

Press Clippings 11-11-20

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U-46 begins in-person classes

4,400 students in prekindergarten through second grade return

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy



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Bucking a regional trend of school districts reverting to remote instruction, Elgin Area School District U-46 began in-person classes Tuesday for 4,400 students in prekindergarten through second grade.

That's slightly more than half the students in those grades; the other half are learning remotely.

“Today went really well,” U-46 spokeswoman Mary Fergus said Tuesday. “We had so many families, teachers and students comment that they were happy to be together. We couldn’t see their little mouths (behind masks), but there were a lot of smiling eyes.”

Students who chose a hybrid option are divided into two groups, with each group attending in-person classes two days a week and learning remotely the remainder of the time. All students receive synchronous online instruction on Mondays.

Several suburban districts, including Community Unit District 300, Des Plaines District 52, Glenbard High School District 87, Indian Prairie Unit District 204 and Wheaton Warrenville Unit District 200, either are halting in-person instruction and switching to remote learning, or are considering delaying the hybrid option amid rising COVID-19 case rates.

DuPage, Kane, Kankakee and Will counties have long surpassed an 8% virus case positivity rate and now have rates in double digits, forcing the state to impose even tighter restrictions on dining activities and social gatherings indoors and outdoors starting Wednesday.

In U-46, officials have been monitoring COVID-19 rates in Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. They’ve tallied 902 open (suspected or confirmed), 963 closed (cumulative number of cases investigated) and 374 positive cases among students and employees since mid-March.

District officials said they are monitoring the situation closely in concert with local health and education authorities.

“We’ve been working on our plans for months now,” Fergus said. “They have been supportive of the decision for U-46 to implement our hybrid instruction given the safety protocols that we have put into action.”

Fergus said officials are moving forward with the plan to allow more students into schools for hybrid learning in waves.

Select groups of middle and high school students will begin in-person classes Monday while third- through sixth-graders move to a hybrid schedule on Dec. 1.

“We will keep monitoring the health data and we will keep talking to our county health officials, watching the positivity rate,” Fergus said.

“In this pandemic, we all must be prepared to make changes as needed.”

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"IF I WERE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A NEWSPAPER OR A NEWSPAPER WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT, I WOULD NOT HESITATE TO CHOOSE THE LATTER." THOMAS JEFFERSON

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Remembering our
local veterans
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More relief funds
on way to village
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Dist. U-46 launching separate 'affinity groups'

By Seth Hancock

School District U-46 is launching what it calls a "bringing together of people" by dividing people apart.

Teresa Lance, assistant superintendent of equity and innovation, sent a message to staff stating the district was launching what are called "affinity groups." Lance has publicly made partisan political endorsements of Democrat party candidates and called Republicans "racist."

"Affinity groups... are intended to provide spaces for people to work together within their own identity group," Lance wrote. "Affinity groups support the mental health of individuals as well as the health and well being of an organization. They contribute to inclusivity and may positively impact an organization's retention and reputation."

The groups, which are voluntary, would segregate people based on "identity" from race to sexual orientation. A district document sent to

staff states such groups are used "as a bringing together of people."

"Race-affinity groups provide a safe space to connect and support one another while also processing their lived experiences," the document states.

The document suggests that minorities, particularly black employees, face struggles when working with other races. It states that "African Americans experience trauma frequently" when in "White-dominant working environments."

In 2020-2021, the district is creating "African American, Latino/Latina/Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, White Allyship, and LGBTQ" groups and it plans to add "groups in subsequent phases of the work," the document states.

The Examiner asked the district about the purpose of the groups including if they are for teachers to create lesson plans or if they are mostly social groups.

"These groups are open to anyone in the District, not just teachers, and are intended to support the goals listed under both our Strategic Plan and our Equity Plan," said Mary Fergus, director of school and community relations. She added: "Affinity groups are for individuals who identify as members of the group and can speak to the experience of being a member of the group from the 'I' perspective."

Asked what "White Allyship" means, Fergus said it's a "group with a common commitment" to be confrontational.

"A white ally acknowledges the lim-

its of her/his/their knowledge about other people's experiences but doesn't use that as a reason not to think and/or act," Fergus said. "A white ally does not remain silent but confronts racism as it comes up daily, but also seeks to deconstruct it institutionally and live in a way that challenges systemic oppression, at the risk of experiencing some of that oppression. Being a white ally entails building relationships with both people of color, and also with white people in order to challenge them in their thinking about race. White allies don't have it all figured out, but are deeply committed to non-complacency."

Village Board approves sewer rehabilitation pact

By Kristin Carreno

Trustees voted unanimously in approval of a contract for sanitary and storm sewer rehabilitation with Hoerr Construction, Goodfield, Illinois, at a cost of \$539,700, at the Village Board meeting on Thursday, Nov. 5. Hoerr Construction submitted the lowest of five bids, with the highest being \$957,875.

According to Public Works Director Matt Mann, the 2020 water and sewer and street budgets include lining sanitary and storm sewers that are in poor condition.

"We'll be lining most of the sanitary sewer on Schaumburg Road between Bartlett Road and East Avenue," said Mann.

Mann said the sewer pipes are 8 through 30 inches in diameter and are approximately 14,025 feet long.

According to Mann, the sewers are deep, in congested locations or under pavement which makes conventional repairs difficult and expensive. Interior lining of these pipes is cost effective, faster and usually safer due to the fact that no excavation and very little restoration is required.

"The lining of the sanitary sewer also helps the village meet the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District's requirements for their mandated inflow and infiltration control program," Mann said.

The engineer's estimate for the work was \$593,250, according to Mann.

School culture initiative to be voted upon by U-46

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 is set to vote on a \$55,800 contract for so-called "school culture improvement" at its upcoming meeting on Monday, Nov. 16.

The contract is with Illinois State University and will be paid for by the education fund if approved. The item was presented at the Nov. 2 meeting which was held electronically due to COVID-19 regulations.

"School District U-46 has a commitment to ensuring inclusive school cultures for all staff and students in our district," the proposal states. "Illinois State University Professors, Dr. Pamela Hoff and Dr. Beth Hatt, will collaborate with the leadership of School District U-46 to incorporate a needs assessment and subsequent professional development grounded in identifying and mitigating equity

traps for the staff of Elgin High School and (Streamwood's) Sunnydale Elementary School."

The cost is \$44,400 for Elgin and \$11,400 for Sunnydale.

The proposal states Elgin's school improvement team saw the need for this while Superintendent Tony Sanders' cabinet "determined that investments were needed in order to ensure a positive and inclusive culture at Sunnydale Elementary School."

Information regarding the proposal and what will be discussed includes "creating a new normal" along with "apprehending diversity, inclusion & equity" and "understanding resistance to social justice/equity reform."

The material states the government schools have a "moral imperative" to shape public opinion regarding issues like race and gender.



Lest we forget!

The Battlefield Cross statue at the village's Veterans Memorial is one of the many statues at the site often visited at and around Veterans Day. Veterans Day is a time to honor all of those who have served the country in war or peace, although it's largely intended to thank living veterans for their sacrifices. The day was originally called Armistice Day, commemorating the end of World War I.

(Examiner photo by Bruce Leighty)

