

## Press Clippings 10/16/2021 to 10/18/2021

---Daily Herald---10/17/2021

### How suburban school districts are scrambling after pandemic exacerbated teacher shortage

By Madhu Krishnamurthy



Long-term substitute teacher Maria Morales teaches preschool at [Huff Elementary School in Elgin](#). Suburban schools are seeing a shortage of teachers and substitutes due to the pandemic and are trying different ways to entice people to step in. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer*

School districts struggling with the long-term effects of COVID-19 have an urgent problem to tackle: a shortage of teachers and substitute teachers exacerbated by the pandemic.

Suburban districts are trying to address the problem by asking retirees to step in where there are critical shortages, increasing compensation, deploying administrators to classrooms and sharing services with neighboring districts.

Statewide, more than 3,600 education jobs are unfilled, with a particular dearth of candidates in special education. As of October 2020, 42% of vacancies were in special education, 9% in elementary education, 6% for bilingual teachers, and the rest spread across other content areas. Districts also are reporting more than 1,200 paraprofessional vacancies, according to the Illinois State Board of Education.

The state board doesn't track substitute positions, but "we are hearing that districts are having difficulty finding substitute teachers," spokeswoman Jackie Matthews said.

## Where substitutes went



Elgin Area School District U-46 boosted pay for substitute teachers like Maria Morales at Huff Elementary School in Elgin. - Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

School districts say the pool of potential substitute teachers is dwindling, partly stemming from COVID-19 concerns and from competition with other jobs. Substitute teachers must be vaccinated or undergo weekly COVID-19 testing, which might deter some candidates.

"It's already a tight labor market," said **Ann Chan, assistant superintendent of human resources for Elgin Area School District U-46.** "The need was not great for substitutes during the pandemic. People were forced to find other work for a whole year and a half. It created a situation where our traditional pipeline had to stop and readjust. "

The state's second-largest school district has about 60 vacancies, mostly for special education and dual language teachers. Skilled paraprofessionals who support classroom teachers also are scarce in U-46.

Retirees make up a third of U-46's pool of 400 active substitute teachers. Some are uncomfortable returning in person with students 11 and under still not eligible for vaccination.

For others, there might be more steady work available outside of schools that offers benefits and is more predictable, Chan said.

To attract new substitutes, U-46 raised its pay rate by \$20 per day starting this month. The district now pays substitutes \$130 per day for general education classes and \$140 per day for dual language and special education classes.

"In addition, there are about a dozen days during the school year when we will pay subs an additional \$20 a day ... when we're offering professional development to our full-time educators," Chan said. "What is challenging for this year is that we consciously created additional (teaching) positions to maintain social distancing to ensure safety of students and staff. When needed, administrators from the district offices fill in as substitute teachers as well."

Finding substitutes for short-term and longer-term assignments has been difficult, said Erin Holmes, spokeswoman for Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211.

"We recently surveyed substitutes who previously had worked for us, and fewer than half indicated they wanted to continue," she said. "The pandemic was largely cited as the reason to not return, with concerns about their health and their family's health being key factors in the decision."

## The hard-to-fill roles



Finding substitute teachers for long-term assignments, like Maria Morales at Huff Elementary School in Elgin, has been difficult for suburban school districts. - Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

District 211 is struggling to find teachers for specialized positions, including English as a Second Language, special education, applied technology and family and consumer sciences. It also is seeing a drop in applicants for roles such as social workers and school psychologists, who are critical for addressing students' social and emotional health needs after months of pandemic isolation from peers.

In Huntley Community School District 158, the pool of applicants for certain teaching positions has been decreasing over the last five years.

"We are experiencing a need for bilingual teachers, school psychologists, special education teachers across all grade levels, career and technical education teachers as well as math and science positions at the secondary level," district spokesman Alex LeMoine said. "We have also not been immune to the shortage of substitute teachers."

In response, District 158 increased pay for substitute teachers this school year and held its first virtual job fair this fall to recruit candidates.

"Several retired teachers are in substitute positions," LeMoine said. "Our team of administrators and staff have also been invaluable in providing necessary coverage to ensure we are able to serve our students in all the necessary ways. We are continuing to explore new ways to recruit and retain quality candidates."

The problem is most suburban districts are in the same boat.

"It has been extremely difficult to find substitute teachers this year," said Carol Smith, spokeswoman for St. Charles Unit District 303 which is facing teacher shortages at all grade levels. "Districts around the area are drawing from the same pool of substitutes. If there are no substitutes available, teachers often fill in during their planning periods, which is not optimal."

Paying a teacher to substitute teach during a planning period costs more than hiring an outside person to stand in for that classroom. Teachers also lose the time they are allotted to plan for their own classes.

The financial impact of the teacher/substitute shortage has been difficult to quantify, said Ross Vittore, assistant superintendent of human resources for Elk Grove Elementary District 59.

"There is a great deal of time and resources needed to support keeping school safely functioning during a pandemic," Vittore said. "This can delay other planned objectives," such as professional development.

## Some options



Elgin Area School District U-46 boosted pay for substitute teachers like Maria Morales at Huff Elementary School in Elgin. - Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

State Superintendent of Education Carmel Ayala offered districts experiencing staffing challenges some ways to sustain in-person instruction.

"School districts may use technology to broadcast the instruction of one in-person teacher to other classrooms in the school that are supervised by parents, volunteers, or paraprofessionals," Ayala wrote in a message to school leaders.

Unlicensed employees or volunteers must be supervised by licensed personnel physically present in the building. Districts can use federal pandemic relief funding to pay for parent mentors and tutors, hire additional staff, and offer stipends and retention bonuses to current teachers, she wrote.

School districts can use [ISBE's Teacher Assignability Tool](#) to find current teachers who may be qualified to fill a vacancy through short-term approvals or previous qualifications.

Recent state law changes also allow new candidates to teach while fulfilling requirements for full licensure to reduce the teacher shortage.

District 211's Holmes suggested the state could offer alternative pathways or embedded work experiences for people to become teachers, allowing them to switch careers and enter education from other jobs.

**---Elgin Courier-News---10/17/2021**

**All U-46 employees other than 3 part-timers complying with mandate requiring COVID-19 vaccinations or testing**

**By Mike Danahey**



All full-time U-46 employees -- from Superintendent Tony Sanders on down -- have been vaccinated for COVID-19 or are being tested weekly, according to district documents. (Stacey Wescott / Chicago Tribune)

All 4,533 full-time employees of School District U-46 are in compliance with the state mandate requiring staff members be vaccinated or tested weekly for COVID-19 or be banned from district facilities, documents said.

There are, however, three part-time employees have refused to comply — two of whom are noon hour supervisors and a third who is a paraeducator, according to information obtained by The Courier-News via a Freedom of Information Act request. The district has 2,187 part-time employees.

No information was provided as to whether the employees were jeopardizing their jobs or facing any other type of punitive action. The district would only say that anyone not in compliance is “not allowed to enter any district buildings or sites.”

Also in compliance with the mandate are all people associated with outside organizations who work inside school buildings, such as employees of the Boys & Girls Club of Elgin and the Elgin Police Department, documents said. That accounts for about 212 people who have access to district facilities.

No volunteers who assist with in-school programming, coaching or other extra-curricular activities have refused to comply.

Superintendent Tony Sanders told the School Board at its Sept. 27 meeting that 99% were in compliance as of the first day.

**---Elgin Courier-News---10/17/2021**

**‘He’s really good’: Jordan Jones leads offense that piles up 423 yards and 6 TDs as South Elgin clinches third straight conference title**

**By Paul Johnson, Aurora Beacon-News**

South Elgin senior Jordan Jones has been playing quarterback in place of the injured Jacob Sullivan for only five weeks, but he has enjoyed being the maestro for coach Dragan Teonic’s offense.

Jones didn't even complete a pass Friday night in a 41-0 Upstate Eight Conference victory at rival Bartlett, but he orchestrated a robust offense that ran for 423 yards and six touchdowns. The 6-foot, 170-pound Jones accounted for 97 yards and two TDs.

"It's kind of fun playing around with the reads," Jones said. "At one point, we were just isolating one person and I was giving it or faking like I had it.

"They couldn't guess, and every time they guessed wrong, we ran it down their throat."

South Elgin's Anthony Marshall, right, heads in for a touchdown while being chased by Bartlett's Koleman Salyer (7) during an Upstate Eight Conference game at Bartlett on Friday, Oct. 15, 2021. (Michael Schmidt / The Beacon-News)

Playing in sloppy, muddy conditions, the Storm (8-0, 7-0) tried to pass three times early, dropping two.

Teonic decided to go exclusively on the ground from there. South Elgin ran the ball 56 times.

"We could have thrown the ball more," Teonic said. "But with these muddy conditions and the ability to completely control the line of scrimmage, there was no sense in throwing the ball."

Teonic also has all the confidence in the world with Jones running the show.

"He has been dealing with a little bit of an injury, so we're protecting him," Teonic said of Sullivan. "Trying to get him right for the playoffs and just playing Jordan because Jordan is really good.

"He's really good, so it's not like we miss much."

Anthony Marshall got things started for the Storm. He had a 22-yard burst to set up a 1-yard TD run. Jones added a 1-yard TD in the first quarter for a 14-0 lead. Marshall punched in another one, this time a 2-yard TD, in the second quarter.

After pounding the interior of the line, South Elgin uncorked a big play to cap the first half. Jones handed the ball on a reverse to his brother Jalen, who ran 76 yards for the TD to give the Storm a 26-0 halftime lead.





South Elgin's Jalen Jones (23) gets hoisted up by teammate Joey Viverito after finishing off a long touchdown run during an Upstate Eight Conference game at Bartlett on Friday, Oct. 15, 2021. (Michael Schmidt / The Beacon-News)

“We saw them flowing heavy to the run fake and we set up Jalen on the reverse,” Jones said. “They weren’t ready for it and he just took it.”

Jordan Jones added a 14-yard TD run in the third quarter and Spencer Menchaca closed out the scoring with a 3-yard TD run.

Marshall led the Storm with 113 yards on 23 carries. Mason Montgomery ran for 95 yards on 11 carries, all coming in the first half.

As good as the offense looked for South Elgin, the defense also was dominant, limiting limited Bartlett (4-4, 4-4) to 65 yards while forcing four turnovers.

For the season, the Storm has only allowed three offensive TDs while scoring an average of 45 points.



Bartlett's Malachi Montijo, left, gets taken down by South Elgin's Salvi Macaluso during an Upstate Eight Conference game at Bartlett on Friday, Oct. 15, 2021. (Michael Schmidt / The Beacon-News)

Teonic credited first-year defensive coordinator Steve Szpejnowski for the solid showing.

“They’ve been great all year,” Teonic said. “To be eight games in and only give up three touchdowns is unbelievably good. We’ve been good on defense for four years now. This is another level.”

The Storm also wrapped up at least a share of their third straight conference title for the first time in program history.

“It shows how much we’ve come up,” Jordan Jones said. “Our senior class is Teonic’s first freshman class, so it shows our progression with Teonic’s offense and how he likes to run things. It shows our progression from 2018 to now.”

**---Daily Herald---10/16/2021**

## **Larkin rallies in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter to stun Elgin, become playoff eligible**

**By Allen Oshinski, Daily Herald Correspondent**



**Larkin's** Timothy L Scott III (3) makes a catch and finds his way into the end zone for a touchdown under pressure from **Elgin's** Adyn Avina (22) during Friday's football game at Memorial Field in Elgin. *Paul Valade | Staff Photographer*

The Town Jug is going to the west side of Elgin.

**Larkin** scored a touchdown and go-ahead 2-point conversion with 39 seconds left Friday to stun **Elgin**, 30-28, and take home the trophy.

As if that wasn't enough, the Royals are playoff eligible at 5-3.

The Royals roared back from a 14-point fourth-quarter deficit to secure the win.

Elgin controlled the game, leading 28-14 with 7 1/2 minutes left after Clem McCullough's 75-yard touchdown run. But Larkin answered with a 50-yard drive capped by Dontrell Maxie's 3-yard touchdown run and 2-point conversion.

On the next series, Erick Myrick picked off McCullough's pass near midfield and returned it to the Maroons' 18. Six plays later, Maxie rolled around left end and bulled his way into the end zone. He then hit Myrick for the 2-point conversion to put the Royals ahead.

Timothy Scott's interception on the next play clinched it for Larkin.

Maxie ran for 89 yards and 3 touchdowns, and threw for 138 yards and another score.

For most of the game it was the Clem McCullough show. Elgin's quarterback ran for the long touchdown, threw two TD passes to Matthew Lawson, and picked off 3 passes on defense.

"It's a lot to process," said Myrick. "First it's the Jug, but then we just clinched going to the playoffs and that's lovely. We've been through a lot from last year to this year. We stepped it up. We made sure we came through and did what we had to do and got the work done."

The win felt like redemption of sorts for Maxie.

"Two years in a row we had lost to them and it was real hard for me," Maxie said. "It was two close games, and I had something to do with it both times. I love to see all the fans and we've got a chance to take Larkin back to the playoffs like they deserve."

Larkin never led until the final minute. Maxie's first scoring run tied it at 14, but Lawson's second touchdown catch and McCullough's long run put the Maroons up two scores in the Upstate Eight contest at Memorial Field.

"We were kind of on a Larkin timetable as opposed to a Coach Dietz and 5 o'clock kickoff timetable," said Larkin coach Grant Dietz. "It took us a little bit to get going and once we did I gave my guys chances to make plays. Dontrell is one of the best players in this conference and when the game is on the line, I don't want anybody else taking the ball except him, maybe five (Jamarion Stubbs) but I need to get my playmakers involved when the game is on the line because I trust them."

The Royals opted to go for 2-point conversions after losing their holder early in the game.

McCullough had to leave for a couple of plays after taking hard hits, and James Syrek stepped in and threw a scoring pass to Tayvion Mitchell. That pass put Elgin ahead 14-6 midway through the third quarter.

**---Daily Herald---10/16/2021**

## **S. Elgin shuts out Bartlett**

**By Jared Birchfield, Daily Herald Correspondent**

**South Elgin** took another step closer to a perfect regular season record and the Upstate Eight Conference title with a 41-0 win over **Bartlett** Friday.

The Storm's record is now 8-0 overall and 7-0 in the league. South Elgin wraps up conference play next Friday at West Chicago.

Bartlett drops to 4-4 both overall and in the Upstate Eight. The Hawks' record makes their season finale next week against East Aurora a must-win situation to become playoff eligible.

The muddy field conditions in Bartlett made any steps a challenge. However, the Storm stuck to their ground game. Quarterback Jordan Jones attempted only two passes early in the game. Neither one was completed.

"We could have thrown more tonight but with these muddy conditions and the ability to control the line of scrimmage there was no sense in throwing the football at all," said South Elgin coach Dragan Teonic.

South Elgin score on four of its six first half possession.

The Storm took a 7-0 lead with 7:36 left in the first half on a 2-yard run by Anthony Marshall. Jones made a 14-0 game on the team's next possession scoring on a 1-yard plunge.

Marshall's second TD, another 2-yard run at the 6:14 mark of the second quarter, made it a 20-0.

South Elgin's last score of the half was set up by Joshua Camcho's fumble recovery on the Storm's 13-yard line. On the third play from scrimmage, Jalen Jones took a handoff, veered to the left side line and sprinted 76 yards for a touchdown. The Storm led 26-0 at halftime.

Bartlett could not get its offense going in the first half. Five of its first half drives were three-and-outs. The Hawks' second possession of the game was its most promising drive. Bartlett drove down to the Storm's 27-yard line. The drive ended when Kai Paz intercepted a Jacob Searce pass.

South Elgin widened its lead to 34-0 on Jordan Jones' second TD, a 14-yard run with 7:53 left in the third quarter.

The Storm thought they had scored when Rocco Cataldo recovered a fumble and scampered 3 yards into the end zone late in the third quarter. However, a whistle blew and no one in a striped shirt indicated a touchdown. After a conference, the officials declared it was an inadvertent whistle and allowed South Elgin to replay the down. This time, Spence Menchaca rushed the three yards for the score.

Bartlett was unable to get its offense going in the second half against South Elgin defense, which has only given up four touchdowns all season.