

Press Clippings - 12/20/2023

- Daily Herald - Elgin U-46 considering closure of six elementary schools

By: James Fuller and Alicia Fabbre
December 20, 2023



Lowrie Elementary School in Elgin is one of three elementary schools that could be closed by Elgin Area District U-46 in June 2027.

In response to outdated buildings and shrinking enrollment, Elgin Area **District U-46** could close as many as six elementary schools.

District officials Monday presented school board members with recommendations that include closing Lowrie, McKinley and Washington elementary schools, all located in Elgin, in June 2027. The plan also suggests retiring Century Oaks in Elgin and Glenbrook and Hanover Countryside elementary schools in Streamwood at a later date.

U-46 families were advised of the potential closures in an email after the school board meeting.

“We know this is difficult news for many of our staff, students, families and community members,” Deputy Superintendent of Operations Ann Williams said. “However, we are committed to providing safe, modern learning environments for all of our students.”

School board members did not make a decision but could consider the recommendations for a vote as early as February.

District officials pointed to declining enrollment and the age of the buildings as reasons for recommending the closures. U-46 elementary schools will see a further decline in enrollment once the district moves all sixth graders into middle school buildings. Currently, sixth grade students attend U-46 elementary schools. The district anticipates completing that transition by the end of the 2026-27 school year.

More than two-thirds of the district's elementary schools were built before 1980, and the newest school opened in 2005. However, the district hasn't seen student population growth in the last 20 years.

Data presented by the district's chief of staff, Brian Lindholm, to school board members showed a 20% decline in elementary school enrollment from five years ago. Projections indicate 14 district schools would operate at 50-60% capacity within the next few years without the closures.

"We are at a point where we need to make some difficult decisions," Lindholm said.

In addition to the proposed closures, the district would investigate transforming the Illinois Park Early Childhood Center into an elementary school to take some students from shuttered schools.

The recommendations also include building a new elementary school in northeast Elgin to replace McKinley Elementary School, which was built in 1887, on a yet-to-be-determined 5- to 10-acre site.

Century Oaks in Elgin, which also is recommended for closure, could potentially be rebuilt on a different part of its 8-acre site, or students may find themselves at a converted Illinois Park school. Glenbrook Elementary, which sits on about 6 acres in Streamwood, could potentially be rebuilt on a different part of the school property.

Hanover Countryside could remain open during a transition period but then would close, according to the recommendations presented.

Additions and renovations are under consideration for Harriet Gifford and Highland elementary schools in Elgin.

Parkwood Elementary School in Hanover Park would be monitored for possible consolidation at a later date.

The school board anticipates discussing boundaries and potential changes in the coming year. Changes to elementary school boundaries would be communicated to families in the fall of 2024, according to the recommendations.

District officials said it costs an average of \$2 million per building to maintain and operate each elementary school — a potential savings of \$12 million per year in closing six buildings. That number doesn't include the cost of teacher salaries, transportation costs and feeding the students at each building. Staff and teachers at the schools that will close will receive job opportunities at the remaining buildings in the district, officials said.

- Chicago Tribune - U-46 officials announce plans to close 6 elementary schools and build 2 new ones in Elgin, Hanover, Streamwood

**By: Mike Danahey
December 19, 2023**



Washington Elementary School in Elgin, which celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2017, is one of six proposed to close under plans presented Monday to the District U-46 School Board.

Six elementary schools will close, two elementary schools will be built and an early learning center will be converted into an elementary school under plans proposed Monday to the **District U-46** School Board.

“We do not take these decisions or recommendations lightly,” Deputy Superintendent Ann Williams said at the meeting. “We know that this is difficult news for many of our staff, students, families and community members.”

“However, we are committed to providing safe, modern learning environments for all of our students and the recommendations presented this evening represent a start by announcing we will move students out of several of our elementary schools with the most pressing needs and into improved, updated or even brand new learning spaces.”

The proposal comes as the latest development in ongoing plans to address building incapacities and grade restructuring throughout the district, part of which will be funded with money approved in a referendum in April.

Williams and district Chief of Staff Brian Lindholm said the recommendations were:

- Lowrie, McKinley and Washington elementary schools in Elgin close in June 2027.
- Century Oaks Elementary in Elgin and Hanover Countryside and Glenbrook elementaries in Streamwood close on dates yet to be determined.
- A new elementary school be built somewhere on Elgin's northeast side on a date yet to be determined.
- A new elementary school be built in the Hanover Park/Streamwood area on a date yet to be determined.
- A feasibility study about converting Illinois Park Center for Early Learning in Elgin into an elementary school be conducted.
- Parkwood Elementary in Hanover Park be monitored for possible consolidation at a later date.
- Additions and renovations be considered for Gifford and Highland elementary schools in Elgin.
- Elementary school boundaries be revised and information communicated to families and residents in fall 2024.

This is in addition to previously announced plans to expand Kimball Middle School in Elgin and Kenyon Woods Middle School in South Elgin, build a new Elgin middle school at 2604 Rohrsen Road, and close Ellis and Abbott middle schools in Elgin will close at the end of the 2025-26 school year.

Preliminary cost estimates for the newer proposal indicate the work at Gifford and Highland would be a combined \$33 million; each new elementary school would be about \$60 million; and conversion of Illinois Park into an elementary school would require about \$10 million.

The moves would rebalance class sizes and staffing to provide the best opportunities for students in the wake of declining enrollments, mostly tied to a drop in the birth rates, the administrators said.

In August 2018, U-46 had 20,000 elementary school students attending 40 schools, with an average of 500 students per building, Lindholm said. Projections for August 2026 put those numbers at 13,500 students attending 38 schools with average attendance at 335 students per building.

The 2026-27 school year also is when the district plans to move sixth-graders from the elementary system into middle schools.

District U-46 has a number of aging buildings. McKinley, Washington and Lowrie all date back to the

late 1800s, sit on relatively small lots and have issues related to their age, the officials said.

“In fact as recently as 2021, Lowrie had a catastrophic plumbing failure that resulted in no water to a portion of the building for several days, porta potties on site and kids eating lunch in their classrooms as the lunchroom was also inaccessible at the time,” Lindholm said.

Century Oaks was built in the early 1970s but the school’s design isn’t conducive to learning, he said.

“Since there aren’t really any hallways in the instructional area of the building students and staff often need to walk through one classroom to get to another,” Lindholm said.

However, because Century Oaks stands on eight acres of land, the district might consider building a new school at the location, he said.

The district is seeking the community’s input on the proposals. Discussion sessions will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 8, and Wednesday, March 13, at Elgin High School, 1200 Maroon Drive. The talks will focus on boundary planning criteria and parameters.

More information and community meeting attendance registration is available online at www.u-46.org/uniteu46.

The district also sent an email to staff and families after Monday’s meeting providing an update of the night’s presentation and an overview of the sites discussed.

- The Examiner -

Multiple expenditures approved by District U-46

**By: Seth Hancock
December 20, 2023**

The Board of Education in **School District U-46** unanimously approved, via a 7-0 vote, of \$312,924 in expenditure items at its meeting on Monday, Dec. 4.

Included was \$108,465, to be paid by the nation’s taxpayers through grant funds, with Haas Factory Outlet to purchase a 5-Axis CNC machine for South Elgin High School’s precision manufacturing program.

“The Precision Manufacturing Lab at South Elgin High School is well equipped to provide students skills in this area and now is offering dual credit as well as a National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) certification,” the proposal states. “Adding 5-axis machining offers students another skill set that will give them a competitive edge. Currently, our students utilize Haas machines and controls to

learn computer numeric control (CNC) machining.”

With Panorama Education, \$106,125 (coordinated early intervening services fund) was approved to upgrade its student success dashboard and to provide professional development.

“This dashboard addresses the ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education)- identified disproportionality in student identification for Individualized Education Programs (IEP) by streamlining data collection and facilitating the tracking and evaluation of student interventions,” the proposal states.

Costing \$61,000 (grant funds), a contract renewal with Electude, an automotive technology platform for preparation in automotive careers, was approved.

A contract renewal with ZSpace was also approved with a price tag of \$37,333 (grant funds). It provides an “augmented/virtual reality platform and software used for student learning” used for automotive technology and healthcare science courses, the proposal states.

“Students have access to automotive software that allows them to manipulate components and assemble/disassemble them,” the proposal states.

“The healthcare science platforms allow the exploration of anatomical and biological models and include virtual dissection.”

Additionally, the board voted 7-0 on the appointment of Diane Belton as the district’s authorized agent for the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund as well as \$8.7 million in itemized bills.

- The Examiner -

Dist. U-46 bond issuance given expedited approval

**By: Seth Hancock
December 20, 2023**

The Board of Education in **School District U-46** unanimously approved of a resolution allowing the issuance of bonds and \$122,843 in expenditure proposals at its meeting on Monday, Dec. 11.

As previously reported, the items were presented on Dec. 4 with expected approval dates at the regularly scheduled Dec. 18 meeting. The board, however, chose to use the optionally scheduled Dec. 11 meeting to approve the items.

The bond issuance, part of a voter approved referendum, is not to exceed \$62 million. The resolution sets the parameters which sets the bond date as “not later than June 18, 2024.

The principal payment will be between January 2025 to January 2037, the first interest payment is July 1, 2024, levy years are 2023 to 2035, maximum annual principal is \$14 million, maximum annual debt service is \$15.5 million, maximum interest rate is 6 percent, minimum purchase price is 98 percent and a call date of Jan. 1, 2033.

The expenditure items include \$72,843 with Apple Inc., paid for by the nation’s taxpayers through grant funds, to purchase 100 iPads or communicating with “students with speech and language challenges,” the proposal states.

“The Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools on these devices can facilitate better communication for students with speech and language challenges,” the proposal states. “The inclusion of AppleCare and high-quality protective cases ensures the devices remain functional for an extended period, safeguarding our investment. All devices and accessories will be procured from Apple, ensuring consistency in quality and service. The comprehensive warranty services provided through AppleCare+ for schools will also reduce potential downtime and repair costs. These iPads replace devices with outdated operating systems that can no longer be supported effectively.”

Costing \$50,000 (education fund), the district is seeking a contract with Collaborative Leadership Consulting Group for bargaining facilitations.

“In the school year 2023-2024, School District U-46 Administration, on behalf of the Board of Education, continues to bargain a successor agreement to the one year extension with the Elgin Teachers Association (ETA),” the proposal states. “Facilitation of this work by the CLC Group provides support for creating structures, systems, culture, and communication practices to reach a successful collective bargaining agreement.

- Daily Herald -

Sahi, Bryan lead Glenbard South past Bartlett

By: Dave Hess
December 20, 2023



Fenton’s Alejandro Diaz dives for the ball as South Elgin’s Ishmael George grabs it during the Bison’s 46-40 win Tuesday in Bensenville.

It was an inside-outside combination **Bartlett** just couldn't contain.

Masroor Sahi provided the outside fireworks for Glenbard South (7-4, 4-2) with 18 points including four 3-pointers. He scored 15 in the first half while Harper Bryan dominated the paint with 14 points and 8 rebounds.

The result was a 63-48 Raiders win over host Bartlett in an Upstate Eight Conference game Tuesday night in Bartlett.

Glenbard South, on a 3-game winning streak, got 14 second-half points off the bench from Mitchell Erickson. Erickson was 5-for-6 from the floor with a 3-pointer.

Sahi was 7-of-10 from the field and canned 4-of-6 from beyond the arc. He also added 3 assists with 4 steals.

"We came out with high energy right out of the lockerroom," said Sahi. "We knew this was a big conference game on the road. The guys did a great job of getting me in good position to score. They trusted me."

Ryan was 7-of-10 from the field and scored 8 points in the first half and added 6 points in the fourth quarter.

"We came out with good energy and had good communication," said Ryan. "We are playing well and are on a nice win streak going into the Christmas tournament."

Sahi canned a trey to start the game and gave the Raiders a 3-0 lead, an advantage they never relinquished.

A 3 at the buzzer by Sahi put Glenbard South up 13-6 lead after eight minutes.

The visitors from Glen Ellyn seized control of the game with an 8-0 run to start the second quarter. Bryan scored 6 points and PJ Lehr had a putback as the Raiders led 21-6 with 4:33 left in the first half.

Bartlett's first basket of the second quarter came on a 12-footer in the lane by Nathan Scearce with 3:19 remaining to make the score 21-8.

The Raiders' biggest lead was 47-27 on a 3 by Erickson with 7:22 left in the game.

"We had good discipline to start the game," said Glenbard South coach Jason Mead. "We had good focus and the kids executed the game plan."

Searce hit five 3-pointers scored 20 of his game-high 24 points in the second half for the Hawks.

- Daily Herald -

Fenton hustles past South Elgin in battle of UEC unbeatens

By: Bill Esbrook

December 20, 2023



Fenton's Xavier Gonzalez, who scored a game-high 20 points, drives against South Elgin's Derek

Fenton senior Damian Harnish doesn't often light up the scoreboard, but he does the little things that can make a basketball team successful.

Tuesday night in Bensenville against visiting **South Elgin**, the 6-foot-2 guard showed how valuable he is to the Bison.

Harnish only scored 2 points, but had 6 rebounds, 3 steals, 3 blocked shots and played a terrific all-around game as Fenton defeated the Storm 46-40 in an important Upstate Eight Conference matchup.

Both teams came in to the game undefeated in conference, but the Bison took sole possession of first place with the win.

"We came in knowing what we needed to do," said Harnish, "because they (**South Elgin**) are a tough team.

"We were both 5-0 (in the UEC), unfortunately one of us had to lose, and I just feel like we came out

with more energy.”

Xavior Gonzalez scored a game-high 20 points for Fenton, while Derek Clark led the Storm with 16.

“We did some good things tonight,” said **South Elgin** coach Philip Church. “For 99 percent of the game plan, the guys executed, and that just shows how far they’ve come.”

South Elgin junior guard Shailen Shukti hit a couple of long 3-pointers in the first quarter as the Storm built an early lead.

Then Fenton clamped down on defense in the second period, and Gonzalez led a 7-point Bison run to give them a 24-18 halftime advantage.

“We went to a couple different defenses to (defend) players that were hot in the moment,” said Harnish.

“We just prioritized certain players, and that opened up some chances for us to hit some big shots.”

Clark opened the third quarter with a 3-pointer, but Harnish took a charge to key a Bison rally.

And when Alejandro Diaz (15 points) hit a 3 with just 30 seconds left in the stanza, Fenton’s lead was 34-22.

South Elgin (7-5, 5-1) mustered a fourth quarter comeback, however, by hitting the boards.

The Storm had a big rebounding advantage in the contest, and when 6-3 junior Ishmael George was fouled while grabbing an offensive rebound and sank 2 free throws, **South Elgin** trailed just 41-37 with 1:55 remaining.

“He (George) hit some big shots for us earlier in the year,” said Church, “but we also talk about rebounding, taking charges, and getting assists.

“Those are a lot of metrics that he’s really taken to. He’s an all-state football player too and a heck of an athlete.”

The teams traded baskets late as a Clark tip-in brought the score to 44-40, but 2 clutch throws from Diaz with just a few seconds left closed out the Bison win.

Fenton improved to 6-0 in the Upstate Eight and 11-1 overall.

“This is like a second family to me,” said Harnish of his team, which has five seniors in the starting lineup.

“We’ve been playing together for four years now and over that time we’ve developed a lot of chemistry,” added Harnish. “I feel like that’s why we play so well.”

Shukti finished with 13 points for **South Elgin**, while George had a game-high 7 rebounds.

“The first two quarters we didn’t do a real good job going after the glass,” said Church. “But (in the second half) our guys realized there were some openings there.”

“We didn’t get that third shooter tonight and we needed that third guy. Fenton plays a real tough zone but I’d say we can hold our heads high. The guys did a really good jo

- The Examiner -

Mistakes, foul calls doom Sabres girls hoops in loss

By: Seth Hancock

December 20, 2023

The **Streamwood** girls basketball team was unable to overcome its mistakes as the Sabres fell 56-47 to **Bartlett** in Upstate Eight Conference on Friday, Dec. 15 at **Streamwood**.

The Sabres were in a back-and-forth first quarter as they clung to a 17-16 lead, but mistakes and foul trouble caught up in the second as Bartlett took a 35-24 lead into the break. **Streamwood** did battle in the third, eventually pulling as close as four, and it trailed 44-37 entering the fourth, but **Bartlett** was able to maintain a steady lead in the final period.

“We absolutely played terrible,” said **Streamwood** coach Elizabeth Endriukaitis. “We absolutely played terrible. I really think we should have won tonight had we not played as bad as we played. Next time, and hopefully I don’t eat my words, it will be a completely different game. We absolutely played atrocious, but for as bad as we played we only lost by nine points.”

Jamia Gatlin (19 points), Brianna Coffey (18 points), Ayumi Ishikawa (five points) and Donielle Smith (five points) led the effort.

The loss was the fourth in **Streamwood’s** last six games after a 4-1 start. The Sabres are now 6-5 overall, 2-4 in the UEC.

The stretch has led to some frustration with the officiating.

“Everything that we practiced the last two days, they didn’t do. So, that’s what happens,” Endriukaitis said. “I’m also tired of unfair officiating, to be quite honest. This can’t be what we get at a varsity game. I know we made mistakes and there were fouls called for us. But it’s frustrating when game after game, it’s not fair in terms of how the fouls were called.”

Streamwood was coming off a 56-41 UEC loss at **South Elgin** on Tuesday, Dec. 12. Coffey (15 points, 14 rebounds) and Gatlin (11 points, five rebounds, four steals), led the effort. The loss at **South Elgin** followed a 2- 2 week including a 56-32 nonconference loss at Oswego on Monday, Dec. 4 with Gatlin

(18 points, eight rebounds) leading **Streamwood**. At Glenbard East, the Sabres fell 46-30 in UEC play on Tuesday, Dec. 5 with Coffey (11 points) leading the effort.

The loss at South Elgin followed a 2- 2 week including a 56-32 nonconference loss at Oswego on Monday, Dec. 4 with Gatlin (18 points, eight rebounds) leading Streamwood. At Glenbard East, the Sabres fell 46-30 in UEC play on Tuesday, Dec. 5 with Coffey (11 points) leading the effort.

Gatlin (25 points, 13 rebounds), Ishikawa (21 points, nine rebounds) and Coffey (17 points, 12 rebounds) led in a 69-55 UEC win at **Elgin** on Thursday, Dec. 7. Coffey (17 points, 10 rebounds, six steals) led in a 34-32 nonconference victory at Zion-Benton on Saturday, Dec. 9.