

## **Press Clippings 11-18-20**

**---The Courier-News--- 11/18/2020**

### **U-46 students to return to remote learning**

District moves online as COVID-19 cases rise in Kane County

**By: Karie Angell Luc**

It's back to remote learning for School District U-46 students.

Acting on the advice of the Kane County Health Department, the U-46 School Board was briefed on plans Monday to put an "adaptive pause" on the return to in-person classes in response to the swelling number of COVID-19 cases in Kane County and Illinois.

Students who have already made the switch will finish the week under the hybrid schedule before returning to remote-only learning Nov. 23. That will continue through Dec. 4 unless cases continue to escalate, Superintendent Tony Sanders said.

"The health department says that we will be OK continuing with our current plan to finish up this week for our students in specialized programs," Sanders said.

Students in pre-kindergarten through second-grade students were back in school on a part-time basis as were some high school students.

All Kane County superintendents will meet with health department officials on Nov. 30 and Dec. 2 for guidance and updates, Sanders said.

The plan now is to work on a second-semester hybrid model for the district's high schools with at least two days of in-person instruction, he said.

"I want to address the rumors that we keep getting," Sanders said. "I have received a few emails, and so have board members, with the belief that we will only have students in person one day a week. I assure you, I will not bring a model forward to the board of education that does not provide at least two days of instruction per week for our students.

"Our contact tracing continues to show us that the illness is not being generated within our buildings," he said. "We are not the spreaders. Schools are actually a really safe place for students to be so long as they wear their masks and staff wear their masks, as long as we provide that social distancing and the hand washing.

Based on the information they've been given by the health department, it's group social gatherings — like those that occurred at Halloween and likely will occur on Thanksgiving — that have been responsible for many of the cases being seen now, Sanders said.

"It is those instances in the public when we allow ourselves to take our masks off and be around others is where we continue to spread COVID-19," he said.

School board member Kate Thommes urged parents to reach out to the district if remote learning becomes too much for their children.

"I get how miserable it is," said Thommes, whose children are U-46 students. "Please reach out if it gets beyond miserable. There are social workers, there are counselors, there are principals, there are teachers, and they're ready, willing and able to help your kids."

Board member Eva Porter said she's been overwhelmed by the number of emails she's been receiving from parents and residents.

"I do read them but it's getting impossible to really answer them all and give the feedback that I would like to give," Porter said. "We kind of speak with one voice (on the board). I'm listening still. Don't think we've gone silent on you. We have not."

**---WBBM NEWSRADIO--- 11/18/2020**

## **Elgin District U-46 to switch to remote learning through Dec. 4; plans to return to hybrid model in near future**

**By: Bernie Tafoya**

The state's second largest school district has one eye on remote learning in the short term, and one eye on in-person learning in the not-too-distant future.

On the advice of public health officials, Elgin District U-46 plans to move to fully remote learning Monday through Dec. 4

Just last week, more than 4,000 pre-kindergarteners through second graders began a combo of in-person and remote learning. Specialized classes had been in-person for about a month. Third-through sixth-graders were supposed to move to a hybrid schedule on Dec. 1.

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

"They believe we will be okay 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."

But, Supt. Sanders said contact tracing has shown school buildings have not been the source the spread of CoVID-19.

"The cases we continue to monitor and track generate from our community. They generate from Halloween gatherings. They will generate from Thanksgiving gatherings if people are not careful," he said.

He said his team continues to work on plans for middle and high schoolers to add at least two days a week of in-person learning as they start the second semester.

Supt. 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 pause on in-person learning.

---Chicago Tribune--- 11/18/2020

## Chicago Public Schools will resume in-person classes in January, but more suburban districts revert to remote learning amid COVID-19 surge

By: Karen Ann Cullotta

Chicago Public Schools has announced that it will continue to provide classes through remote learning until after the winter break, but then plans to begin bringing students back on Jan. 11.

The news came down just after Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced Tuesday that he is imposing more restrictions to try to stem the spread of the coronavirus — but reiterated that he’s leaving decisions about schools to local districts.

CPS’ announcement also coincides with decisions by several suburban districts to revert to remote learning as COVID-19 cases surge in Illinois.

CPS, which has been delivering lessons remotely since Pritzker shut down schools statewide in March, said Tuesday afternoon it will begin bringing prekindergarten and some special education students back for in-person classes on Jan. 11.

Other students in kindergarten through eighth grade are scheduled to return to schools on Feb. 1. A return date for high school is still under consideration, officials said. Classes will start with a hybrid model that combines in-person and remote learning.

“While the district is prepared to safely offer in-person learning at this time — consistent with schools across the city and country, including at private and parochial schools in Chicago that have seen low incidence of school-based transmission — beginning in-person instruction in January will minimize disruptions as students transition back to schools while allowing students to quarantine following the holidays,” read an announcement attributed to Mayor Lori Lightfoot, the Chicago Department of Public Health and CPS.

They also noted, however, that with the governor’s Tuesday declaration, CPS “will suspend all high school sports beginning Friday,” including sports like bowling, cheer, dance, and boys swimming and diving that were set to move forward this winter.

Other districts in the Chicago region that already reopened schools are in many cases reverting to remote learning, though.

Among the latest are Palatine-based Township High School District 211 and Community Consolidated School District 15, which collectively enroll a total of roughly 24,000 students in prekindergarten through 12th grade. Both school systems are taking an “adaptive pause” from classroom instruction this week, officials said in recent parent letters.

The resumption of remote learning for all District 211 students started on Monday and for District 15 will begin on Wednesday, officials said.

**In Elgin-based School District Unit 46**, the 37,000 students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade are also slated to remain or return to a strictly distance-learning format from Nov. 23 through at least Dec. 4, **Superintendent Tony Sanders** said in a Monday parent letter.

In CPS, officials had previously announced plans to bring preschool and some special education students back during the second quarter but until Tuesday had not provided a specific date. The Chicago Teachers Union has resisted plans to reopen schools amid skepticism of adequate protections for students and staff.

The CTU called the reopening date “arbitrary” and said the plan “ignores” the current surge of COVID-19.

But in making the announcement, city officials said “many CPS families — particularly Black and Latinx families on the south and west sides of the city — have not been served well enough by remote learning, and opening classrooms beginning with our youngest and highest-need learners will help ensure greater access to high-quality instruction this year.”

CPS also said part of its strategy to minimize the COVID-19 risk when schools reopen is a testing initiative. Free coronavirus tests will be provided to students and staff who have symptoms or have had close contact with an infected person, and school-based staff will be tested regularly as part of a surveillance program to help identify any undetected spread in schools.

Parents in CPS still will have the option of keeping their children in remote classes and can change their minds closer to the reopening dates. As of Monday, officials said, about 34% of eligible pre-K and special education students at 404 district schools have opted in to school-based learning.

Outside of the city, the three northwest suburban school districts join a rapidly growing list of districts across suburban Chicago that have stopped in-person classroom instruction this month in the wake of the rapidly escalating numbers of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

“I know this decision will come with mixed feedback from our parents, staff and the larger community, with some in support of the plan and others against it,” District 15 Superintendent Laurie Heinz said in a Sunday parent letter.

“I certainly understand the challenges that working parents will face who rely on our schools for childcare and the overall stressors of fully remote learning,” Heinz said. “Navigating educational plans during the ups and downs of this pandemic has come with no ‘right’ answers or perfect solutions. In the end, I have to make decisions based upon the health and safety of everyone in our buildings, both students and adults.”

Heinz said the decision to pause in-person instruction was also prompted by the Cook County Department of Public Health stay-at-home advisory that went into effect Monday and will last at least 30 days.

“We have heard from many staff members and parents (who) do not feel safe remaining in school during this stay-at-home advisory period,” Heinz said, adding that a district survey this month found that 80% of District 15 staff was in favor of moving to remote learning for students.

“Our staff has worked hard during this trying time, and they are becoming increasingly concerned for their own safety due to the recent surge in positivity rates and health department advisory,” Heinz said.

Still, despite the switch to remote learning for all students, the district’s 20 school buildings will remain open, and some teachers will be delivering online lessons from their classrooms, a spokeswoman from the district said Tuesday.

In District 211, also based in Palatine, Superintendent Lisa Small acknowledged that “being in-person with our students is where our best work is done.”

But with the recent rise in COVID-19 cases in the community, and with guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Cook County Department of Public Health, Small said the district decided to take an adaptive pause from Monday through Dec. 4.

A return to the district’s hybrid learning plan, including in-person instruction, is slated to begin Dec. 7, Small said.

“While our school-based transmission rates are minimal, the number of students and staff members diagnosed with COVID-19 and the number of individuals needing to quarantine because of COVID-like symptoms has significantly increased during the month of November,” Small said.

In total, 64 students and 25 staff members have tested positive for COVID-19 since Nov. 1, a district spokesman said Tuesday.

The spokesman said District 211 teachers will have a choice to either work remotely or come to school during the three-week adaptive pause, adding that those “who can do their job remotely, have the choice to do so, but those who cannot are to report to work.”

Indeed, with the COVID-19 rates spiking across suburban Chicago, a burgeoning number of school districts in the collar counties are also returning to or continuing remote instruction this month, including West Aurora District 129; Lake Zurich District 95; Wheaton District 200 and Naperville District 203.

Yet despite the growing number of schools pausing in-person instruction this month, officials at several suburban school districts, including Winnetka School District 36, Wilmette School District 39, Arlington Heights School District 25 and [Township High School District 214](#), say they have no immediate plans to stop in-person instruction in the coming weeks.

On the contrary, the District 25 school board last week passed a plan directing Superintendent Lori Bein to begin a transition for students to return to a full in-person learning model, with a remote option for families who are not comfortable with their students returning to the classroom, on Jan. 19, if the required metrics and safeguards are met, according to a recent parent letter.

In Winnetka School District 36, where officials have budgeted around \$2.3 million for COVID-19-related expenses — roughly \$1,400 per student — Superintendent Trisha Kocanda said in a parent letter last week that while families should remain vigilant about following safety guidelines, the district remains “committed to making sure our students benefit from in-person learning for as long as possible.”

“While we are noticing a recent increase in the metrics related to new case counts and positivity rates, our schools continue to provide safe, quality, in-person learning, and we want to keep it this way as long as we can,” Kocanda said.

At neighboring New Trier High School, which after a recent pause resumed in-person instruction for students at its Winnetka and Northfield campuses last week, Superintendent Paul Sally said in a Saturday parent letter that officials are “especially pleased at the very high participation in the first week of our COVID-19 saliva screening program.”

The \$1.3 million program has thus far identified 15 presumptive positive cases among 1,920 students and staff screened, Sally said.

In regards to the county’s stay-at-home advisory to help curb the spread of COVID-19, Sally said attending school is considered “an essential activity,” adding that the high school plans to continue its 25% hybrid schedule for students this week, “following our existing strict safety protocols.”

Officials with one of the state’s largest teachers unions on Monday called on Pritzker to close school buildings because of the soaring COVID-19 cases across the state and to come up with a clear metric for when it’s safe to reopen.

But the governor said Tuesday he will “continue to rely on local school boards to apply the right approach here.”



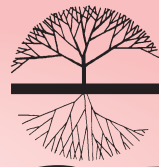
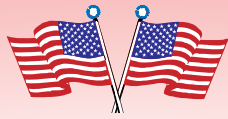
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# Examiner of STREAMWOOD

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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

50 cents  
November 18, 2020



Air compressor  
approved by village  
See ..... Page 4

Cheap Seats:  
Control is power  
See ..... Page 8

## U-46 enrollment data reveals largest loss ever

By Seth Hancock

School District U-46 has suffered its greatest hit enrollment declines in the 2020-2021 school year.

At its Nov. 2 meeting, held electronically due to COVID-19 regulations, the Board of Education was presented with this year's numbers which showed a loss of 1,391 students (3.7 percent) from 38,014 to 36,623.

The loss is nearly triple what the district projected to lose in this year's budget which expected a loss of 483 students.

Since 2014, enrollment has declined from 40,487, a loss of 3,856, and the trend is expected to continue. Prior to this year, a loss of 634 students in 2018 was the largest decline.

"I don't see it changing course.... I wouldn't be surprised if we end up down around 32,000 to 33,000 students once this cohort size makes its all the way through all of our grade levels," said Jeff King, deputy superintendent of operations.

"The whole state of Illinois is down in enrollment the last couple of years," Superintendent Tony Sanders said and claimed U-46's loss is "about the same as large districts across the state."

The largest losses this year came at the elementary level, a loss of 1,037 students, and early childhood, a loss of 270. No elementary school saw significant gains while nine saw declines of over 40, led by South Elgin's

Fox Meadow (73) and Elgin's Lords Park (72).

Central programs, like the Dream Academy, saw a loss of 110 while middle schools hemorrhaged 123 total students with seven of eight schools losing students. Streamwood's Tefft Middle School did increase by 98 while Bartlett's Eastview Middle School saw the largest loss, 56.

High schools added 39 total students. Elgin (63) and Larkin (55) saw the largest gains while three schools lost students.

Since 2016-2017, every grade level from pre-kindergarten through seventh grade has lost students with particularly high drops in third and fifth grade, both dropping by 551. Eighth, ninth and 11th grades saw modest gains (averaging 21) but there's been a net loss of 99 students between eighth and 12th grade.

King said kindergarten through fifth "has dropped by almost 400 students per grade level over the past five to six years." He said "early childhood tends to build as we go through a normal school year," but "I'm not sure we'll build up to what's last year's number was" because of COVID-19.

The district expects lower elementary numbers to start hitting the middle and high

school levels in coming years.

King said he thinks there's been "some loss because of COVID and people converting to private schools, and the charter school" when asked by board member Melissa Owens. He said the district believes it lost 100 students this year to the charter school.

Sue Kerr, the board's president, asked about hospital births which King said the district uses a Canadian third-party which provides updated 10-year projections each year. King said rates have been "down for almost seven years in Illinois," but "births have kind of leveled off" in recent years.

Elementary building utilization, which King said is "based on the number of seats that are available,"

showed that 52 percent (21 buildings) are between 66 and 81 percent utilization and 35 percent (14) are 50 to 65 percent. Three schools, 8 percent, are 82 to 97 percent utilization and two schools (Wayne and Bartlett's Prairieview), 5 percent, are below 50 percent utilization.

The district is currently going through a facility audit and King said current evaluations suggest no new money should be spent on some buildings which rather should be closed. King said: "I think you're going to see a few of those."

"The problem is where some of those buildings exist," King said. "We don't have room to move kids. All of our room is essentially the southeast, and you can't take kids on that long of a bus ride."

## Litigation-related items approved by Dist. U-46

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 unanimously approved, of two litigation-related items at its meeting on Monday, Nov. 2 which was held electronically due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Included was a resolution allowing the district to join over 100 government-run school districts in over 20 states in a lawsuit against Juul, which sells e-cigarettes and other vaping products.

Superintendent Tony Sanders alleged that Juul "deliberatively marketed their materials, their electronic cigarettes, to youth" and said that the district, with the board, was "authorized to hold these conversations in closed session until this point."

Juul has denied that it markets to youth. In a statement last year regarding a similar lawsuit, Juul said it "never marketed to youth and do not want non-nicotine users, especially youth, to ever try our product."

U-46 will join other districts through the Frantz Law Group out of California.

Miguel Rodriguez, chief legal officer, said "there will not be any legal fees up front" and "it'll be simply a matter of recovery." The resolution states Frantz would receive 20 percent for "any recovery on or before June 30, 2021" and 25 percent for "any recovery after July 1, 2021."

The resolution states that "in recent years the use and abuse of e-cigarettes and vaping devices has increased dramatically among high school and middle school students, leading to significant risks of addiction and potentially life-threatening respiratory ailments" and claims that "has caused the District to incur costs in the form of staff time, disciplinary proceedings, and other costs."

Also approved was a settlement agreement pertaining to a lawsuit originally filed by School District 300, based in Algonquin, against Sears Holdings Corporation.

The lawsuit pertained to a 1989 economic incentive given by Hoffman Estates to attract Sears which was unable to maintain the required number of jobs it promised to create after its 2018 bankruptcy, according to the lawsuit.

Several other taxing bodies, including U-46, were a part of the lawsuit. No indication was given at the meeting on how much U-46 will receive from the settlement.

Rodriguez did say "the litigation is still ongoing."



### Good to see some things are open

While many things have returned to a more restricted status throughout Illinois due to the state mandates in reaction to the coronavirus, the Poplar Creek Library makes sure patrons are aware of its status at its village location via its wind-driven banner, shown Thursday, Nov. 5.

(Examiner photo by Bruce Leighty)