

Press Clippings 03-12-21

---Daily Herald--- 03/12/2021

Ex-Bartlett High teacher found guilty of endangering student in liquid-nitrogen demonstration

By: Susan Sarkauskas



Garry Brodersen

A former Bartlett High School teacher was found guilty Wednesday of misdemeanor reckless conduct for pouring liquid nitrogen on a student's chest and groin during a science experiment in 2018.

The six-person jury also found Garry Brodersen, 66, of the 0-100 block of North Grove Street in Carpentersville, guilty of misdemeanor endangering the health and safety of a child.

"Mr. Brodersen displayed extremely poor judgment when he doused a student with a dangerous chemical during a science demonstration," DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlin said in a news release.

The student was lying on his back in a classroom when Brodersen poured the liquid nitrogen onto his chest, then a larger amount onto his groin. In a cellphone video WGN News obtained, the student jumps to his feet in pain after the chemical was poured on the groin area.

Nitrogen, a gas, takes a liquid form when it is between -320 and -346 degrees Fahrenheit. At those temperatures, it rapidly freezes skin tissues and eye fluids.

Brodersen was placed on paid administrative leave after the incident came to light. The Elgin District U-46 school board approved a resignation agreement in July 2018.

He remains free on bond and is next due in court March 18 for post-trial motions and possible sentencing.

---Daily Herald--- 03/12/2021

Teachers, students, parents reflect on the year since COVID-19 closed suburban schools

By: Marni Pyke



One year after schools physically closed, some students are back in the classroom masked and socially distanced, and others are e-learning Thursday at Liberty Elementary School in Bartlett, like in third-grade teacher Olga Fishkin's class. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer*



First-grade student Jakub Markowski runs in place during a math marathon Thursday at Liberty Elementary School in Bartlett. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer*



Third-grade teacher Olga Fishkin works with her in-person students and virtual students. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer*



William Reimholz, 12, and his sister, Ellis, 9, work out in virtual gym class during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both Woodland Elementary School District 50 students attend remote classes. *Courtesy of Candice Reimholz*

There was cheering in some classrooms and hallways when the announcement went out a year ago that Illinois schools were closing amid the spiraling COVID-19 pandemic.

But for many parents it was a gut check, while teachers and administrators looked down the logistical and technological abyss posed by remote learning.

"I remember talking to our superintendent and saying, 'When we come back after spring break,'" recalled Lombard Elementary District 44 fifth-grade teacher Rebecca Gamboa. "He said, 'We're probably not coming back for the rest of the year' ... and I laughed."

On March 13, 2020, Gov. J.B. Pritzker ordered Illinois schools to shut down in-person classes for two weeks to reduce the spread of the deadly virus. The temporary measure was extended with a statewide stay-at-home order enacted March 21.

Those first weeks were a "sprint," Elgin Area School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders said, "getting teachers and support staff access to the materials that had been left at school, getting more devices into the hands of kids ..., ensuring we could provide meals to families, ensuring low-income families had access to the internet, and preparing for remote learning for students."

Students and teachers didn't come back that semester, and some didn't return in the fall, either. One year later, many school districts are offering in-person instruction as well as remote learning.

Naperville North High School senior Tessa Devine couldn't wait to return to class in January but found "it was definitely very strange at first. It felt almost cold -- everyone had masks on, everyone was spread out.

"Now it's a lot more normal to me and I really enjoy seeing friends and interacting with teachers -- a huge part of school is the social aspect," said Devine, managing editor of the schools' North Star newspaper.

When school closure news broke, "everyone in the hallway was screaming and talking. It was a little bit chaotic, but it was honestly a bit joyful," Devine remembered.

"We had no idea what it was going to turn into. We were in the depths of the semester and everyone was exhausted, so a break seemed like the best thing that could happen. And, it was so weird to be living through something that felt so apocalyptic."



Tessa Devine, a Naperville North student, describes her high school experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. -

Mark Welsh | Staff Photographer

That euphoria faded as everything from field days to senior graduations evaporated, replaced by virtual events.

Just 10% of U.S. school districts were prepared in March 2020 to offer formal curriculum and instruction online, according to Advance Illinois, an educational advocacy and policy organization. The value of teachers was amplified for parents working from home and trying to remember what the lowest common multiple meant.

"I had to relearn long division," said Wildwood resident Candice Reimholz, who has a son in seventh grade and a daughter in fourth grade at Woodland Elementary School District 50 in northern Lake County.

But, "I feel grateful for the ages they are. If they were in kindergarten, it would have been a very different situation," she said.

"They miss their friends, but the kids have been thriving with e-learning" and plan to continue remotely until the new school year, Reimholz said.

Melissa Deegan of Naperville has two children in junior high and at high school who are attending hybrid programs in Naperville Unit District 203.

When lessons were remote, she bought new computer equipment, but "it made me realize that all the technology and materialistic things cannot replace the value of in-person learning," Deegan said.

With math, "it's very challenging to sit and watch a video and not have that engagement one-to-one with the teacher. Both of my kids missed the opportunity to work on math problems in class with peers, and that same issue transfers to science."

Teachers in their classrooms also felt the disconnect.

"As a teacher you want to do your best, and it's hard when it just isn't possible," said Gamboa, who took to wearing "crazy hats" and painting her face to keep her fifth-graders engaged.



Lombard Elementary District 44 fifth-grade teacher Rebecca Gamboa paints her face and wears "crazy hats" during online learning to engage with her students. - Courtesy of Rebecca Gamboa

Teaching math online was a particular concern, she said, because "you rely so much on being able to walk around and look at what they're doing," making observations like, "Oh, you forgot to subtract in this division problem."

But she's also "seen a maturity and empathy in students that I haven't seen before," Gamboa said. When her computer crashed, "I was so frustrated, but one of my students said, "These things happen and we understand.""

"Going remote sent shock waves across the entire state," said Jessica Ramos, director of community engagement for Advance Illinois.

"We have all experienced the pandemic, but the pandemic has not been felt equally. Students of color, students of low-income backgrounds carry a different weight."

Those findings resonate in Northwest Suburban High School District 214, said Superintendent David Schuler, who added that households with essential workers who couldn't work from home also suffered during the pandemic.

"We've all experienced levels of trauma to some degree, but (families) of first responders and those in poverty were disproportionately impacted," he said.

Another inequity was lack of internet access or inadequate technology facing some families.

Although school districts have made a herculean efforts to bridge those gaps since spring 2020, "Black and Hispanic households are still three to four percentage points less likely than white households to have reliable access to devices, and three to six percentage points less likely to have reliable access to the internet," a COVID-19 [report](#) on learning loss by consultants McKinsey & Company found.

Sanders keeps a photo of his key administrators hunched around a table March 13, 2020, that's remarkable for two reasons.

One is the grim faces. The second is "we had no masks and no social distancing," Sanders recalled. "We really did not have enough knowledge at the time to know of the importance of those two mitigation strategies. That was the last time I have seen any of those team members in person without a mask."



Top administrators at Elgin Area School District U-46 meet March 13, 2020, the day Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced school closures statewide because of COVID-19 -- and the last time they gathered without masks. - Courtesy of Tony

Sanders

A year later with vaccinations underway, Elmhurst Unit District 205 Superintendent Dave Moyer sees light ahead, but "people are exhausted," he said of his staff.

One concern is how the pandemic will affect academic performance, but many educators are withholding judgment given an absence of data. The research organization NWEA found in a study based on fall 2020 test scores that students in grades three through eight performed similarly in reading compared to 2019 but were 5 to 10 percentage points lower in math.

"It's been challenging for students and families and teachers, and there are a variety of areas where things are less than perfect. But for the most part, the majority of kids are learning and progressing," Moyer said.

"One thing we're going to find with this generation of students is that they are probably going to be the most resilient generation of students our country's ever seen," Schuler said. "They keep getting right back up, and that's going to serve them incredibly well as they get older."

Devine said she finds that "even the bad things taught me good things ... taught me how to be patient, how to be flexible, how to communicate." Amid a pandemic, "I was forced to deal with things and roll with the punches, and I think that's made me a better person overall."

---WGN9--- 03/12/2021

Former Bartlett High School teacher convicted of pouring liquid nitrogen on student

By: Associated Press

WHEATON, Ill. (AP) — A former chemistry teacher at a suburban Chicago high school has been convicted of reckless conduct for a 2018 incident in which he [poured liquid nitrogen on a student](#) during a science demonstration, injuring the youth.

A DuPage County jury on Tuesday also found Garry Brodersen, 66, guilty of one count of endangering the health or life of a child following a two-day trial, prosecutors said. That charge and the reckless conduct charge are both misdemeanors.

Brodersen, of Carpentersville, was performing a science demonstration in front of a class in May 2018 at Bartlett High School when prosecutors said he poured liquid nitrogen on a male student's chest and groin area. The student suffered burn injuries to a finger and his groin, the state's attorney's office said.

"Mr. Brodersen displayed extremely poor judgment when he doused a student with a dangerous chemical during a science demonstration," DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlinsaid in a written statement.

The student had volunteered to take part in the science demonstration but did so with the understanding that the liquid nitrogen would be poured over his chest area, not on his groin area, a spokesman for the state's attorney's office said.

The student has since fully recovered, the spokesman said.

Brodersen resigned from his position and voluntarily surrendered his teaching certificate in June 2018, following the incident, a spokeswoman for School District U-46, which includes Bartlett High School, told the Chicago Tribune.

Brodersen is expected in court again March 18 for post-trial motions or sentencing.

---NBC News--- 03/12/2021

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Prosecutors said the student suffered burn injuries to a finger and his groin following the 2018 incident at Bartlett High

By: The Associated Press

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Bartlett High School in Bartlett, Ill. Google Maps

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