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U-46 to pause hybrid classes

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Elgin Unit District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders the district will pause hybrid classes and revert to distance learning for all students starting Monday

Elgin Area School District U-46 will halt in-person classes and switch to fully remote learning starting Monday through Dec. 4, after guidance from local health officials.

The change will come after merely two weeks of hybrid learning for early grades. The district started in-person hybrid classes for 4,400 students in prekindergarten through second grade on Nov. 10. Select groups of middle and high school students in specialized programs began in-person classes this week while third- through sixth-graders were supposed to move to a hybrid schedule on Dec. 1.

The Kane County Health Department on Monday notified U-46 leaders that the district must take an “adaptive pause.”

“They believe we will be OK continuing with our current plans for this week, then strictly offering distance learning for all students effective Nov. 23,” Superintendent Tony Sanders told the school board Monday. “That means that no in-person instruction or extracurricular activities will occur during that time period. Grades three through six that were supposed to start back on (Dec. 1) will remain in distance learning until the adaptive pause is concluded. Teaching assignments for grades three through six will remain the same for now. However, we are proceeding forward with professional development for those teachers this Thursday and Friday as we had planned to do so.”

Sanders said Kane County superintendents will meet with health officials on Nov. 30 and Dec. 2 to review COVID-19 case numbers and get further guidance before considering extending the hiatus from in-person lessons.

“While we are on this adaptive pause, all administrators and all 12-month staff members will need to continue working from our buildings to support teachers who may choose to teach from their classrooms,” Sanders said.

Elgin Teachers Association President Barb Bettis said she had planned at Monday’s meeting to share the concerns she had been hearing from many of the 2,700 teachers union members.

“We are still committed to continuing to work with the district administration to help ensure its ultimate implementation is safe, successful, and sustainable,” Bettis said. “We are grateful for this pause so that we can address the areas of concern that currently exist in our system.”

Some school board members acknowledged they have heard from parents who are struggling with remote learning.

“We are doing distance learning in our house and I get how miserable it is,” school board member Kane Thommes said. “If it gets beyond just rotten, ask for help. There are people who can help.”

U-46 celebrates American Education Week

Submitted by Elgin Area School District U-46

As the nation continues to struggle with a public health crisis that has deepened appreciation for the importance of public education, Elgin Area School District U-46's teachers and education support professionals will be honored with an "Accent on Achievement" during Monday night's board of education meeting. The recognition coincides with the beginning of American Education Week, being celebrated Nov. 16-20.

American Education Week is always recognized one week before Thanksgiving. It is organized by the National Education Association, along with 13 other organizations, including the U.S. Department of Education and the National PTA.

Each day of American Education Week focuses on a specific school position and Nov. 18 is Education Support Professionals Day, honoring secretaries, paraprofessionals, food services workers, operations staff, bus drivers and bus assistants.

"I am grateful every day for the work done by our teachers in providing a quality learning experience for our students," said U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, our teachers have shown new levels of flexibility, creativity, talent, and dedication in connecting with and educating their students.

"Meanwhile, our educational support professionals have bolstered that effort, in many cases taking on new responsibilities as we all deal with the challenges of this pandemic."

Those new roles for support professionals have included preparing student supplies for Distance Learning kits, creating instructional videos with teachers, recording read-alouds of books for remote library sessions, delivering supplies to families, distributing meals, making phone calls to check in with families and follow-up on attendance, sanitizing school buildings, and more.

The focus for each day during American Education Week is as follows:

- Monday, Nov. 16: Kickoff Day
- Tuesday, Nov. 17: Parents Day

- Wednesday, Nov. 18: Education Support Professionals Day
- Thursday, Nov. 19: Educator for a Day
- Friday, Nov. 20: Substitute Educators Day

Barbara Bettis, president of the Elgin Teachers Association, and Sara Moeller, president of the District U-46 Educational Assistants union, will accept the "Accent on Achievement" certificate at 7 p.m.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the board will be participating electronically using a Zoom webinar which the public may join live at us02web.zoom.us/j/81429354372. Members of the public will be able to issue public comment through the Zoom application during the public comment portion of the meeting. The meeting will also be livestreamed on the district's YouTube [channel](#).