

Press Clippings 04/30/20

--- CHICAGO (WBBM NEWSRADIO)---04/30/2020

'Too Many Unknowns': Elgin District U-46 Looks At All The Possibilities Of The Next Academic Year

By: Bernie Tafoya

While school administrators all across Illinois are busy trying to continue educating their students via remote and e-learning during Governor Pritzker's stay-at-home order, they're also keeping an eye on what the next academic year will look like.

Elgin District U-46 Supt. Tony Sanders said his district "sprinted" to get distance learning up and running in three weeks and now is in a "marathon" to look at a range of scenarios for the next school year, depending upon where things stand with the coronavirus.

"What if we're able to open school, but not for all students at the same time? What if we have to stagger start and stop times and the number of kids allowed into school and do some blended model of in-person and distance learning? What happens if we can't come back at all in-person?" he said.

Supt. Sanders said there are a lot of questions with few answers.

"I wish I had it all developed and ready to roll out, but there's just too many unknowns right now," Sanders said.

The head of Illinois' second largest school district said questions include whether students will still be distance learning when it's time to start the new school year, or if students are allowed back in school buildings whether they'll have to maintain social distancing.

And on social distancing, he said, "I don't know what this looks like for pre-schoolers and kindergartners. I don't know how you tell them they can't get within six-feet of one another and actually ensure that that happens."

Supt. Sanders suspects the answers may be different for each district depending upon how many students they have. In Elgin District U-46, there are 39,000 students, with each high school having more than 2,000 students.

"It might be some groups of students on daily basis come in, but a limited number, and for the most part, we engage in this distance learning like we've been doing these past few months," he said.

Supt. Sanders has a team of administrators working on various scenarios. He said the team will soon present some of their ideas to principals to get their feedback.

The U-46 administrators are also trying to figure out how to make up for all the lost learning that has happened during the stay-at-home order. Supt. Sanders said that while most students are trying to keep up with their learning, and teachers are stressed trying to keep teaching while many times having to deal with having their own children at home, some students are not doing anything. In those cases, he said, teachers and even principals have been contacting families to try to get them more focused on education.

Supt. Sanders said he has tried to send a message to his teachers that this is the time to be innovative when they don't have to worry about the state report card and state assessments.

"It all boils down to the basic relationship between the student and the teacher," he said.

Sanders said it's clear the academic calendar will have to be reconfigured. He said he may want to "front-load" more teacher in-service days earlier in the year to provide teachers with greater help in distance learning should the need arise to return to that method of teaching.

In the end, though, Supt. Sanders said he'll take guidance from Governor JB Pritzker, the Illinois Board of Education, and public health officials.

Please follow this link to listen to the clip: <https://omny.fm/shows/wbbmam-on-demand/elgin-district-u-46-looks-at-all-the-possibilities>

---Daily Herald---04/30/2020

Judson awards honorary doctorate to U-46 leader

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy



Elgin Unit District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders will receive an honorary doctorate from Judson University in Elgin. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer*

Judson University in Elgin is awarding an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters to Elgin Area School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders.

The award recognizes Sanders' dedication and commitment to improving educational opportunities and outcomes for all students, Judson officials said.

It would have been presented during Judson's spring commencement, which has been postponed until Sept. 19 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The university instead will recognize Sanders during a [Facebook Live](#) interview with Judson President Gene Crume to be broadcast at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday.

"I am beyond honored," Sanders said. "The work I do in U-46 is only possible because of a supportive family, and an amazing team."

Sanders joined U-46 in 2007 as chief communications officer and later chief of staff for then-Superintendent José Torres, who left in 2014 to become president of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora. Since then, Sanders has led the state's second-largest school district as CEO and switched to the title of superintendent after attaining state certification in February.

Sanders has overseen U-46's rollout of full-day kindergarten, expansion of its dual language program to high school, and the creation of a new alternative high school, the DREAM Academy, serving students with a trauma-sensitive approach to teaching. He lobbied state lawmakers for a more equitable education funding formula signed into law in 2017, and has grown the district's reserve fund balance above 25% of its \$580 million operating budget.

"I have always appreciated his leadership, not only in field of education but in his work throughout the community," Crume said.

Sanders is perusing a doctorate from Aurora University. He lives in Elgin with his wife, Schelli, and their children, Jack and Lexie, are both U-46 graduates and have attended Judson University.