

## **Press Clippings 05-29-21 to 06-01-21**

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**---Press Clippings---06/01/2021**  
**There are no U-46 related news stories.**

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**---Press Clippings---05/31/2021**  
**There are no U-46 related news stories.**

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**---Press Clippings---05/30/2021**  
**There are no U-46 related news stories.**

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**---Chicago Tribune---05/29/2021**

**COVID-19 led some schools to drop letter grades. One suburban student is on a quest to get his back.**

**By: Karen Ann Cullotta**

When Elmwood Park High School eliminated letter grades last spring because of the COVID-19 pandemic, honor student Magnus Shipinski — who anticipated earning all As and one B — was disheartened to learn the new pass-incomplete system would mar his transcript with a spate of ambiguous Ps.

“Once the pandemic hit, a lot of students felt like, ‘What’s the point of anything?’ because there was no reason to work hard anymore, when all you needed to do was pass,” said Shipinski, 16, a junior, whose repeated request to have his “pass” grades from last spring changed to traditional letter grades were soundly denied by Elmwood Park Community Unit School District 401.

Shipinski is especially dismayed that his GPA did not get the boost he’d anticipated from what he thinks would have been an A in AP World History.

More than a year later, Shipinski is worried all of those P grades could potentially harm his prospects for college scholarships and for acceptance to prestigious universities where the competition is fierce.

“It’s definitely part of my character and who I am that when I believe in something, I really work for it, so it’s really hard to just ‘pass’ my classes after putting in so much effort and time,” Shipinski said.



Magnus Shipinski, 16, a junior at Elmwood Park High School. He's protesting his district's pandemic-era grading policy for not giving teens letter grades, and instead gave students a P for passing or an I for incomplete. (Stacey Wescott / Chicago Tribune)

The decision by the suburban Chicago high school to abandon traditional letter grades last spring was prompted by a state guideline that schools could use a pass-incomplete system that would mitigate the negative affects of remote learning and support students at an extraordinarily difficult time.

Still, at many Illinois school districts, [including Chicago Public Schools](#), teachers continued to assess their students’ work at the start of the pandemic with letter grades, but in a way that did not lower the grades, with the expectation that incomplete assignments would be finished once students had the opportunity to get back on track.

Grading as usual was reinstated in many districts statewide, including District 401, at the start of the 2020-21 school year.

District 401 Superintendent Leah Gauthier did not reply to repeated requests for comment.

But in an April 27 email to Shipinski after he asked for letter grades to be reinstated, Gauthier wrote: “In weighing all considerations we made that decision on what we thought was best for the entire district.”

“While I understand that you are concerned about your GPA and your class rank let me reassure you that pass/incomplete allowed for your GPA and class rank to remain intact throughout the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year,” Gauthier wrote. “This was the case for all students for GPA and class rank. All students resumed traditional letter grades at the start of the 2020-2021 school year. We will not be making any changes to last year’s grading practices.”

Shipinski also pleaded his case with the Illinois State Board of Education but was told “grading practices are determined at the local district level through school board policies.”

The teen was praised for his “advocacy” and “willingness to share” his perspective, and urged to apply for a spot on the state’s Student Advisory Council.

Many Illinois school districts continued giving students letter grades even at the onset of the coronavirus, with the caveat that a student’s grades would not decline from pre-pandemic levels.

At Palatine-based Township High School District 211, officials created an emergency remediation summer school program last year, which paired about 100 students one on one with

mentor teachers who helped them in specific subject areas, District 211 spokesman Tom Petersen said Friday.

About 90% of the teens in the program had “incomplete” grades changed to a passing, he said.

Elgin-based School District U-46 similarly did not lower grades and provided opportunities over the summer and this school year for students who ended the 2019-20 year with “incompletes” to finish the courses, district spokeswoman Mary Fergus said.

Teachers at Township High School District 214 had the option during the pandemic to issue a “pass,” “no credit” or “audit” grade for students in all courses, including those that meet a graduation requirement, spokesman David Beery said Friday.

In addition, the district launched intervention measures, such as providing tutors to students at risk of failing and meeting with parents of high school seniors to ensure they remained on track for graduation.

Brian Taylor, a managing partner at Ivy Coach, which provides college admissions counseling and ACT and SAT tutoring, applauded high schools that assessed students’ progress with traditional letter grades as much as possible throughout the pandemic.

“Shame on the schools that are putting their students at a major disadvantage by not putting the letter grades earned during the pandemic on their transcripts,” Taylor said, adding that while many colleges are now “test optional,” scores from ACT and SAT exams, and high school transcripts, still determine admission.

“One of the reasons applications were up at many colleges is because students thought they could get in without test scores,” Taylor said. “But if a student doesn’t have all of their letter grades on their transcript, and there’s no test, what data can the colleges rely on?”

Still, some foes of standardized tests say that although a full slate of regular course grades would provide colleges a bit more information on a student’s transcript, “experienced admissions officers do not need all the details from every year of high school to make high quality judgments about applicants.”

“They can, and do, look closely at the rigor of courses an applicant has taken, the high school’s academic profile, the performance of students from the same school who previously enrolled and teacher recommendations, among other factors,” said Bob Schaeffer with FairTest: National Center for Fair & Open Testing.

The disappointment high school students are experiencing after their academic careers and extracurricular accomplishments were derailed by the pandemic is painful, but the setbacks also provide opportunities for growth, said Alexandra Solomon, a family therapist and clinical assistant professor at The Family Institute at Northwestern University.

“You certainly want to validate these students’ concerns and the sense of unfairness and disruption to a meritocratic worldview, where you work hard and have something to show for it,” Solomon said. “Seen through an adolescent’s eyes, it can be seen as quite disruptive, but if you widen the lens, these school systems have been trying so hard during the pandemic and without a playbook.”

While a cluster of “P” grades on a pandemic-era transcript may raise questions for some college admission officers, Solomon said high-achieving students “will still get into many colleges, and be on paths to being very successful.”



Douglas Wildes, left, principal at Elmwood High School, stops to get a selfie with junior Magnus Shipinski, 16, outside of the high school on May 28, 2021, in Elmwood Park. (Stacey Wescott / Chicago Tribune)

Shipinski, whose high school activities include theater and golf, has not yet had any luck in his grade-changing quest, but he isn't ready to give up just yet.

"It's pretty upsetting, because other people excel at sports, but for me, my grades at school are my focus, and I've put in a lot of time and effort," Shipinski said. "The district seemed to think I'm asking for every student to be on a grading scale, but I made it pretty clear, I don't want to cause harm to anyone. But for me, it's causing harm by not giving me my grades."

**---WGN9---05/29/2021**

## **Suburban family upset after student not allowed at graduation due to close COVID-19 contact**

**by: Kelly Davis**

ELGIN, Ill. – Four District U46 students will not be walking in their high school graduation ceremony due to close contacts with a COVID-19 case.

Ana Arizmendi received a call Monday that her daughter, Crystal Enriquez, won't be able to walk this Saturday at Elgin High School's graduation.

"She's very sad, she's like 'mom I can't this, was very important to me' and she's devastated," Arizmendi said.

A spokesperson for District U46 said they notified families of their policy back in April.

If a student tests positive for COVID-19 or comes in close contact with a case, they "will not be permitted to participate in the graduation ceremony."

"She has to be in quarantine for 14 days," Arizmendi said. "It's been four days already, she has no symptoms. The risk of getting contagious is very minimum because normally they wear their masks, they're a couple feet apart."

The school district said their policy adheres to local county health guidance on COVID-19 and quarantining.

"All week I've been calling the nurse the principal, District U46 and I get all the same answers no we're just following rules," she said.

A spokesperson said the high school offered to host a private ceremony for the four students or they can walk in the summer graduation ceremony in July.

“We recognize this is a terrible situation for our seniors and we have a lot of empathy for them and for their families. We know this is a challenge for students across the state and country,” they said.

School officials said at least one of the families agreed to an alternative ceremony and they’re hoping to work with others to find a solution.

## **SPORTS**

**---The Courier-News---05/29/2021**

### **Sabre stunner**

Lara doubles in winner as Streamwood rallies from 5-run deficit to beat Bartlett

**By: Paul Johnson**



Streamwood’s Nicholas Weaver, left, celebrates with Chris Lara after Lara had the game-winning hit in the bottom of the eighth inning against Bartlett on Wednesday. Brian O’Mahoney/Beacon-News photos

Streamwood’s Kevin Lunz celebrates with his teammates after scoring the winning run.

Streamwood’s Chris Lara wasn’t happy with the way he was hitting the ball going into his at-bat in the eighth inning.

He erased all the bad memories with one swing of the bat, however.

The sophomore shortstop ripped a double to left to drive in Kevin Lunz with the winning run Wednesday in a wild 8-7 Upstate Eight Conference victory over Bartlett.

The Sabres had lost seven straight Upstate Eight games coming into the day, but rallied from a five-run deficit to beat the conference champions.

“It was just put the ball in play,” Lara said. “I wanted to go (to the opposite field), but I barreled it. That’s all I really needed to do.

“I didn’t hit really well except for that at-bat, so it felt good to barrel one up and drive it.”

Lunz cracked a one-out single to start the rally and advanced to second on a wild pitch.

“I gave him the option to bunt down the third base line if he was in or back, but he was in,” Streamwood coach Dan Jennings said of Lara. “He hadn’t gotten a hit in a couple days.

“He’s aggressive in the zone early in a plus count, 2-0. You have to love to hit in a plus count. It shows when the guys are on time and barrel it down the line. He did an awesome job.”

Bartlett (17-7, 15-2) looked to be in command early. The Hawks took a 7-2 lead in the top of the fifth inning on a two-run homer by Nick Castrovellari.

The wheels fell off in the bottom of the fifth, though.

Starter Nathan Gargano got his work in for the postseason, going four strong innings. Bartlett coach Chris Baum lifted him to give other pitchers some innings and made several defensive changes.

The Hawks then committed four errors as Streamwood sent 10 batters to the plate and scratched out five runs to force a 7-7 tie.

Nick Weaver contributed an RBI single in the rally. He finished 3-for-3 with three RBIs.

“We have to make the correct plays and slow the game down when it matters,” Baum said.

“We’re getting our work in right now, making sure everybody is sharp.

“It’s the opportunity we were afforded by locking (the conference title) up the last game. We have to make sure we’re tight when it matters.”

Streamwood nearly took the lead in the bottom of the sixth, but Lara was nailed at the plate by Bartlett right fielder George Betevis to end the inning. Betevis also threw out a runner at third to end the third.

After allowing the homer, Eric Arroyo settled in on the mound to keep Streamwood in the game. He struck out three, allowed five hits and walked none over four innings to earn the win.

The two teams will be quite familiar with each other the next two weeks.

They wrap up the regular season in the UEC on Friday at Bartlett and then open the Class 4A playoffs against each other next Thursday.

“We never go into a game knowing we’re going to win or lose, but I definitely think we’re going to come out stronger,” Lara said. “We know we can take them.

“I think this will bring us as close as we need to be together. Hopefully, it rides throughout the rest of the season.”