

Press Clippings 2/8/2022

Daily Herald

Here we go again: Judge's order sparks conflict, renews debates over masks in schools --- 2/8/2022

By Russell Lissau



Jessica Banaszek, a parent and founder of the group M.A.S.K.S., which stands for Make All School Kids Safe, took part in a rally Monday outside Wheaton Warrenville Unit School District 200 headquarters in Wheaton. "We're here because we feel that our district has neglected to keep our kids the safest as they can be in this time of uncertainty," Banaszek said. *Sandy Bressner/Shaw Media*

Despite a downstate judge's order lifting a statewide mask mandate, many suburban schools insisted students and employees wear face coverings Monday to prevent transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Whether they complied with the rules varied, however. And there were some demonstrations -- both against masks and in favor of them.

At St. Viator High School in Arlington Heights, about 40 students were sent to the gym after walking into the building without masks Monday morning.

The students were told they could don masks and attend classes or go home, according to an email sent to the school community Monday afternoon by the Rev. Daniel Lydon, the school president, and Principal Karen Love.

Some returned to class, some went home, and several refused to do either and remained in the gym.

Administrators later decided to move to remote learning starting Tuesday because of the controversy.

"Our staff, administration, and faculty have been the subject of excessive abuse from some individuals and we are concerned about the safety and wellness of everyone in our building as tensions mount," the administrators wrote.

The long-standing mask requirement in Illinois schools came to an abrupt end Friday, when Sangamon County Judge Raylene Grischow granted a temporary restraining order effectively ending the mandate. The ruling came as part of a lawsuit filed last year by dozens of parents and students against more than 150 school districts statewide.

Wheaton Warrenville Unit School District 200, one of the defendants, opted for voluntary masking because of the ruling.

Some parents protested the decision outside the district's offices Monday.

"I do think we're in a period of confusion and disruption, and that's why I think District 200's decision was outrageous," said Shannon Limjuco, a Wheaton parent who helped organize the demonstration. " ... Other school districts around us are staying the course with masking and other COVID mitigation, knowing that things are still in flux."

Limjuco sent her kids, ages 11 and 8, to Whittier Elementary School in Wheaton with masks but wrestled whether to keep them home out of concern for their health.

"We want our schools to stay open," Limjuco said. "We don't want our teachers and kids getting sick and potentially having to close down our schools."

The attendance rate Monday was consistent with any other Monday in the district, a spokeswoman said.

The district still has "a very strong set of mitigations in our schools, mitigations that apply to our ventilation systems, mitigations with distancing in classrooms," Superintendent Jeff Schuler said.

A sizable demonstration also occurred before Monday's **Elgin Area School District U-46** board meeting -- but here, the sign-waving protesters were upset with officials' decision to keep masks mandatory.

Among those taking part was Kim Kowall, an interventionist at the district's Illinois Park Early Learning Center in Elgin. She said the young children she works with are suffering setbacks to their speech development and social-emotional learning because of the mask mandate.

"We literally can't hear these kids," Kowall said. "They don't have a voice. Their families don't have a voice."

Campus life was quieter in Maine Township High School District 207, where officials kept a mask order in place at their three campuses. Officials subsequently heard from parents who thanked them for maintaining the policy and others who "expressed disappointment" with the decision, spokesman Brett Clark said.

In Libertyville-Vernon Hills Area High School District 128, officials kept mask mandates in place at both campuses.

The "vast majority" of students attended classes and wore masks with no disruption to the school day, district spokeswoman Mary Todoric said. Teens who didn't follow the policy weren't allowed in class, she said.

Those students met with their principals and were given an opportunity to explain their position and ask questions, Todoric said. Students then were allowed to wear masks and go to class, leave school for the day or complete classwork in a gym.

In Elmhurst Unit District 205, another defendant in the lawsuit, masks now are strongly recommended, but not required.

"We had over 98% student attendance," Superintendent Keisha Campbell said Monday.

Batavia Unit School District 101 officials continued requiring masks for everyone, too. Compliance was good, Superintendent Lisa Hichens said.

"Our students have been very respectful," Hichens said.

Aurora-based Indian Prairie Unit District 204 kept a mask mandate in place except for anyone listed as plaintiffs in the legal fight.

Spokeswoman Lisa Barry said Monday went "pretty smoothly." No students were sent home because they didn't have masks, she said, and no protests developed.

- Daily Herald staff writers Madhu Krishnamurthy, Eric Peterson, Christopher Placek, Susan Sarkauskas, Kevin Schmit and Katlyn Smith contributed to this report.

Daily Herald

School mask decision by judge 'cultivates chaos,' Pritzker says --- 2/8/2022

By Marni Pyke



A total of 8,426,262 people have been fully vaccinated or 66.5% of Illinois' 12.7 million population as of Monday. *Daily Herald File Photo*

Gov. J.B. Pritzker Monday blasted a downstate judge's order temporarily lifting face mask restrictions at numerous school districts as sowing "chaos" amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sangamon County Judge Raylene Grischow's "decision cultivates chaos for parents, families, teachers and school administrators across the state," Pritzker said at an event in Chicago.

"More importantly, it constrains the ability of the named school districts to maintain safe, in-person learning requirements."

Grischow on Friday issued a temporary restraining order, which effectively prevents schools from enforcing mask, quarantine and COVID-19 test requirements at multiple districts. It stems from a lawsuit filed by 145 families stating that quarantines infringe on students' rights and that districts have no lawful authority to mandate masks in class.

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul is seeking to reverse the decision that left administrators scrambling this weekend to react and inform families about whether students should show up with masks or not on Monday. A total of 145 school districts were named in the lawsuit including suburban ones such as **Elgin Community Unit District U-46**.

"The judge has created a tremendous amount of confusion even in the way she wrote her decision," Pritzker said.

"Illinois schools that have not been named as defendants in the lawsuit should continue to follow the prescribed public health protocols which have ... made it possible for kids to continue learning in person."

Pritzker also said districts with a "shared understanding with their labor unions" regarding health requirements must continue to follow those.

Overall, "districts ought to err on the side of protecting everybody in the school," Pritzker noted, adding that Illinois is only just starting to climb out of a deadly COVID-19 surge in December and January amid the highly infectious omicron variant.

In her ruling, Grischow said districts had adopted policies "that have held children will be excluded from school in the event they do not wear a mask on school premises ... further preventing them from receiving an in-person education."

Meanwhile, the seven-day average of new COVID-19 cases decreased by 39% in a week. Monday's average was 7,221 compared to 11,873 on Jan. 31, Illinois Department of Public Health data showed.

New cases of COVID-19 reached 13,953 over the weekend with 187 more people dying from the respiratory disease, the IDPH reported.

Patients in the hospital with COVID-19 came to 2,744 as of Sunday night. The seven-day average is 3,192 hospitalizations.

Between Friday and Sunday, 73,307 more COVID-19 shots were administered. The seven-day average is 25,238.

The state's positivity rate for COVID-19 cases is 5.5% based on a seven-day average.

So far, 8,426,262 people have been fully vaccinated or 66.5% of Illinois' 12.7 million population, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. The CDC defines fully vaccinated as two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or one dose of Johnson & Johnson's.

Of those people who are fully vaccinated, 47.8% have received a booster shot.

The IDPH reported 5,565 new cases on Saturday, 3,687 on Sunday and 4,701 on Monday. Deaths came to 89 on Saturday, 67 on Sunday, and 31 on Monday. The state does not update data on weekends.

Total cases statewide stand at 2,971,516 and 31,483 Illinoisans have died since the pandemic began.

The federal government has delivered 23,202,545 doses of vaccine to Illinois since distribution began in mid-December, 2021, and 20,696,791 shots have been administered.

Labs processed 106,566 virus tests in the last 24 hours.

ABC-7 Chicago

Suburban Chicago parents plan protests, lash out after Illinois school mask mandate ruling --- 2/8/2022

By Jessica D'Onofrio

Tuesday, February 8, 2022 8:32AM

GLENVIEW, Ill. (WLS) -- A protest is planned in Glenview Tuesday, after an Illinois judge's ruling forced many schools Monday to decide whether to continue with a mask mandate or to make them optional. Emotions across the state are running high.

Some school districts kept their mask rules in place, while others made them optional, as COVID cases decline nationwide.

At Our Lady of Perpetual Help school in Glenview, a group of parents is planning a protest at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday morning.

They said they don't want the school to continue to require masks; they want masks to be optional.

Emotions boiled over during a meeting in Naperville Monday night.

"Why are you continuing to enforce a mandate that is null and void?" Lisa O'Reir said. "You have all shown your true colors. It is not the children you care about."

"I'm not sure who you represent but it is not us," said another parent.

"This type of evil is exactly what the law was intending to constrain; yet you continue to perpetrate this evil -- the judge's words, not mine," Kevin Sawotsky said.

The parents from District 203 read from the temporary restraining order. Last Friday, a judge in downstate Sangamon County ruled against Gov. JB Pritzker's mask mandate inside school buildings, in response to lawsuits involving parents and teachers from more than 150 districts.

After that ruling went in favor of the lawsuit, whose plaintiffs include parents from District 203, the board decided in a closed-door Sunday meeting that they would continue to require masks in schools.

"Naperville made a decision per the guidance of health departments to continue the requirement of masking in schools, buses, after-school activities, with the exception of the named parties in the lawsuit," said Superintendent Dan Bridges.

Several parents at that meeting in Naperville promised legal action against the school superintendent and possibly the school board if no change is made imminently.

Some surrounding school districts, including Schaumburg, Elmhurst, Arlington Heights, Barrington and Wheaton, have chosen to make masks optional. Dozens of students showed up at Naperville schools Monday maskless. They were separated out and did e-learning activities.

Between vitriol, tears and begging for mask choice, just a few parents and a teacher stepped up to back the board's decision to keep masks mandatory for now.

"Their goal is to intimidate you," one parent said. "You guys have kept school running."

"The majority, the actual majority of families out there, know that for the past 23 months you have had our back," another added.

Pritzker spoke about the ruling Monday morning at a press conference on preventing expressway shootings. He said the judge's ruling, "cultivates chaos" and that, "poor legal reasoning should not take one of our most effective tools off the table, so, again, I have asked the attorney general to continue to aggressively appeal this decision."

Attorney General Kwame Raoul officially filed an appeal Monday morning.

A group of Wheaton parents gathered to protest outside District 200's headquarters Monday, demanding school administrators walk back their mask optional policy change.

After nearly two years of online learning, Claudette Cummings was on the verge of going back to in-person learning. Not anymore.

"She's had three open-heart surgeries, and she has a low oxygen level, so, for her, COVID could be calamitous," her mother, Leslie Cummings, said.

For others, the mask optional decision was long overdue.

"We're really excited for that," said father of three Michael Lafido. "I have a daughter that is a

little speech delayed. Reading lips is really important for her."

For some of the districts named in the lawsuit that resulted in the temporary restraining order, administrators said removing the mask mandate for their schools was a legal decision.

"What we issued last night we did with full recognition that it's being appealed and that it is possible and likely that something will change," said Superintendent Jeff Schuler, Community Unit School District 200.

In Schaumburg's District 54, masks in school are now optional. It's a big change for students and parents at Robert Frost Junior High School in Schaumburg. Some are comfortable with the switch to a mask optional policy, while others are not.

Patti Rojek told her 13-year-old son Sam to keep wearing his.

"My opinion, I think they should still be wearing the masks," Rojek said. "It's not that big of a deal in my opinion. It's something small that's working."

When is right time for schools to lift mask mandate?

Sam said he is listening to his mom, and the new rules have him worried.

"Kind of uncomfortable because I'll know that they're more likely to get sick and they're more likely to pass it to me," Rojek said.

Others think it is time to lift the mandate.

"We now have vaccinations," said Robert Frost Junior High parent Brian Watson. "We have medications that can address the issue. At what point as a society do we say let's try to go back to normal? Because it will never be perfect."

Robert Frost eighth grader Teresa Watson said she wants to see how the mask optional policy goes.

"Some people were saying like, 'Oh yeah this is so exciting finally!' and other people were like, 'I'm still gonna wear it.' I mean obviously I'm still gonna wear it because I haven't gotten my booster yet, but I guess I'll just have to see," she said.

Meanwhile, Chicago Public Schools said it will continue to require masks, as will U-46 in Elgin.

The state's second largest school district will have an exemption for a handful of students whose parents were part of the lawsuit, but that's it.

"Based on the wording of the temporary restraining order, we believe we still have the authority to enforce mask wearing as part of our local mitigation efforts, and again, the local bargaining agreements that we have that compel us to provide a safe environment for our employees to work," U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders said.

Many others have moved swiftly to lift the mask mandate. Some said they will continue to strongly encourage their use, others that these are decisions that should be made at home, like the superintendent of Timothy Christian Schools in Elmhurst.

"We have wide spaces (and) large classrooms. We believe we can achieve this," said Matt Davidson, superintendent for Timothy Christian Schools. "We're seeing it in so many places, tens of thousands of schools across the country, have been mask optional all year long."

Davidson said he believes he has the support of most of his school community. With nearly 1,300 students, Timothy Christian is the largest Christian school in Illinois.

"We have kids who are really suffering," Davidson added, "and we just want to present an optional environment where those decisions for the children can be made in the home, and we're going to respect them."

Also going "mask optional" are large suburban public school districts across the area, including those in Schaumburg, Elmhurst, Arlington Heights, Barrington and Wheaton, where Shannon Limjuco has two elementary school grade children. She said her kids will continue wearing their masks.

"I'm upset," Limjuco said. "I think it's the wrong call."

CPS said in a statement last week that the court's ruling does not prohibit the school district from continuing its COVID-19 mitigation policies and procedures, including universal masking, and that the district "will stay the course."

"There is no rhyme or reason to have it; if people can have masks optional, that is the best decision for everyone," said Natalie Merchant, an anti-mask parent.

"It's time for kids out of masks. All parents want is a choice," said Jennifer Hildreth, also an anti-mask parent.

District 181 schools went to remote learning Monday while administrators figure out how to interpret the ruling; the district is a party in the case.

"I think they should follow health recommendations, which right now say kids should be in a mask," said Reid McCollum, a pro-mask parent.

The mask mandate remains at Hinsdale high schools. According to District 86, about 55 students at Hinsdale Central refused to wear a mask Monday; they were given the choice to go to the auditorium or back home.

"I chose to head to the auditorium without my mask on, and really didn't want to go home; I felt it was our right to stay here without our masks per the ruling on Friday," said senior Sydney Pjesky.

District Breakdown:

- **Chicago Public Schools:** Masks required
- **Timothy Christian Schools:** Masks optional
- **U-46 in Elgin:** Masks required
- **Barrington School District:** Masks recommended but not required
- **District 200 in Wheaton:** Masks recommended but not required
- **District 67 in Lake Forest:** Masks recommended but not required
- **Geneva School District 304:** Mask optional on Tuesday.
- **Hinsdale/Clarendon Hills School District 181:** Open Tuesday. Masks optional but encouraged.
- **Schaumburg District 54:** Masks not required
- **St. Charles CUSD 303:** Masks suggested but not required
- **Orland School District 135:** Masks not required
- **Wheaton School District 200:** Masks recommended but not required
- **Plainfield District 202:** Masks recommended but not required
- **Lisle District 202:** Continuing mask mandate, will make final decision after survey of parents
- **Algonquin District 300:** Open Tuesday, continuing mask mandate
- **Benet Academy:** Open Tuesday, masks recommended but not required

NBC-5 Chicago

Morning Rundown: Confusion in the classroom --- 2/8/2022

(To watch video, click on link below)

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/top-videos-home/the-morning-rundown-todays-top-headlines-to-start-your-day-316/2752647/>

NBC-5 Chicago

Schools make masking decisions after ruling from downstate judge --- 2/8/2022

(To watch video, click on link below)

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/schools-make-masking-decisions-after-ruling-from-downstate-judge/2752413/>

More schools made the decision to lift a masking requirement for students following a ruling from a downstate Illinois judge that prohibits districts from enforcing a statewide mask requirement.

During an emergency meeting Monday, District 181 in Clarendon Hills, which switched to remote learning while officials made a decision on the ruling, said it would temporarily lift the requirement.

The district said it plans to resume classes Tuesday with masks optional. Staff will still be required to wear them, however, and students will still need to wear them on buses.

"We will continue to monitor the status of the case," the district said in a release. "If the rule is reversed or modified on appeal, we will immediately return to a mask mandate."

In Geneva's District 304, which canceled classes Monday while the school decided what it would do, masks will also now be optional.

[The state of Illinois filed a notice of appeal Monday challenging the temporary restraining order issued](#) by the downstate Sangamon County judge.

Speaking at a news conference, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker called the ruling by Judge Raylene Grischow "out of step with the vast majority of legal analysis," saying it "cultivates chaos for parents, families, teachers and school administrators."

[The judge issued the order preventing enforcement of the statewide mask requirement in schools Friday](#), explaining Pritzker overstepped his legal authority by implementing such a mandate.

In the ruling issued in response to a lawsuit filed by a group of parents and teachers in more than 140 school districts, Grischow also determined several more of Pritzker's emergency orders to combat the spread of COVID-19, including one issued last year that mandates vaccinations for school employees, are "null and void."

READ: [Full ruling issued by Judge Raylene Grischow.](#)

Pritzker said he has directed Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul to seek to have the ruling overturned "with all possible speed." Raoul filed a notice indicating the defendants - the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Department of Public Health and their leaders, as well as Pritzker - intend to appeal, but the process could take weeks or months.

For millions of Illinoisans, Pritzker said, wearing masks has never been about what was "required by the governor or any other authority."

"Masks are, for most people anyway, have been about doing what's right for yourself, for your loved ones, for others, for your community as a whole," he said. "Nowhere is that more true than in schools, community hubs where parents and grandparents, teachers and staff interact with each other every day."

Continuing his criticism of the ruling, Pritzker claimed Grischow has "created a tremendous amount of confusion" in regard to the way the decision was written.

"As for this specific case, poor legal reasoning should not take one of our most effective tools off the table," he said.

[The judge's decision led to uncertainty at school districts statewide over the weekend](#), prompting administrators to scramble and decide which actions, if any, to take ahead of the start of the school week Monday.



[CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS](#)FEB 7

[Masks Will Stay On in CPS Despite Downstate Judge's Ruling Against Mandates](#)



[SCHOOL MASK MANDATE](#) FEB 7

[Ruling on Illinois School Mask Mandate Lawsuit: What to Know So Far](#)

At least one district canceled classes altogether, multiple others shifted to remote learning and numerous districts decided to strongly recommend - but not require - masks following the decision.

Others, such as [Elgin Area School District U46](#), opted not to drop face covering requirements.

[U-46 Supt. Tony Sanders](#) explained the district's school board approved COVID-19 mitigations, including a mask mandate, before the governor's mask requirement in schools was issued, and noted Grischow's ruling "recognizes the independent authority of school districts."

Students named in the lawsuit and those with medical exceptions don't have to adhere to the requirement, he said.

Masks will stay on in other school districts, including [Chicago Public Schools, as a mask mandate is included in a collective bargaining agreement between the district and Chicago Teachers Union](#). Such agreements remain enforceable, according to the ruling.

"The court's ruling does not prohibit CPS from exercising its authority to continue its COVID-19 mitigation policies and procedures," CPS CEO Pedro Martinez said in a statement.

NBC Chicago/Associated Press

Kane County Connects

Schools scramble after mask ruling --- 2/8/2022

Browse: Home / 2022 / February / 2 Kane County School Districts Close For a Day, Others Keep Protocols While Sorting Out Mask Mandate Ruling



2 KANE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS CLOSE FOR A DAY, OTHERS KEEP PROTOCOLS WHILE SORTING OUT MASK MANDATE RULING

kanecountyconnects / February 7, 2022 / Comments Off on 2 Kane County School Districts Close For a Day, Others Keep Protocols While Sorting Out Mask Mandate Ruling / Breaking News, Communities, Consumers, Government, Schools

Two Kane County school districts — Geneva School District 304 and St. Charles School District 303 — are closed today (Monday, Feb. 7, 2022) while officials sort out the ramifications of a Sangamon County judge’s temporary restraining order on Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s mask requirements, quarantines and COVID-19 vaccinations and testing rules for more than 140 schools issued last fall.

- [CLICK THIS LINK FOR MORE ON THE STATE OF ILLINOIS RESPONSE.](#)



Kent Mutchler

“The TRO temporarily suspended enforcement of mask mandates for students and exclusion for asymptomatic close contacts,” District 304 Superintendent Kent Mutchler wrote.

“While the ruling came out Friday, the district continues to receive information that needs to be considered. To that end, administration of Geneva 304 has determined it is in the best interest of the district to implement an emergency day on Monday, Feb. 7, and school will be canceled for all students while our teams continue this very important work.”



Jennifer Norrell

East Aurora School District Superintendent Jennifer Norrell said the restraining order will be appealed at the Illinois Appellate Court level by IDPH and ISBE with an expected ruling by Feb. 17, and the state has requested an official stay of the judges’ order, “however it is not anticipated that the judge will grant a stay on an order she just issued.”

“As a district we are neither for or against for these mitigations,” Norrell said in a note to parents. “However, at this time EA District 131 will continue to move forward with all current mitigation efforts in place until further notice.:



“For now, we have decided that students and staff will return to school tomorrow using the same COVID mitigation strategies that we have been following throughout this school year,” she said.



Tony Sanders

U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders said he still has the authority to require masks and other mitigations in order to protect the health and safety of students and staff, saying Grischow’s ruling “recognizes the independent authority of school districts.”

“We are getting so close with our ever-declining cases to returning to a sense of normalcy, which likely will include a movement toward masks being optional,” he said in a statement to parents. “I am asking that we continue to support the safety of our students and our staff by wearing masks for now.”

Click the links below for messages directly from each school district.

School Closing Information

Below is a list of Kane County public school districts as well as colleges and universities. **Click on the link in each school district header** to find the most recent information.

School District U-46

“As students and staff return (on Monday, Feb. 7), please know that our plan for reopening will still be in place. Masks will still be required.”

[FULL MESSAGE](#)

- [U-46 Facebook Page](#)
- [U-46 Twitter Site](#)

Daily Herald

Mentorship program seeks volunteers to help teens ---

2/8/2022

By Rick West



Danielle Valkner of St. Charles is founder of Fostering Success, a local nonprofit foundation established to provide guidance, a sense of community and financial assistance to teens and young adults. *Rick West | Staff Photographer*

After years of working with CASA Kane County as a child advocate, Danielle Valkner of St. Charles saw the gaps in an overworked system, especially for kids in their teen years approaching adulthood.

She's hoping a new program she helped to found called Fostering Success can help fill those gaps.

The group's mission is to provide mentorships and financial assistance to teens and young adults facing life's challenges throughout their transition into adulthood.

"We're essentially talking about underprivileged, underserved or at-risk youth that need another positive adult role model in their life," Valkner said. "So many times these kids just need a break, somebody to watch out for them and provide them with good advice."

The program initially was conceived with kids in the foster care system in mind, hence the name.

"That's still our primary focus. But through our research, we realized that the demand and need is much bigger than that," she said. "There's a lot of kids out there that need that support."

As it navigates the waters with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to help foster kids, the group is working locally with **Elgin Area School District U-46** and its Project Access program.

The groups are partnering to identify kids who could benefit from the mentorship program. They plan to kick off a pilot program in April.

Meanwhile, Fostering Success is recruiting volunteer mentors and plans to begin training in March. After training the first wave of volunteers, the group hopes to add more mentors every other month.

"We want people who are committed to really working to make a difference -- somebody who has time and capacity to be a positive influence in these kids' lives and really wants to develop a friendship with them," she said. "This is a meaningful connection."

Mentors are asked for a one-year commitment to start. After an initial meeting, the mentors will be encouraged to check in with their mentee about once a week by phone and meet up a couple of times a month for a fun activity or just to hang out.

"It's really just establishing that connection and then being a consistent, positive role model their life," she said.

Mentors will have to pass a background check and be fingerprinted by the school district or the state.

Fostering Success was funded by seed money from the Wisdom Family Foundation, a Wayne-based, family-run nonprofit that connects children and families with immediate resources.

Valkner said they've been actively fundraising for outside donations since November. They hope to partner with corporate sponsors who will help with funding and provide mentors.

The five-member board includes Liz Sutherland, a co-worker of Valkner who herself went through the foster care system growing up. At 18, she found herself a legal adult and all alone.

"Life was tough because I was out here with nobody," Sutherland said. "I really wish there had been a consistent person that was in my corner, someone who could have helped me navigate tough situations. I strongly believe Fostering Success is going to paint that critical piece in these young adults' lives."

Sutherland is helping write the training that mentors will go through. Valkner said the group will take as many volunteers in Kane and DuPage counties as it can get to help the nearly 800 homeless students that Project Access expects to identify by the end of the school year.

"We're just asking for four to six hours a month," Valkner said. "Four to six hours to do something really worthwhile."

CBS-2 Chicago

School districts differ in response to judge's halt on Pritzker's mask mandate --- 2/7/2022

By Tim McNicholas and Marissa Parra

CHICAGO (CBS) — Some Illinois schools were sent scrambling this weekend after a downstate judge put a temporary restraining order on Gov. JB Pritzker's mask mandate. Many school districts across the state are struggling to figure out whether they need to keep mask mandates in place in light of the judge's ruling, which covers more than 140 districts named as defendants in a string of lawsuits against the state's school mask mandate. Many districts are continuing to require masks for students, teachers and staff, while others are now making masks optional. Some districts canceled classes on Monday, hoping to get clarity on the court ruling later this week, while other districts have moved to remote learning. Then there's District 34 in Glenview, which is requiring masks for everyone except the individual plaintiffs named in the lawsuit.

As districts scrambled to figure out their updated mask policies, so did parents.

“We were a little bit nervous to know what would happen and if it would be chaotic or not,” said Catherine Disterheft, a parent in Lombard. “Definitely chaotic.”

Fellow Lombard parent Lenore Gutierrez said she was not happy with the judge’s ruling.

“I don’t think they [masks] should be optional at schools, especially because not all kids have finished their vaccines,” she said.

For children at Chicago Public Schools, this ruling changes nothing. CPS students, teachers, and staff will still have to wear masks on Monday.

A CPS spokesperson told CBS 2 in a statement that the court’s ruling does not prohibit CPS from exercising its authority to continue COVID-19 mitigation policies, including universal masking and vaccination and test requirements for staff members.

The spokesperson added, “We will stay the course.”

Meanwhile, the office of Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul has already filed an appeal of the temporary restraining order issued by Sangamon County Judge Raylene Grischow, and has filed a request for an emergency stay on the judge’s ruling — meaning the ruling is in limbo.

The state argues “the court abused its discretion in refusing to balance the harms” caused by its Friday ruling. The state even gives a date on when they’d like the court to reverse course — Feb. 7, this very day.

But so far, that emergency request has not been granted.

Gov. JB Pritzker on Monday called the judge’s ruling blocking enforcement of the state’s school mask mandate at scores of districts “out of step with the vast majority of legal analysis in Illinois and across the nation.”

“Most importantly, it constrains the ability of the named school districts to maintain safe in-person learning requirements, as if kids need a minute more of remote learning, when there are commonsense tools that we have to reduce and prevent it,” Pritzker said. “The judge’s decision cultivates chaos for parents, families, teachers, and school administrators across the state.”

Pritzker said the judge’s ruling has led to confusion about whether or not districts not named as defendants in the case are covered by the temporary restraining order. The governor recommended that schools not named as a defendant in the lawsuit should continue to follow the mask mandate and other COVID-19 protocols.

“Poor legal reasoning should not take one of our most effective tools off the table,” Pritzker said. “The judge has created a tremendous amount of confusion, even in the way she wrote her decision, so that has been problematic.”

Pritzker also said school districts that have reached COVID-19 safety agreements with teachers’ unions, such as CPS, also should continue to follow the terms of those agreements.

“Masks keep kids safely in school in-person, which we all want. Across the state, the nation, and the world, the evidence is there whether or not you want to look at it. In the moment that we’re in right now, masks are a proven tool; not a new feature of life, but a tool to get us through this time,” Pritzker said.

The governor said he is happy to see that the state’s COVID-19 metrics are headed in the right direction, with a steep decline in new cases statewide in recent weeks. He said he’s hoping that trend continues, which might open the door to lifting the school mask mandate in the coming weeks.

However, Pritzker also noted that, should the state lift any of its COVID-19 mitigations in the near future, it’s possible those rules might have to go into effect again down the line if the state sees another surge in cases.

Meanwhile, the attorney who filed the lawsuit against the school mask mandates said he wants changes now.

“The due processes in the law that is written is that if you’re trying to do these things with masks and exclusion of students, or testing or vaccinating of teachers, they have rights to object if they don’t think it’s necessary to do those things,” said attorney Tom DeVore.

DeVore also asked why the state had no plan in place, knowing a ruling in the court case was coming.

“Governor, you knew that a ruling was coming on this one way or another,” DeVore said. “Why wasn’t there guidance ready to announce on Friday – or even sooner, perhaps – about what schools and teachers and parents should do in response to a situation like the one that we’re in right now?”

Gov. Pritzker said the guidance when it comes to masks in schools has never changed.

“This is the guidance actually we’ve been giving all along which is, these are the things that are the tools that can be used to keep everybody healthy,” he said. “We’ve provided the same guidance – people should wear the masks in schools.”

[READ MORE: Parents Barge Through Doors At North Suburban School Board Meeting, Chaos At Districts Around Illinois After Ruling Halting Mask Mandate](#)

The Chicago Archdiocese announced the decision to continue requiring masks in Chicago area Catholic schools. The following statement was released:

“We are continuing to require masks in our schools because we remain concerned about the number of COVID-19 cases in our schools and communities. Nationally, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, over 3.5 million coronavirus child cases were reported in January. In addition, many teachers tell us that they have concerns about working in a mask-optional environment.

But the Joliet Diocese has moved to make masks “recommended” rather than required, effective Tuesday.

Last Friday, the rolling seven-day average of positive cases in our schools was higher than at any point last fall.

Fortunately, the number of positive cases in our schools has dropped significantly over the past month. That is good news. Unfortunately, it is still higher than on any single school day last August, September, or October. COVID-19 is still being transmitted throughout our communities and we do not want our Catholic schools to contribute to that spread – to our school children, teachers, staff, or their families. We want to see the number of positive cases in our schools continue to decline.

We are studying the numbers closely and we will lift the mask mandate in our school as soon as we believe it is safe to do so. When we do, we will be confident that we are safeguarding the health of our students, teachers and staff. We look forward to that day and hope it comes soon.

In the meantime, including tomorrow morning, we will continue to apply the same mask requirements that have been in place for the past year and a half.” Barrington 220 School District has announced it will be recommending but not requiring masks based on this decision. However, masks will be required on school-based transportation due to a federal CDC order, the district said.

Naperville Community School District 203, however, will be continuing to require masks in school. The district cited its legal counsel, saying the legal effect of the temporary restraining order is unclear, and the only exceptions made to current policies will be for named parties to the lawsuit. **Elgin Area School District U-46** will also continue to require masks in school, according to a letter from the district’s superintendent. Indian Prairie School District 204, too, will continue its COVID protocols.

Community Consolidated School District 181 has opted to use an emergency day and will switch to remote instruction.

Geneva Community Unit School District 304 and St. Charles District 303 have also opted for an emergency day Monday but will not have instruction.

“Due to the multiple interpretations of the ruling and the status of the State mandates, there is a strong likelihood that there will be disruption in our schools which will have a substantial negative impact on the delivery of instruction and the health and safety of our students and staff,” District 304 wrote in a letter to parents.

“My stance on it is that a judge made a ruling and we’ll be sending our daughter to school tomorrow without a mask. And if the school decides to do anything contrary to what this lawsuit said they should be doing, we will have options moving forward,” said District 90 parent Jason Hartrich.

His daughter is in Fulton Jr. High.

“When we discussed this with her this evening as a family she said she just wants to go to school tomorrow as a normal kid,” he said.

Their school was not one of the 145 districts listed in Austin V. Pritzker, the case ruled on Friday.

Now the debate rages on: What do the schools not listed in that lawsuit do Monday?

“Obviously we would be welcome to just having options as parents,” Hartrich said.

“It’s been terrible. I think a lot of parents have no idea that this is even happening,” said Jay Bionda, who has a 3-year-old and a 6-year-old in District 101.

His daughter receives extra attention in class.

“She was born premature, so she has some speech issues. Part of the reason why she goes to that school is because they give extra attention like that. She’s never been able to see her teachers’ mouths while they’re speaking,” he said.

Pushback for wearing a mask though is not the attention he wants his kids to receive.

“We will send our kids with masks because we don’t want our kids to feel the pressure or the emotional trauma that comes along with standing up in front of a crowd.

Meanwhile, a second lawsuit in the works — waged by parents — could force even more schools to create a no-mask option.

As for masking outside schools, Pritzker Friday signaled a possible end to the statewide mask mandate soon.

“I believe that we should remove masks and as soon as we possibly can,” he said. “And constantly listening to doctors and scientists and encouraging them. When can we do this? What’s the right time? What’s the right way to do it? And so very hopeful we’ll be able to make some announcements about that.”

The governor’s comment comes with a dramatic drop in new COVID cases, which are down more than 50% in a week.

Nearly 53% of CPS students over 12 are fully vaccinated. More than 90% of CPS teachers are, too.

The following list reflects school policies in the Chicago area as of Monday night:

MASKS REQUIRED

- Chicago Public Schools
- Naperville Community School District 203
- East Aurora District 131
- **Elgin Area School District U46**
- Indian Prairie School District 204
- Community High School District 128
- Township High School District 113
- Lansing District 158
- Palatine District 15

MASKS OPTIONAL OR RECOMMENDED

- Plainfield Schools District 202
- Lake Forest Districts 67 & 115
- Barrington District 220
- Hillsboro School District 3
- Huntley District 158
- Lombard Elementary District 44
- Arlington Heights District 25
- [Joliet Diocese Schools](#)

CLASSES CANCELED, MASKS NOW OPTIONAL

- Geneva District 304

REMOTE LEARNING, MASKS NOW OPTIONAL

- [Clarendon Hills District 181](#)

Federal News Network

Illinois attorney general appeals school mask ruling – 2/7/2022

By John O’Conor, AP political writer

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Illinois’ attorney general on Monday appealed a judge’s ruling that invalidated Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s requirement that masks be worn in schools to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Democratic Attorney General Kwame Raoul asked the 4th District Appellate Court in Springfield for an emergency halt to a temporary restraining order against the mask mandate.

“Absent a stay, students, teachers, and other school employees will be further exposed to COVID-19, leading to additional and likely widespread transmission within schools and in the broader community, increased hospitalizations and deaths, and school staff shortages requiring full remote learning or even school closures,” the appeal stated.

Sangamon County Circuit Judge Raylene Grischow on Friday ruled that the Democratic governor had overstepped his authority in an emergency order issued in the fall that has required students and staff to wear face coverings. She nixed other orders too, including one mandating vaccinations for school employees.

She agreed with the plaintiffs that students may not be excluded from school for health reasons without family consent or a public health quarantine order.

In a news conference Monday, Pritzker said the ruling was “out of step with the vast majority of legal analysis.”

“Most importantly, it constrains the ability of the named school districts to maintain safe in-person learning requirements,” Pritzker continued. “The judge’s decision cultivates chaos for parents, families, teachers and school administrators. ... Wearing masks has never been about what was required by the governor or any other authority. Masks, for most people anyway, have been about doing what’s right.”

Grischow’s ruling on the mask mandate affected more than 150 school districts, prompting varied reactions. At least two — St. Charles Community Unit School District 303 and Geneva Community Unit School District 304 — reacted with an emergency closure Monday. Chicago Public Schools, meanwhile, said it would continue to enforce its mask mandate.

Springfield School District 186 said it was “encouraging” students and staff to wear masks “until a more definitive ruling and additional guidance are brought forth.”

Chicago Public Schools maintains the ruling does not affect the district from exercising its authority to continue COVID-19 safety protocols, including requiring masks in classrooms. Also, the nation's third-largest school district negotiated a COVID-19 safety plan with the Chicago Teachers Union in January, which requires the district to provide KN95 masks to students and teachers.

The rules "have allowed us to provide a safe in-person learning environment for students and staff, and we will not jeopardize the progress we have made in protecting our school communities during this pandemic," district CEO Pedro Martinez said in a statement to the community.

Elgin School District U46 said it was keeping its mask mandate, but exempting students and teachers who signed on to the litigation.

"We are getting so close with our ever-declining cases to returning to a sense of normalcy, which likely will include a movement toward masks being optional," **Superintendent Tony Sanders** said in a written statement. "I am asking that we continue to support the safety of our students and our staff by wearing masks for now."

Fox 32 Chicago

Reversal of state mask mandate creates 'tremendous amount of confusion' at Illinois schools --- 2/7/2022

By Joanie Lum

ELGIN, Ill. - There was confusion over masks in schools across Illinois Monday after a downstate judge ruled that state [mask mandates do not have to be enforced](#) at certain school districts.

Gov. [JB Pritzker](#) said the ruling is misguided. He is having Attorney General Kwame Raoul seek an emergency appeal to overturn.

"The judge has created a tremendous amount of confusion, even in the way she wrote her decision," Pritzker said. "So that has been problematic. We've asked, did in fact, have the Attorney General staff talking to the staffs of schools all across the state over the weekend, to give them their best advice and allowing them to make decisions for themselves. But we want to make sure that we're getting an appeal heard as soon as possible so that we can rid ourselves of the fog of you know, frankly, not good decision-making."

Meanwhile, administrators in districts across the state are trying to interpret Sangamon County Circuit Court Judge Raylene Grischow's decision.

Parents are getting different messages.

It was a scramble over the weekend for administrators, they had to let families what the rules would be for Monday since the mask policy was challenged in court.

Tony Sanders, superintendent of Elgin District U-46, decided to keep the mask requirement in place, for now. He wrote a letter to parents advising them of his decision to keep mask policies in place, even though the district was named in the lawsuit that challenged the governor's executive order on masks.

Monday seemed like just another day at Abbott Middle School. Students are in the habit of wearing masks to school.

Several school districts made masks optional while some canceled classes altogether.

<https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/reversal-of-state-mask-mandate-creates-tremendous-amount-of-confusion-at-illinois-schools>

Elgin schools keep mask requirement in place despite judge's ruling

Tony Sanders, superintendent of Elgin District U-46, joins Good Day Chicago to explain why they are keeping mask requirements in place for student's despite a judge's decision to effectively prohibit a statewide mask requirement in schools.

In Elgin, there was a surge in COVID cases after the holidays but now that number is decreasing.

"Those numbers are coming down. I think we will be mask optional in a few weeks. I'm not comfortable enough to make that decision or recommendation to our board," Sanders said.

Elgin District U-46 has collective bargaining agreements not affected by the court ruling similar to Chicago Public Schools.

NBC – 5 Chicago

Ruling on Illinois school mask mandate lawsuit: What to know so far --- 2/7/2022

Illinois schools were scrambling to react after a ruling by a downstate judge Friday placed a temporary restraining order on Gov. J.B. Pritzker's statewide mask mandate in school buildings. NBC 5's Jen DeSalvo has reaction and the next steps.

A downstate Illinois judge [made a ruling late last week](#) that effectively prohibits a statewide mask requirement in schools, sparking plenty of confusion from school districts across the state.

So what does it mean, how are schools responding and what's next? Here's what we know so far.

What exactly happened with the ruling?

A judge in downstate Sangamon County granted a temporary restraining order Friday effectively prohibiting mask requirements for students in numerous school districts across the state.

Parents filed suit against more than 140 school districts, Gov. J.B. Pritzker and the Illinois State Board of Education last year, arguing there was no due process in Illinois' statewide mask order.

Sangamon County Circuit Court Judge Raylene Grischow heard oral arguments in the case earlier this month prior to granting the temporary restraining order.

READ: Judge Raylene Grischow's full [ruling here](#).

The ruling announced Friday afternoon states defendants are temporarily restrained from ordering school districts to require masks for students and teachers - unless a quarantine order is issued by a local health department.

The judge's decision covers districts across the state but not Chicago Public Schools.

According to the ruling, collectively-bargained agreements remain enforceable, like the one between CPS and the Chicago Teachers Union.

What happens next?

Now that the judge has made her widely-anticipated ruling, what are the next steps?

[The state of Illinois announced it will appeal the decision](#), with Pritzker late Friday calling the ruling "misguided."

The governor's office issued a news release saying schools may be forced to go remote if they don't have proper tools to keep students and staff safe.

[Pritzker had harsh words](#) for the judge's decision and quickly urged the state's attorney general's office to appeal, suggesting the ruling could spark another surge in the virus.

“The grave consequence of this misguided decision is that schools in these districts no longer have sufficient tools to keep students and staff safe while COVID-19 continues to threaten our communities — and this may force schools to go remote,” [Pritzker said in a statement](#). “This shows yet again that the mask mandate and school exclusion protocols are essential tools to keep schools open and everyone safe.”

Attorney General Kwame Raoul agreed with Pritzker that the ruling would make it more difficult to protect students and school employees from the virus, and said he would appeal.

“This decision sends the message that all students do not have the same right to safely access schools and classrooms in Illinois, particularly if they have disabilities or other health concerns,” Raoul said in a statement.

How are schools responding?

As school districts across the state begin to interpret the order, different actions are being taken.

At least one Illinois school district has canceled classes for Monday and many others have decided to recommend masks.

Geneva Community United School District 304 said it will cancel classes Monday, explaining implementing an emergency day is in its best interest.

"We recognize the challenges this decision may have on our families, but given the fluidity of the situation we strongly feel that this time is necessary to effectively plan for any potential impact on our students, staff, and school community," said Dr. Kent Mutchler, superintendent.

Community Consolidated School District 181, which has schools in Clarendon Hills, Hinsdale, and Burr Ridge, said Monday will be an emergency remote instruction day.

"Due to the multiple interpretations of the ruling and the status of the State mandates, there is a strong likelihood that there will be disruption in our schools which will have a substantial negative impact on the delivery of instruction and the health and safety of our students and staff," the district said in a letter to families.

Arlington Heights School District 25 distributed a letter to parents saying it will be in a "mask recommended environment" - at least during the Temporary Restraining Order period.

Crystal Lake Elementary District 47 issued a similar message explaining "face masks will be strongly recommended but not required at school and at all school-related events for staff and students, as well as visitors and volunteers."

In south suburban Burbank, School District 111 will "fully comply with the court's ruling," but recommends masks be worn by all students and staff in school buildings.

Elgin Area School District U46 is standing by its requirement, explaining its Board of Education approved a resolution in August of last year supporting that the district follows recommendations issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as local health agencies.

"Within her ruling, Judge Grischow, recognizes the independent authority of school districts," Supt. Tony Sanders said in a letter to parents.

However, the district explained there are students who have exceptions as they are included in the lawsuit in which the TRO was issued.

Vernon Hills-based Community High School District 128, too, will still enforce the mask mandate, except for when it comes to students named in the lawsuit.

Others, however, are waiting for clarification before proceeding.

Oswego Community Unit School District 308 said it was "consulting with our district attorneys to further understand the impact of the decision for our students and staff."

Some districts are put in a different situation due to collective bargaining agreements.

According to the ruling, such agreements remain enforceable, like the one between Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union.

"...We expect the mayor and CPS to act responsibly and uphold our agreement to require masks — providing KN95 masks for every adult and child in our schools," CTU said in a statement. "This is what the overwhelming majority of Chicago parents and families support."

What are experts saying?

Prior to the ruling, [NBC 5 talked to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, about the state of COVID-19 in Illinois.](#)

When it comes to relaxing mitigations in schools, Fauci said, "We're not there yet."

WGN Radio

Elgin School District U-46 is sticking to wearing masks ---

2/7/2022

By Curtis Koch

Elgin School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders joined Chicago's Afternoon News with Lisa Dent and Steve Bertrand. Superintendent Sanders discussed his district's reaction to a downstate Illinois judge ruling against mask mandates and why they have decided to keep their mask policy in place.

(To hear interview with Superintendent Tony Sanders click on link below)

<https://wgnradio.com/chicagos-afternoon-news/elgin-school-district-u-46-are-sticking-to-wearing-masks/>

WBEZ Chicago

The rundown: Schools scramble amid confusion over masks

--- 2/7/2022

By Hunter Clauss

Good afternoon! It's Monday, and the nephews loved *Labyrinth* when I was babysitting them on Friday. Maybe next time I'll cue up the 1985 *Alice in Wonderland* TV miniseries that had this [horrific scene](#) with the Jabberwocky that's totally OK for kids. Here's what you need to know today.

[1. Masks are now optional for thousands of Illinois students after a downstate judge's ruling](#)

Confusion erupted among families and school officials over the weekend after a downstate judge ruled to temporarily suspend mask requirements at schools, saying Gov. JB Pritzker had overstepped his authority.

Some districts either shifted to remote learning or canceled classes today. Chicago Public Schools and [Elgin U-46](#) — the largest districts in the state — are keeping masks in place, partly because of safety agreements with their teachers' unions that can't be broken.

And others are following the judge's order, telling families that masks are optional but encouraged.

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul is seeking to stop the judge's order and is expected to file an appeal today. [[WBEZ](#)]

The news comes as Democratic governors in other states are re-evaluating their COVID-19 protocols. Today, the governors of New Jersey and Delaware announced they will lift mask mandates for schools. [[NPR](#)]

The whole thing raises an obvious question: When, if ever, will life go back to "normal"? As *The Washington Post* reports, a growing number of pandemic-fatigued Americans want to move on with their lives.

But, as we've all experienced, previous declarations of the pandemic's end were premature.

“We’d like to be done,” a behavioral scientist told the newspaper. “The problem is, it’s a virus. It’s not getting tired.” [[WaPo](#)]

Cities Talk FM 929

Illinois schools struggle with Monday plans after court ruling --- 2/7/2022

Normal, IL, USA / www.cities929.com

Feb 7, 2022 | 6:00 AM



(The Center Square) – Some Illinois school districts said they would continue to enforce mask mandates Monday after a circuit court judge late Friday ruled Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s mask and vaccine mandates null and void.

Pritzker’s mandates have been in effect since last fall. Separate lawsuits from hundreds of plaintiffs challenged the mandates with the cases heard over several days last month.

Sangamon County Circuit Court Judge Raylene Grischow on Friday said in a ruling granting a temporary restraining order against the mandates that the governor’s orders seemed to try and work around individual due process in law and called the bureaucratic maneuvering a “type of evil” that the law was intended to constrain.

The judge ordered districts to temporarily halt requiring masks and excluding children from school and stop requiring vaccines or testing for teachers, unless there’s individual due process. She said all non-named districts may govern themselves accordingly.

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) on Saturday said its collectively bargained agreement with Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) means its mask mandate is still in place.

“This ruling also states that collectively bargained agreements are still enforceable,” CTU’s statement said. “Our January 2022 agreement with Chicago Public Schools, which guarantees masking, will keep schools open and safe.”

And on Sunday, several other school districts across the state notified parents that their students would still be required to wear masks.

Elgin U-46, the state’s second largest school district after Chicago, sent a message to parents that its union contract also required masks. Indian Prairie District 204 in Aurora and Naperville also said it would continue requiring masks.

District 26 in suburban Cary said it would comply with the judge’s ruling but only for the 11 district students who were plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

Attorney Thomas DeVore, who filed the separate cases on behalf of more than 700 plaintiffs against nearly 170 school districts, the Pritzker administration and state education officials, argued state statute requires due process for medical devices or procedures to be forced on someone.

“I can only hope this might be the time for the Governor to lift what the Court has found to be illegal mandates and let the good people of this state get back to their lives,” DeVore told The Center Square after the ruling.

Before the ruling was issued Friday evening, Pritzker still wouldn’t say when he’ll lift his mask mandate in schools.

“I believe that we should remove masks as soon as we possibly can,” Pritzker said Friday afternoon. “I’m constantly listening to the doctors and scientists and encouraging them, ‘when can we do this, what’s the right time, what’s the right way to do it.’ And so, very hopeful we can make an announcement about that.”

After the ruling blocking mandates Friday evening, the governor said in a statement he is seeking an expedited appeal in the Fourth District Illinois Appellate Court in an effort to restore his rules.

“The grave consequence of this misguided decision is that schools in these districts no longer have sufficient tools to keep students and staff safe while COVID-19 continues to threaten our communities – and this may force schools to go remote,” Pritzker said. “This shows yet again that the mask mandate and school exclusion protocols are essential tools to keep schools open and everyone safe. As we have from the beginning of the pandemic, the administration will keep working to ensure every Illinoisan has the tools needed to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.”

DeVore had previously said he expects the case to go all the way to the Illinois Supreme Court.

While some districts said without mandates they will go remote, other districts with mask optional policies all year have done so without much disruption.

Kane County Connects

State appeal court's mask mandate restraining order; local schools have varying responses --- 2/7/2022

[kanecountyconnects](#) / [February 7, 2022](#) / [Comments](#) [Offon State Appeals Court's Mask Mandate Restraining Order; Local Schools Have Varying Responses](#) / [Communities](#), [Consumers](#), [Education](#), [Events](#), [Government](#), [Public Safety](#), [Public Service](#), [State of Illinois](#), [WK-Communities](#)

LAST UPDATE: 10AM MONDAY, FEB. 7

State Appeals Order Preventing School Safety Measures

Gov. JB Pritzker has asked the Illinois Attorney General's Office for an immediate appeal of Judge Raylene Grischow's decision to restrain the state from enforcing the safety measures aimed at protecting teachers, school personnel, students and communities from COVID-19.

The Attorney General is seeking an expedited appeal from the Fourth District Illinois Appellate Court.



JB Pritzker

“The grave consequence of this misguided decision is that schools in these districts no longer have sufficient tools to keep students and staff safe while COVID-19 continues to threaten our communities – and this may force schools to go remote,” Pritzker said. “This shows yet again that the mask mandate and school exclusion protocols are essential tools to keep schools open and everyone safe. As we have from the beginning of the pandemic, the administration will keep working to ensure every Illinoisan has the tools needed to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.”

“We remain committed to defending Gov. Pritzker's actions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and will appeal this decision in the Illinois Appellate Court for the 4th District in Springfield,” said Attorney General Kwame Raoul. “This decision sends the message that all students do not have the same right to safely access schools and classrooms in Illinois, particularly if they have disabilities or other health concerns.”

SOURCE: state of Illinois news release

Local Schools Have Varying Responses

Local schools have varying responses to the court decision — with some closing doors on Monday while officials determine what to do.

- [CLICK THIS LINK FOR MORE KANE COUNTY SCHOOL CLOSING INFORMATION.](#)

[East Aurora School District 131](#) will continue to move forward with all current mitigation efforts in place until further notice.

“[West Aurora School District 129](#) was *not* among the 150 named school districts in the lawsuit; therefore, this ruling has no immediate impact on our COVID-19 mitigation measures.”



Geneva, St. Charles schools closed Monday (Feb. 7) as officials determined next steps.

[Batavia School District 101](#): “For now, we have decided that students and staff will return to school tomorrow (Monday, Feb. 7) using the same COVID mitigation strategies that we have been following throughout this school year.”

[Central School District 301](#): “Because the judge’s order does not apply to the district and could be stayed as early as tomorrow, the district has decided to ‘stay the course’ and continue with our current mitigation plan while the appeal and stay are still pending.”

“Administration of [Geneva 304](#) has determined it is in the best interest of the district to implement an emergency day on Monday, Feb. 7, and school will be canceled for all students while our teams continue this very important work. This approach allows us to ensure that we are effectively collaborating on our plans while protecting a day of in-person learning, which will be made up on May 31.”



of 10 a.m. Monday.

[Kaneland District 302 website](#) as

All [District 300](#) schools will be closed today, Monday, Feb. 7, 2022. “The district will be implementing an emergency day as a proactive measure to ensure a safe learning environment for our students and our staff. The district will send a follow-up message tonight with more information.”

[School District U-46](#): “As students and staff return (on Monday, Feb. 7), please know that our plan for reopening will still be in place. Masks will still be required.”

[St. Charles CUSD 303](#): "All classes and after-school activities are canceled Feb. 7, 2022." A special board meeting is set for 6 p.m.

The [Kane County Chronicle reports](#) that, starting Tuesday, St. Charles School District students and staff members will be encouraged but not required to wear masks to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

SOURCE FOR ABOVE: Kane County school district websites

Daily Herald

Elgin Area School District U-46 high school counselors tour local businesses --- 2/6/2022

Submitted by Pat Szpekowski



Elgin Area School District U-46 high school counselors tour the Automotive Lab at South Elgin High School, in addition to the tech lab at Elgin High School, Elgin Sweeper in Elgin, and Hoffer Plastics in South Elgin. The event was sponsored by the Alignment Collaborative for Education in partnership with U-46. *Courtesy of Alignment Collaborative for Education*

Experience will better assist students in career opportunities

Over 30 counselors from all five [Elgin Area School District U-46](#) high schools experienced their own career exploration day at two local businesses, Elgin Sweeper in Elgin and Hoffer Plastics in South Elgin, and the career and technical education labs at Elgin and South Elgin high schools on Friday, Jan. 28.

The goal of the event, which was sponsored by Elgin's Alignment Collaborative for Education in partnership with U-46, was to bridge the gap between the career and technical education programs offered at the high schools and available careers in the automotive, engineering, welding, and manufacturing industries.

Alexa Charsha-Hahn, lead counselor at U-46, endorsed the day highlighting that "counselors from this experience will be better equipped to guide students toward courses preparing them for highly technical professions."

In touring Elgin Sweeper, a leader in the sweeper industry for more than 100 years, and Hoffer Plastics, a family-owned business and leader in the custom plastic injection molding industry, the counselors learned about future job projections, skills required and opportunities for career advancement.

Leadership from both businesses welcomed the opportunity.

"Alignment and U-46 are championing the easiest and most impactful ways we can give back to our local community," said Lisa Baran, director of human resources, Elgin Sweeper. "We are excited and humbled to showcase Elgin Sweeper to the next generation of manufacturing talent."

Hoffer Plastics, a founding partner of Alignment Collaborative for Education, was honored to host representatives from U-46 and Alignment.

"We're excited about sharing the many wonderful career opportunities manufacturing offers young people, whose high-tech skills, entrepreneurial spirit, and desire to give back could not be more welcomed or needed than they are today," said Charlotte Hoffer-Canning, Chief Culture Officer, Hoffer Plastics.

"This opportunity for high school counselors helps strengthen their understanding that careers in manufacturing and technical education can begin and flourish while students are

completing their high school experience," said Nancy Coleman, executive director, Alignment Collaborative for Education.

The Alignment Collaborative for Education (ACE) mission is to align community resources and collaborate with organizations in support of public school strategies to raise student achievement; create responsible, productive, and contributing members of our society; and advance the economic and social well-being of communities served by Elgin Area School District U-46 in Illinois.

For more information, visit www.align4edu.org.

Daily Herald

Prep Wrestling: Conant dominates South Elgin regional --- 2/6/2022

By Bill Esbrook, Daily Herald Correspondent

Conant excelled Saturday at the Class 3A wrestling regional at **South Elgin**.

The Cougars qualified 10 competitors for next weekend's sectional, to be held on their home floor. They boasted champions in six weight classes and won the team title as well.

Conant's Sammy Santangelo (120 pounds), Peter Floyd (132), Ethan Stiles (152), Cody Sebo (170), AJ Hernandez (182), and Henry Chang (195) all finished the day as regional champs.

"I definitely thought we could take this one as a team today, and some of the guys exceeded expectations," said Cougars coach Andrew Guilde.

Conant finished first with 192 points, and Guilde saved some of his highest praise for senior Yordan Neykov, who rallied back to take third place (126) and move on.

The top three individuals in each weight class qualified for next weekend's sectional tournament. Conant also qualified for the dual-team sectional on Feb. 22, at South Elgin.

"He was down in both (of his final two) matches," said Guilde of Neykov, "and he battled back to take third. He believed in his conditioning and his training."

Schaumburg finished second in the team race with 132 points and got five wrestlers out, while Elk Grove was third (131.5) with eight of its squad squad qualifying.

Chance Guziec of the Grenadiers won at 220, just edging Harley Stary of Conant in a 7-6 decision.

"He was able to avenge a loss (to Stary) in conference," said Grens coach Daniel Vargas of Guziec. "There were a couple of reversals, and I felt like whoever was on top at the end was going to win."

Brady Phelps (106) was victorious for the Saxons, as was teammate Called Kirchner (113). Nico Clinite of host South Elgin won at 145, while Hoffman Estates had the heavyweight champ (285), Kehinde Akintunde.

Rolling Meadows had a ton of success in the third-place matches as five of its team earned advancement.

Lake Park won three titles -- Dominik Mallinder at 126, Mike DiBenedetto at 138, and Joey Olalde at 160.

"I would say we wrestled pretty well today," said Lancers coach Mark Cameron. "We have some things to clean up, because getting out of sectionals is quite a bit different than getting out of regionals. Overall today, though, I was pleased with our performance."

Cameron added that he counts on Malinger and Olalde, both four-year varsity standouts, to be "leaders in the room and pave the way for the younger guys."

"It was exciting today, and a little nerve-wracking," said Olalde, who won in an 8-2 decision over CJ Gilbert of Conant.

"CJ is a tough kid, I've wrestled him before," said Olalde. "As a matter of fact, that was my first match of the season. He's tough on top, you've got to watch out for those cradles, but as we went along I knew that if I got to my attack, I was golden."

Elk Grove had five second-place finishes, from Nicasio Ancient, Grant Madi, Ty Macina, Brady Tosterud, and Ramiro Valdivia.

More runners-up were Alan Velazquez of Meadows, Vincent Merola of Lake Park, Caden Kirchner from Schaumburg, Israel Vargas, Jalen Curtis and Julian Bonilla of Hoffman Estates, and Josh Morrison from the champion Cougars.

"I haven't seen the brackets yet," said Guilde of next week's sectional, "But I feel like all of our guys have a chance to make it downstate."

