

Press Clippings 2/23/2022

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News

U-46 moves to 'strongly recommend' school mask policy --- 2/22/2022

By Mike Danahey

Elgin Area School District U-46 will go from requiring everyone in its buildings to wear masks to strongly recommending people still do so, depending on conditions, effective Wednesday.

U-46 Superintendent of Schools Tony Sanders made that announcement in his weekly newsletter, which was posted to the district's website Friday.



U-46 Superintendent of Schools Tony Sanders, shown in a file picture from Oakhill Elementary School in 2021, announced Friday that the Elgin-based district's mask policy will change to strongly recommended. (Stacey Wescott/Chicago Tribune) (Stacey Wescott / Chicago Tribune)

“Strongly recommended means that our desire is to see all students and staff continue to wear appropriate masks that have been identified as effective against the spread,” Sanders said in the newsletter. “Any of our district-provided masks meet those requirements.”

The move comes after the Appellate Court of Illinois for the 4th Circuit ruled late Thursday night, upholding a temporary restraining order that had been issued in litigation in which U-46 was among the defendants. The order applied to a mandate for mask-wearing at schools that Gov. J.B. Pritzker issued in August.

The three justices said that “because the emergency rules voided by the TRO are no longer in effect, a controversy regarding the application of those rules no longer exists. Thus, the matter is moot.”

The judges also ruled that the language of the temporary restraining order “in no way restrains school districts from acting independently from the executive orders or the Illinois Department of Public Health in creating provisions addressing COVID-19.”

“The court affirmed the ability of local school districts to make decisions in regards to mitigation strategies,” Sanders said in his newsletter. “Even prior to the Appellate decision, we had begun preparing for a shift in our local mitigation strategies, which would be announced today because our local COVID-19 metrics continue to trend in a favorable direction”

Sanders said the Wednesday start allows the district time to address concerns of teachers or families and allows teachers time to adjust their classroom setups, if need be. U-46 schools are closed Monday in observance of President’s Day.

The Board of Education will be notified about the plan and its implementation at its next scheduled meeting Monday, Feb. 28.

With the new plan, the district’s health services department will look over metrics from Cook, Kane and DuPage County, where it has schools, and school-based data, then advise Sanders.

“It is important to note that these local guidelines give the district the ability to increase mitigations, including masking, in the case of a significant rise in cases,” Sanders said in the newsletter.

The district would require masks if all three counties have COVID-19 positivity rates of eight percent or more, which the Illinois Department of Public Health labels substantial rates. When those rates meet the IDPH standards for being low or moderate, U-46 will continue to strongly recommend students and staff wear masks.

“Using these updated metrics, and if there is no worsening of the metrics, all U-46 schools will move to strongly recommended by Wednesday, Feb. 23,” Sanders says.

However, Sanders says, for each campus, “If the positivity rate at any school is considered substantial, based on confirmed positive cases, student absences due to reported symptoms, or through identification through SHIELD testing, masks would be required.”

And because of federal regulations still in effect, masks must be still worn on school buses at all times, Sanders notes.

“For those who have been awaiting the option to remove your mask, please take into consideration the personal challenges and feelings of those who continue to be worried about catching COVID-19,” Sanders said. “If a teacher or other staff member asks students to use a mask, please honor that request as a sign of respect, knowing there is likely an underlying health concern that prompts that request.”

The district will continue to have masks and other PPE available for those who want to use them, Sanders said in the newsletter, and will continue to encourage those who can get vaccinated against COVID-19 to do so.

“Research demonstrates the vaccine to be the most effective mitigation strategy,” Sanders says.

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News Crosswalk near Larkin High School up for final vote ---

2/22/2022

By Gloria Casas



Caption: Elgin city Council members are voting on an agreement with an engineering firm to develop plans for a new crosswalk on Larkin Avenue to make it safer for Larkin High School students and pedestrians. (Gloria Casas / The Courier-News)

Elgin’s plan to make Larkin Avenue safer for pedestrians, especially **Larkin High School** students, is moving ahead with the city council set to consider a contract for engineering services.

City council members are expected to consider the agreement for about \$35,000 with Hampton, Lenzini, and Renwick, Inc., for a pedestrian crossing project. The agreement is listed under the consent agenda for Wednesday’s council meeting.



Caption: Elgin city Council members are voting on an agreement with an engineering firm to develop plans for a new crosswalk on Larkin Avenue to make it safer for Larkin High School students and pedestrians. (Gloria Casas / The Courier-News)

The council allocated \$250,000 toward a pedestrian crossing in this year's budget using a surplus from the Riverboat fund.

Elgin officials, School District U-46 staff, and Hampton, Lenzini, and Renwick engineers met to talk about solutions to the safety concerns surrounding Larkin Avenue near Larkin High School. The high school is located at the corner of Larkin Avenue and Mclean Boulevard and has more than 2,000 students.

Over 17,000 vehicles travel on the roads daily, according to city documents. There's a timed crosswalk at the intersection. But many students cross Larkin Avenue just west of the intersection to get to restaurants like McDonald's, Beef Villa, and Dunkin' located on the north side of Larkin, the documents state.

A few ideas are a mid-block crossing that would include rectangular rapid flashing beacon signs, a refuge island at the crosswalk location, and the installation of a fence around the Larkin High's campus, city documents state. The fence would make students and pedestrians cross at designated crosswalks, city officials said.

The project is expected to be done by July 2022.

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News

Elgin-area news: Black History events online --- 2/22/2022

By Mike Danahey

U-46 Black History Month events online

Elgin Area School District U-46 is hosting two online events this week as part of its celebration of Black History Month.

A virtual Black History Month that took place Tuesday night is now available for viewing on the U-46 YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/user/SchoolDistrictU46/videos.

In the presentation, educator and community leader Brittany Barber, the 2019 recipient of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award in the City of Elgin, gives a keynote address entitled "Seizing the Moment: Embracing Black Excellence and Recognizing Black U-46 Scholars." About 70 African-American students were invited to attend the talk with their families.

U-46 and the Alignment Collaborative for Education is hosting a college admissions panel with representatives and alumni from four Historically Black Colleges and Universities - Howard University, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Tuskegee University - from

6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 24. High schoolers and their family members who want to attend the panel can register for the Zoom session at [us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpd-usrTwpE9yOPVbWysxRkZFP5NBAXpmpdy](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/91234567890?pwd=UWpE9yOPVbWysxRkZFP5NBAXpmpdy.).

Kane County Connects

U-46 schools host social programs for Black History Month - -- 2/22/2022

While **School District U-46** aims to celebrate Black history throughout the school year, schools and district officials have been recognizing contributions of Black Americans throughout the month of February.



The district is hosting a virtual Black History Month celebration at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 22, open to all members of the U-46 community. During the program, U-46 will be honoring about 70 African-American students who are excelling in 6th, 8th, and 12th grades.

These outstanding students have been invited to attend with their families.

School District U-46 Celebrates



February 2022

Educator and community leader Brittany Barber, the 2019 recipient of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award in the City of Elgin, will offer a keynote address entitled “Seizing the Moment: Embracing Black Excellence and Recognizing Black U-46 Scholars” as part of the event. Those interested in attending can watch as the event is streamed via the [U-46 YouTube channel](#).

In addition, U-46 and the Alignment Collaborative for Education are hosting a college admissions panel with representatives and alumni from four Historically Black Colleges and Universities — Howard University, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Tuskegee

University. High schoolers and their family members who want to attend the panel, being held from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 24, should register [here](#).

Teachers and school leaders across the district have also created special activities and events while acknowledging that we cannot limit Black history lessons and celebrations to the month of February. Some of the remaining events are listed below.

School	Activity	Date
Bartlett High School	MAC Talent Show – a Celebration of Black Excellence	Late February
Fox Meadow Elementary School	Classroom Projects, shared on school’s Facebook page	All Month
Heritage Elementary School	Black History Month Speech Assembly and Black History Laser Show	Feb. 23 / Feb. 24
Parkwood Elementary School	“One Classroom, One Quote” building-wide project	All Month
Ridge Circle Elementary School	Students share how an African-American has impacted their life during morning announcements	All Month
Spring Trail Elementary School	Quotes from famous African-Americans read during morning announcements	All Month
Streamwood High School	“Amplifying Our Voices” programs around the school, including music, a game night, a movie night, and themed dress days.	

The Examiner of Bartlett

Expenses primed for vote by District U-46 board ---

2/23/2022

By Seth Hancock; Note – this story also ran in The Examiner of South Elgin and in The Examiner of Streamwood

The **Board of Education in School District U-46** is set to vote on \$2 million in operations and maintenance fund items at its upcoming meeting on Monday, Feb. 28. The items were presented on Feb. 7.

Included is a \$1.9 million bid for boiler replacements at five schools split between Source Mechanical, Inc. (\$1.1 million) and Ideal Heating Company (\$878,221).

Source Mechanical will do the replacements at Streamwood's Heritage Elementary School, Bartlett's Independence Center for Early Learning and Elgin's Ron O'Neal Elementary School and Ideal at Elgin's Coleman and Wayne elementary schools.

"The boilers at Coleman, Heritage, Independence, Ron O'Neal, and Wayne are at the end of their expected lifecycles," the proposal states. "As a result, it takes a great deal of manpower and resources to simply maintain these pieces of equipment. Due to their age, administration can no longer source some of the parts needed for repairs. Thus, these critical building systems need to be replaced before they fail."

Work will begin on June 8 with substantial completion expected by July 25.

Also set for a vote is a bid from Weaver Consultants Group costing \$49,800 for an asbestos three-year reinspection and management plan update.

"The Asbestos Reinspection and Management Plan must be updated every three years according to state and federal regulations," the proposal states. "An independent third-party consultant, licensed in the asbestos discipline, must perform the required tasks, as mandated by applicable regulations. The information obtained from the asbestos reinspection helps to maintain existing records and assists in the facilitation of future repairs and renovations for construction projects."

The project begins after the bid is awarded with substantial completion expected by Oct. 1.

Sue Kerr, the board's president, asked which schools would be inspected to which Patricia Waldau, interim director of plant operations, said it will cover the "majority of the buildings in the district."

The Examiner of Bartlett

U-46 looking to again waive instructional fees --- 2/23/2022

By Seth Hancock; Note – this story also ran in The Examiner of South Elgin and in The Examiner of Streamwood

School District U-46 plans to waive instructional fees for the 2022-2023 school year.

The proposed school fees were presented to the Board of Education at its Monday, Feb. 7 meeting with a vote expected on Feb. 28.

“We are still recommending that the Board of Education waive all instructional fees for our families for the 2022-2023 school year,” said Superintendent Tony Sanders. “The only fees that will exist are the optional programs.”

This would be the second straight year the fees would be waived.

Optional fees include \$80 per sport for the middle school athletic participation fee as well as several at the high school level: Driver’s education behind the wheel (\$250), driver’s education textbook (\$13), lifeguard course fee (\$45.75), independent physical education course fee (\$15), parking permit (\$100), athletic participation fee per sport (\$150), athletic fee for football (\$200), activity fee (\$40) and basic yearbook (\$45). A customized high school yearbook is available, with price determined at each site.

High school athletic fees are capped at two per student athlete, four per family.

Board member Dawn Martin asked how the district keeps track if a family has multiple multi-sport athletes who may attend different high schools within the district, and Dale Burnidge, director of financial operations, said “it should be capped at four, even if they are at two schools.” Burnidge said families in this situation can speak with the school athletic directors to handle this on a case-by-case basis.

The district does offer insurance plans for students which Sanders called an “optional item families may choose to partake in.” The cost is too be determined “because the insurance company does not publish new rates until April or May.”

Board member John Devereux asked about academy and magnet school fees to which Sanders said: “We eliminated those about three or four years ago.”

The Examiner of Bartlett

Hawks girls’ basketball fall to Falcons in regional play ---

2/23/2022

By Seth Hancock

The **Bartlett** girls’ basketball team’s season ended in the Hoffman Estates Regional semifinals as the No. 15 Hawks fell 63-19 to No. 2 Wheaton North on Monday, Feb. 14.

Wheaton North jumped out to a 22-0 lead after one quarter and didn’t look back. The Hawks trailed 34-10 at halftime and 56-15 after three quarters.

Despite the loss, the young Hawks squad saw growth through the season. After starting the year 0-11, Bartlett went 10-10 the rest of the season to finish 10-21 overall.

“Overall, I am very pleased with where we are as a team and how much we grew together,” said Bartlett coach Tanner Gardon. “Obviously, you want that last game to be more competitive but our improvement in the second half of the season is a highlight.”

Bartlett did not have any seniors on the team meaning this group gained a lot of valuable experience. Laney Stark, a sophomore, was selected as all-conference in the Upstate Eight.

“We talked to the girls about what we need to do this offseason, and a big thing is maturity,” Gardon said. “All these girls have a full varsity season under their belt, so now they have to be students of the game and we need to be sharper mentally during pregame, during the game and postgame. We will continue to develop our offensive/defensive philosophies while improving individual skills in the summer.”

There were seven juniors on this year’s squad and five underclassmen.

The Examiner of Bartlett

Storm earns regional title by topping Elgin, Jacobs ---

2/23/2022

By Seth Hancock; Note – this story also ran in The Examiner of South Elgin

Propelled by a team effort and a fast start, the No. 2 **South Elgin** girls’ basketball team grabbed the Larkin Regional crown with a 61-48 win over No. 3 Jacobs in the title game on Thursday, Feb. 17.

The Storm had defeated Jacobs 54-34 in their season opener at the Dundee-Crown Thanksgiving tournament. South Elgin (26-5 overall) advances to the DeKalb Sectional where it will face No. 1 Hononegah (30-3), who the Storm defeated 50-46 at the same Thanksgiving tournament.

“We talked about beating Jacobs the first game of the year,” said South Elgin coach Dan Mandernack. “I told them they’re going to want revenge, and we had to come out and throw the first punch.... We’re going to enjoy this tomorrow and then get on to Hononegah.”

The Storm did throw the first punch building a 22-13 lead after one period behind a pair of threepointers each from senior Ella Winterhalder (17 points, five treys) and junior Chloe Kmiec (seven points) and six points from junior Zoie Lewis (10 points, 11 rebounds, five steals).

South Elgin led 34-21 by halftime and maintained a double-digit lead the rest of the night.

Winterhalder said strong defense and strong starts have been a staple this year along with teamwork. The Storm had four double-digit scorers including 17 points from senior Caroline Croft (seven assists, five rebounds, three steals), who tallied 12 in the fourth quarter, and 10 from junior Raina Yang (five assists, three steals).

“We all set the same goals of winning conference (Upstate Eight) and winning this regional,” Winterhalder said. “Us contributing, all of us, makes it more special. We’re a close group of girls.”

This is the second regional title for Croft and Winterhalder who were on the program’s last regional winning team as freshmen.

“It’s a great feeling to do it again,” Croft said. “Most people don’t even get to do it twice in a career, so I’m very grateful to get to do it.”

To get to the Larking title game, South Elgin defeated No. 8 Elgin 59-17 in the regional semifinal on Tuesday, Feb. 15. Croft and Winterhalder each had 14 points.

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News **Raina’s Storm: Raina Yang bounces back from big hit,** **returns from hospital to lift South Elgin to first sectional** **win in program history --- 2/22/2022**

By Rick Armstrong



South Elgin's Raina Yang, with the cut on her forehead bandaged, came back from the hospital to lift the Storm past Rockton Hononegah in a Class 4A DeKalb Sectional semifinal on Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022. (Mark Black / The Beacon-News)

A fun game of rock-paper-scissors this was not.

This was a battle.

South Elgin literally took Rockton Hononegah’s best shot — an elbow to the forehead that sent the Storm’s Raina Yang to the floor and then to the hospital.

But the 5-foot-5 Yang, a feisty junior guard, returned Tuesday night and sparked a comeback that helped make program history.

“It was a hard hit but it’s OK,” Yang said. “We stayed in it, came back, pulled it together and got the ‘W.’”



After getting bandaged up, South Elgin's Raina Yang (12) came back to help the Storm defeat Hononegah in a Class 4A DeKalb Sectional semifinal on Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022. (Mark Black / The Beacon-News)

Ella Winterhalder scored a game-high 15 points while Caitlyn Tolentino and Chloe Kmiec each added 11 as South Elgin rallied for a 57-48 victory in a Class 4A DeKalb Sectional semifinal.

The Storm (27-5), which came back from an eight-point deficit in the second quarter, beat Rockton Hononegah (30-4) for their first sectional win in four tries.

South Elgin advances to play at 7 p.m. Friday in the sectional final against Barrington, which beat Huntley 53-36 in the other semifinal. And Yang’s return made a big difference.

“I think Raina is the glue of our team,” Winterhalder said.

This night she was.

Yang was pressuring an opposing ballhandler as South Elgin held a 9-2 lead with 3:15 remaining in the first quarter. The player swung her elbows, trying to clear space, and connected.



South Elgin's Ella Winterhalder (10) celebrates after beating Rockton Hononegah in a Class 4A DeKalb Sectional semifinal on Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022. (Mark Black / The Beacon-News)

Yang was helped off the floor and taken by her parents and DeKalb's training staff to nearby Northwestern Medicine Kishwaukee Hospital.

"The doctor said I'm going to need stitches," Yang said. "But obviously, I could play through it."

After she left, Hononegah's 1-2-2 trapping press became more effective and the Indians went on an 8-0 run. They opened the second quarter with a 9-2 spurt to take a 19-11 lead.

That's where it stood when Yang returned to the gym and went back into the game with 3:35 remaining in the first half.

Caroline Croft made a 3-pointer that started a 15-3 burst, allowing South Elgin to close the half with a 26-22 lead.



South Elgin's Caitlyn Tolentino (1) drives to the basket against Rockton Hononegah in a Class 4A DeKalb Sectional semifinal on Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022. (Mark Black / The Beacon-News)

Yang, unfazed by her experience, had a pair of assists and a basket in that stretch.

“She’s our ballhandler,” Winterhalder said. “Raina can knock down shots midrange. Most importantly, she is poised with the ball. She doesn’t force anything and has a high basketball IQ.”

“I felt like without her, we were struggling to make the right play, make the right pass. She came back in and gave us a spark.”

Hononegah struggled taking care of the ball in the second half, committing 10 turnovers. The Storm outscored the Indians 31-26 in the closing 16 minutes.

South Elgin beat Hononegah for the second time this season. The first victory, a 50-46 decision, came in the second game of the season.

“I was definitely scared I might have a concussion but I’m good,” Yang said. “I’m glad I was able to get back in the game.”



South Elgin's Caroline Croft, right, and Ella Winterhalder celebrate beating Rockton Hononegah in a Class 4A DeKalb Sectional semifinal on Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022. (Mark Black / The Beacon-News)

All of Winterhalder’s points came on five 3-pointers and she drew three charges in the game, giving her 42 for the season.

“It’s something I like to do,” Winterhalder said. “It’s kind of an undervalued thing on defense. Not a lot of people are expecting it, but it sparks our players.”

Kmiec, a 5-7 junior guard, came off the bench and scored all of her points in the fourth quarter, making three 3-pointers.

“Chloe just has ice water in her veins,” South Elgin coach Dan Mandernack said. “And getting (Yang) back was what we needed. It’s hard to beat their press. Luckily, we start five guards.

“Yang is such a catalyst. She calms down everyone, gets the offense set up. The kids never panicked. We said it’s the biggest game of the year but the most fun game of the year.”

Daily Herald

South Elgin makes history with 1st sectional win ---

2/22/2022

By Jared Birchfield, Daily Herald Correspondent

South Elgin's 57-48 Class DeKalb 4A sectional semifinal win over Hononegah was a hard fought one, and the Storm's Raina Yang has the bandaged forehead to prove it.

The contest between the two conference champions featured five lead changes and four ties.

The victory, the first girls sectional win in South Elgin's history, advances the Storm to Thursday's championship against Barrington, 53-36 winners over Huntley in the second semifinal.

"We just made history. It's our 27th win, we are 18-0 in (the Upstate Eight) conference and we have never won a sectional game," said South Elgin coach Dan Mandernack. "For all that to happen, we want to get greedy now. If we win the next one, we then play at home -- we host the supersectional."

Yang left the court in the first quarter with gashed forehead. Her return in the second quarter ignited a South Elgin (27-5) rally that got it back in the game. Teammate Chloe Kmiec provide the spark in the fourth quarter that finally put the Storm on top for good.

Yang had to leave the court late in the first quarter after an elbow by a Hononegah player opened a cut on her forehead on a scramble for a loose ball under the Indians' basket.

When the junior left the game, South Elgin led 9-2. The Indians then went on a 19-2 run that spanned two quarters. A buzzer-beating 3-pointer by Carly Lamay (eight points) put the Rockton school on top, 10-9 at the end of first quarter.

Yang, sporting a large butterfly bandage on her forehead, return to the court with 2:48 to play in the half. South Elgin responded by going on a 15-2 run -- six on two of Ella Winterhalder's five 3-pointers -- and put the Storm back in front 26-22 at halftime. Winterhalder led all scorers with 15 points.

"The girl came down with her elbow and kind of hit me in the head," Yang said. "I was definitely a little heated, but I shook it off and put it into the game."

"(Yang) is such a catalyst for us," Mandernack said. "She calms down everyone. She gets the offense set up. Her basketball IQ is off the charts."

Trailing 39-36 at the start of the fourth quarter, Kmiec (11 points) tied the game with a 3-pointer from the left wing. The junior's second trey with 6:35 left on the clock put her team ahead 42-41.

Hononegah reeled off three straight baskets to go up 48-44 with four minutes to play. Kmiec responded with her third bucket from beyond arc and then a layup on a steal to put South Elgin back on top 49-48. Caitlyn Tolentino (10 points) followed with another layup for a 51-48 Storm advantage.

"I knew I had to do shooting because that's what I am known for as a player," Kmiec said. "I had to do good with shooting and I tried to follow through the best I could with that."

"She knows she has got the green light (to shoot 3-point shots) and she's got ice water in her veins," Mandernack said of Kmiec.

The Indians were unable to score in the last three minutes and South Elgin connected on six free throws to ice the win.

Breacia Carter scored 12 points for the Indians and teammate Allyson Niefeldt tallied 11,

Hononegah, winners of the Northern Illinois Conference, finish the season with a 30-4 record.

