (in a satirical way) help our communities understand the complexity of our work since March 13, 2020.

#### **March 13 — 46 cases**

Effective March 17, you must shut down all schools. This virus called COVID-19 will spread like wildfire if we do not flatten the curve. We also are shutting other nonessential services like bars and gyms. Oh, but please be sure to educate kids remotely. We will let you know how soon.

Sincerely,

State Government (SG)

#### **March 27 — 3,026 confirmed cases and 34 deaths**

Please begin remote learning days beginning March 31. We suggest you do not grade students. Use this as “the opportunity to redo, make up, or try again to complete, show progress, or attempt to complete work assigned prior to March 13.” And even though it does not really count, take attendance! — SG

#### **April 27 — Over 45,000 cases; 1,983 deaths**

While schools remain closed, we give you flexibility on how to meet student needs, but try to give 30 minutes per day of instruction to kindergartners, to somewhere between two and five hours for high school.

Start making plans to make up for lost learning (assume online).

And you cannot hold any in-person graduation ceremonies. — SG

#### **May 1 — 56,000 cases; 2,457 deaths**

Forget about that whole graduation statement. Be creative, but follow the rules — wear face masks, limit participation, and get all your local health departments to bless your plan. — SG

#### **May 15 — 90,000 cases; 4,058 deaths**

Here is guidance for how you can run summer school. You should plan to make it remote only. This will help those students who were not successful in remote learning. — SG

## **June 18 — 134,000 cases; 6,536 deaths**

Great news! Remember how we said you couldn't hold in-person summer school? Well now you can utilize a mix of in-person and remote learning.

For next school year, plan to return to school using Blended Remote Learning Days “to support a safe transition back to in-person learning.” -SG

## **June 23 — 137,000 cases; 6,706 deaths**

While we said to expect Blended Remote Learning Days to provide a “safe transition back” to school, now in-person instruction is strongly encouraged. You must provide “appropriate social distancing, face coverings, enhanced sanitation measures, and other accommodations ...” and no more than 50 individuals in one space ... and make sure nobody with symptoms comes into a building.

Please note, there are no additional legal protections if someone gets sick while in your schools.  
— SG

## **June 24**

Our bad. When we said “Face coverings” we really only meant face masks. Face shields don't work. — SG

## **July 23 — 166,000 cases; 7,366 deaths**

Less than a month away from school and we are pleased to share with you our Fall 2020 Learning Recommendations. We really want to ensure local control, but 1) we really want to emphasize the importance of in-person schooling, and 2) you must offer families a remote learning option. You may decide internally how to reconcile those two points.

It is safe to open if you follow what we said before ... social distance, mask wearing, no more than 50 people in a space. Congratulations, you are an “essential function” once again. And remember kids need a full five hours of instruction daily. — SG

## **July 23**

This is your federal government. We have over 4 million cases and 143,868 deaths on a slope that continues to rise.

We really want kids back in school. It is perfectly safe so long as you follow the timely and updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control. In addition to masks and social distance, we also want you to ensure that everyone washes their hands frequently, nobody touches their face, people who are sick stay home, and you limit the use of shared objects.

Some countries are using “pods” where students and staff stay together all day. Sorry if you cannot afford the additional staff for that model. Good luck figuring out lunch and bus transportation.

Sincerely,

Federal Government

- Tony Sanders is CEO of Elgin Area School District U-46.

## **---The Courier-News--- 07/29/2020**

### **U-46 board accepts e-learning plan**

Students will remain home through first quarter of school year

**By: Rafael Guerrero**

School District U-46 students will do remote learning through late October under the revised 2020-21 school calendar approved Monday by the school board.

“This is not the way any of us would have wanted to go back to school, but I do think it offers us the most flex given the circumstances we face,” said board member Melissa Owens, who described it as a “heartbreaking and impossibly difficult situation.”

First quarter classes will be done at home through an e-learning format, similar to what was done in the spring, as fears about the spread of the coronavirus continue.

The program will be stronger and improved from what was offered previously, and students will be assessed and graded, officials have said.

The first day of school will be Aug. 24, two weeks later than the original start date. Teachers will begin work one week earlier and preschool will start one week later. The last day of school will be June 2.

Board member John Devereux said he supported the “phased-in approach,” noting that he and two others in his immediate family were diagnosed with mild cases of COVID-19 in May.

“We must plainly and honestly acknowledge that by opening up schools for in-person learning, we would be contributing to the spread of the disease,” he said.

Under the current plan, e-learning will continue through Oct. 22. A hybrid model of in-person and remote instruction will begin the following week for elementary and middle school students.

High school students will continue to learn remotely through the fall semester.

Officials expect many students in high school and lower grades to return to their schools at some point in late fall, but in small groups. Among them would be high school freshmen, career and technical education students, special education students, preschoolers and kindergartners, English language learners and students requiring intervention.

All families will have the option of enrolling their children in the district’s distance learning academy, which they would have to commit through the end of the fall semester.

Deputy Superintendent of Instruction Suzanne Johnson said students may end up with a teacher who is not from their school. Parents interested in this option can complete a survey this week, and additional information on the academy will be available in early August, she said.

Hundreds of people watched the school board's electronic meeting through a Zoom feed and via YouTube livestream, which at one point had nearly 1,000 viewers.

Board member Kate Thommes said she had received more than 200 comments from residents, many of whom supported the district's reopening plan.

Students in middle and high school, including her own, will not get the school year they envisioned, Thommes said, but protecting students and staff must be the priority.

"This plan does not meet the standard of perfection but it does meet the standard of safety," she said.

Added Owens: "Students do not exist in a vacuum. Teachers, janitors, administrators, aides, food service personnel, social workers, all of these make up a school community as do the families of each and every student. ... Yes, students are far more likely to have a favorable outcome for COVID-19 infections, but that is not the case of our extended school family."

**---Daily Herald--- 07/28/2020**

## **U-46 board approves plan for starting school year Aug. 24 remotely**

**By: Madhu Krishnamurthy**



Elgin Area School District U-46 will be starting in August with all-remote learning, but by late October it plans to move to a hybrid model of in-person and remote learning.

The Elgin Area School District U-46 school board approved a plan Monday night for starting the school year Aug. 24 -- delayed roughly a week -- with distance learning for all students in kindergarten through high school.

The first e-learning day for preschoolers will be Aug. 31. Teachers return the week of Aug. 17 for professional development and planning for remote learning.

The district will transition to a hybrid model for preschool, elementary, and middle school students starting in the second quarter on Oct. 22 with emphasis on mask-wearing and social distancing. High school students will continue with online learning for the entire fall semester, said Suzanne Johnson, deputy superintendent of instruction.

During nine weeks of distance learning, access to buildings could be allowed for specific purposes, such as for lab work and Individualized Education Program requirements. Priority access will be allowed in small groups for English Language Learners, students needing additional academic, social and emotional support and special education, early childhood, dual language and kindergarten students. High school students would continue online learning with limited building access to small groups for career and technical education (CTE) programs, labs, gifted and academy programs and specialized courses of study, and students needing interventions or supports.

Johnson said resuming in-person instruction for high schools is much more complex.

"Our largest high school is approximately 2,800 students ... That's without the hundreds of staff members who also report to work each day," Johnson said.

The district's five high schools have different footprints, square footage, and varying programs and spaces for student gatherings and instruction. Among the challenges are being able to provide safe transitional periods and places where more than 50 students could gather while maintaining social distancing and meeting masking requirements. Breaking up high school student populations into smaller groups also will be difficult.

"They are markedly different and much larger in size from our middle schools and our elementary schools and thus one of the key reasons we have chosen to proceed with the online or virtual distance learning for high school for this semester," Johnson said.

Johnson acknowledged some other school districts are exploring starting the school year fully in-person, with a hybrid model or entirely virtual. And some districts already are revising those plans to start with a slower roll-in or distance learning for the first quarter or semester.

U-46 officials previously planned on starting the fall semester using a hybrid of in-person and online instruction.

"This may not meet the standard of perfection, but it meets the standard of safety for all of our students, and we will continue to proceed to do the best we can with that priority," Johnson said. "We are still determining specific courses and opportunities for in-person learning, activities and events. Our goal is to create a smooth transition and minimize change for students."

The district is launching a Distance Learning Academy, which will operate as a completely virtual kindergarten through eighth-grade school with U-46 teachers and curriculum. Families and staff members must select and commit to this option for the entire first semester. The academy currently is not an option for preschoolers who require hands-on, developmentally appropriate instruction, access to materials and resources. Details about the virtual academy will be finalized in early August.

With the later school start, the first semester will not conclude until after winter break this year. Calendar changes include adjusted dates for middle and high school quarters and elementary school trimesters, and designation of Election Day on Nov. 3 as a holiday. The school year will end on June 2.

For more details on the reopening plan, visit <https://www.u-46.org/>

**---Daily Herald--- 07/25/2020**

## **U-46, Comcast extend partnership to offer internet service at home to eligible students and families**

**Submitted by: Elgin Area School District U-46**

Elgin Area School District U-46 and Comcast recently announced an extended partnership to provide eligible low-income families with Internet service at home.

The agreement, an extension of an arrangement that began in the spring, is designed to help students enrolled in the state's second largest district succeed by staying connected through the summer and when teaching and learning resumes in August for the 2020-21 school year.

Fall plans for teaching and learning in U-46 call for starting with distance learning and then moving into a hybrid approach, implementing both in-person classes and distance learning until there can be a full return to school for all students.

"We're grateful for this agreement with Comcast as we continue to close any opportunity gaps among our students," said School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders. "This will help us meet our mission to ensure all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed through an online connection with their teachers, coursework and important educational resources throughout the 2020-21 school year."

Under the agreement, U-46 will purchase Comcast's Internet Essentials service through the end of May 2021 on behalf of eligible households in the district.

U-46 has worked since school doors closed March 13 to close technology gaps by providing internet to families without service and distributing Chromebooks and other devices to students in pre-kindergarten through fourth grade and any older students who did not have a device in the 1:1 fifth- through 12th-grade program.

The district serves more than 38,000 students who live across 90-square miles in 11 northwest suburban towns and villages.

Since 2011, more than 220,000 Illinois households -- and more than 2 million nationwide -- have been connected to the Internet at home through Comcast's Internet Essentials program. Some 90 percent were not connected until they enrolled in the program.

Internet Essentials provides Internet Service at home to eligible low-income households for \$9.95 a month plus applicable taxes and fees. Internet Essentials has an integrated, wrap-around design that addresses each of the three major barriers to broadband adoption that research has identified, including:

- A lack of digital literacy skills;
- A lack of awareness of the relevance of the Internet to everyday life;
- Fear of the Internet;
- The lack of a computer; and
- The cost of Internet service.

The program is structured as a partnership between Comcast and tens of thousands of school districts, libraries, elected officials and nonprofit community partners.

"Internet Essentials has helped millions of Americans gain access to the Internet at home since it launched nine years ago," said Matthew Summy, Comcast's Regional Vice President of External Affairs. "We are honored to work with U-46 to remove barriers to in-home Internet adoption."

Families who believe they are eligible can get more information by clicking on Assistance with High-Speed Internet via the district's Let's Talk customer service tool at [www.u-46.org](http://www.u-46.org).

Elgin Area School District U-46 serves families across 90 square miles within Chicago's northwest suburbs in Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood and Wayne and portions of Carol Stream, Hoffman Estates, St. Charles, Schaumburg and West Chicago.

More than 38,000 preschoolers through 12th-graders attend the 57 district schools and programs. The district's vibrant student population lists 103 home languages, and more than half of its students are from Hispanic families.

#### About Comcast Corporation

Comcast Corporation (Nasdaq: CMCSA) is a global media and technology company with three primary businesses: Comcast Cable, NBCUniversal, and Sky. Comcast Cable is one of the United States' largest video, high-speed internet, and phone providers to residential customers under the Xfinity brand, and also provides these services to businesses. It also provides wireless and security and automation services to residential customers under the Xfinity brand.

NBCUniversal is global and operates news, entertainment and sports cable networks, the NBC and Telemundo broadcast networks, television production operations, television station groups, Universal Pictures, and Universal Parks and Resorts. Sky is one of Europe's leading media and entertainment companies, connecting customers to a broad range of video content through its pay television services. It also provides communications services, including residential high-speed internet, phone, and wireless services. Sky operates the Sky News broadcast network and sports and entertainment networks, produces original content, and has exclusive content rights. Visit [www.comcastcorporation.com](http://www.comcastcorporation.com) for more information.

**---The Courier-News--- 07/24/2020**

## **U-46 to spend \$589,000 to fight virus**

District to invest in masks, thermometers, hand-washing stations

**By: Rafael Guerrero**

School District U-46 will purchase nearly \$264,000 in face masks and thermometers and more than \$325,000 in portable hand-washing stations as it prepares for the school year.

The school board unanimously approved the purchases at Monday's school board meeting. While the Elgin-area district intends to start the school year with most of its students and staff learning and working from home, U-46 joined countless others in purchasing masks, thermometers, and other items to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection inside its schools and facilities.

Board members approved bids from CFJ Manufacturing, GNOMedica LLC and Maybe Mars LLC to supply U-46 schools with masks for special needs students, digital thermometers, student and staff masks, respectively. According to school board documents, the special needs mask will allow educators to see the mouths of their students and vice versa.

According to the proposal, 44,000 thermometers will be purchased for students and staff to take home. District officials have previously said it will adopt a policy for students and staff to check themselves for fever prior to leaving home on any days they may attend school in person.

According to the school board documents, the \$263,920 purchase will include the thermometers, 800,000 children's masks, 800,000 children/adult masks, and 5,000 special needs masks.

There were 103 different businesses that bid on the personal protective gear purchase, according to the board documents.

"It's great when we have a lot of bidders that come in for a lot of projects, but this is the most I've ever seen on one specific bid," said board member Melissa Owens.

"Every vendor had to submit a sample with their bid," said Bruce Phelps, U-46's Senior Business Official of Business Services. "We've taken those masks, and we've reviewed them to make sure they are the quality we are looking for."

School board members, meanwhile, approved the combined \$325,351 bids from Central Restaurant Products and School Nurse Supply Inc. to supply U-46 facilities with 288 hand-washing stations that can be operated using either a mechanical foot pump or electrical pump.

According to the proposal, the district's Plant Operations department conducted a review of all buildings to determine what classrooms already contained operational sinks and which ones did not.

The \$589,271 will be paid from U-46's educational fund account, according to the proposal.