



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **School District U-46 Opens Doors on Aug. 16**

*Students will return for full-day, in-person learning*

**ELGIN** - Classes resume Monday, Aug. 16 for more than 37,000 kindergartners through 12th graders across School District U-46. For the first time since March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced a shift to Distance Learning, the District plans to open doors to all U-46 students for full-day, in-person instruction.

"We are so excited to welcome our students back to classrooms where they can experience the extraordinary learning moments that happen in person as students work with each other and teachers," said U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders. "Staff across the District have spent the summer preparing our buildings, classrooms, curriculum, and resources so that we can start the school year on a strong foundation."

To watch a welcome video from Superintendent Sanders, click [here](#).

U-46 will be instituting a number of safety measures to help protect students, staff, parents, and the larger community from the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. The District is also complying with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Illinois State Board of Education, and its local health departments, Kane, DuPage, and Cook.

Those safety measures include:

- Universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.
- Social distancing of 3 to 6 feet to the extent possible.



- Regular testing among unvaccinated students (only with permission from parents).
- Regular hand washing and respiratory etiquette.
- Monitoring data, including vaccination rates among staff and students, community transmission rates, and reported COVID-19 cases in schools.

In addition to having nearly all students back in buildings full-time this school year, the District looks forward to some new and continued work to increase opportunities for students.

The 2021-22 school year will see the launch of U-46 Rising which is an intentional focus to improve core instruction through the use of student-led academic teaming. In this model, teams of two to five students work toward a common academic goal with clear protocols for engaging in the standards-based academic work. Teams are interdependent, relying on each other with minimal teacher guidance.

“I wrote back in the early days of the pandemic that if public education looks the same after the pandemic as it did before, then we have failed,” Sanders said. “U-46 Rising is part of our District’s work to ensure that our systems work for all of our students — especially those who are vulnerable and marginalized — in order to help them have bright futures.”

The first phase of U-46 Rising will see teachers and administrators receive professional development focusing on how and why the District is shifting to student-led academic teaming and the new practices for students and teachers to gauge progress and learning. Students will begin to learn how they will set their own learning targets (based on standards), self-assess and track their progress, as well as support the progress of their peers.

While U-46 Rising will be implemented Districtwide over the next several years, five elementary schools have been designated as “Schools for Rigor



and Equity,” serving as demonstration sites for the work. Those buildings will have additional time with leadership and instructional coaches and free before- and after-school childcare to support students and their families.

“Our Creekside community is deeply committed to our mission to cultivate the unique brilliance of each of our students, and we are honored to pursue that mission as a U-46 School for Rigor and Equity,” said Creekside Elementary Principal Joel Pollack. “We are excited to amplify our scholars’ agency and intrinsic motivation, building important skills like critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity through rigorous instruction fueled by the power of student-led academic teams.”

The other Schools for Rigor and Equity are Channing Laurel Hill, Parkwood and Willard elementary schools, each representing a region or network that feeds into the five U-46 comprehensive U-46 high schools.

Additionally, with the 2021-22 school year, U-46 celebrates the first class of Dual Language students who will have been in the program through their senior year. The District has been adding a grade served every school year and now more than 11,000 K-12 students are on their way to becoming bilingual and biliterate, better ready to build careers in a global society. Dual Language is a form of bilingual education in which students are taught literacy and academic content in two languages - English and Spanish, in the case of U-46 which is home to one of the largest such programs in the United States.

U-46 will also continue its robust college and career offerings, including a partnership with Elgin Community College to offer a full-time Dual Credit program for our juniors and seniors. These students, who must demonstrate certain college readiness benchmark scores for acceptance, take all of their courses at ECC. They earn both high school and college credit for each class. Students in the program for two years will graduate with both a high school diploma and an ECC associate's degree in arts or science. In May 2021, 42



graduating seniors were honored for their participation in this valuable program.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, all students in U-46 from 5th to 12th grade had a Chromebook they could use in class and take them home in the evenings to use for homework. With the swift move to Distance Learning, U-46 became a 1:1 device District nearly overnight; elementary students each have a Chromebook, and preschoolers and kindergartners have iPads.

Also due to the impact of COVID-19, the U-46 Board of Education voted to waive registration and instructional fees for U-46 students for the 2021-22 school year. In addition, the District is providing free school supplies to elementary students. Additionally, as part of federal and state provisions in response to COVID-19, breakfast and lunch will be free this year for all students at all U-46 schools.

Over the summer, the first-ever U-46 Summer Connection served approximately 2,000 students in preschool through 6th grade with free in-person camps, classes, and academic enrichment programs offered in conjunction with about 10 community partners. At the secondary level, new summertime programs called The Middle School Experience, Freshman Connection and College Jumpstart were available to incoming 7th, 8th, 9th and 12th graders, respectively.

Students enrolled in the District's preschool programs will have their first day of school on Monday, Aug. 23.

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*School District U-46 serves families in 11 communities: Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood and Wayne, as well as portions of Carol Stream, Hoffman Estates, St. Charles, Schaumburg, and West Chicago. In total, the District encompasses 90 square miles within the Fox*



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*River Valley, approximately 45 minutes west of downtown Chicago, and includes communities within Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. More than 37,000 PreK through 12th graders attend the 57 District schools and programs. To learn more, visit the U-46 [website](#), or like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).*