

Press Clippings - 3/15/2023

– Chicago Tribune –

Elgin News Digest: U-46 holding district job fairs Friday and Saturday

March 14, 2023

By Mike Danahey - The Courier-News

U-46 holding district job fairs Friday and Saturday

School District U-46 is holding job fairs to fill district jobs from 2 to 6 p.m. Friday, March 17, and 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 18, at the U-46 Welcome Center, 1019 E. Chicago St., Elgin.

Among the job openings are qualified teacher, social worker, paraprofessional, food service technician and bus driver positions, a district news release said. Same-day interviews will be available.

For more information, go to info.u-46.org/JobFair or email humanresources@u-46.org. To apply for a job with the district, go to www.u-46.org/careers.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

– Daily Herald –

U-46 superintendent search to focus on in-house candidates

March 14, 2023

By Alicia Fabbre

Elgin Area School District U-46 school board members hope to find their next superintendent among the district's own ranks.

Tony Sanders, who led the district since 2014, resigned as superintendent in February after being named the state's superintendent of education. U-46's deputy superintendent for instruction, Suzanne Johnson, was named interim superintendent in February.

Schaumburg-based Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates will help the district conduct an internal search to identify the next superintendent, Sue Kerr, U-46 school board president, said Monday.

"There are several reasons we decided to review only internal candidates," Kerr said during Monday's school board meeting, adding that the district had several candidates with superintendent endorsements who could fill the job. "We also believe that utilizing a "grow your own" strategy -- a strategy the district has developed with other staffing positions -- will result in a more efficient and successful transition for the district as a whole."

She noted an internal candidate would already be well versed on various district initiatives such as building improvements or the district's plan to transition to a full middle school model.

Kerr said the board hopes to conclude the internal search by the end of May. If an internal candidate is not identified, the board would then move to expand the search, Kerr said.

Board members also agreed in February to let Johnson know of their intentions to name a permanent superintendent by June 1.

Kerr said updates on the search will be provided during regularly scheduled board meetings and on the district's website. She anticipates the search process will include community surveys, forums and focus groups with staff, students, parents and

community members. Additional details about the search process will be discussed at the school board's March 20 meeting.

– Chicago Tribune / Courier News – U-46 to limit school superintendent search to internal candidates, hires firm to help conduct process

March 14, 2023

By Mike Danahey



An executive search firm has been hired to help the District U-46 School Board review internal candidates for the superintendent's position. (Karen Sorensen / The Courier-News)

The search for **School District U-46's new superintendent** will be conducted among internal candidates only in a process to be led by executive search firm Hazard, Young, Attea Associates, School Board President Sue Kerr said.

“There are several reasons we decided to review only internal candidates. We are fortunate to have an outstanding group of administrators with superintendent endorsements who have the ability to transition into this position,” **Kerr** said, reading from a prepared statement at Monday night’s board meeting.

“We also believe that utilizing a grow-your-own strategy, a strategy the district has developed with other staffing positions, will result in a more efficient and successful transition for the district as a whole.”

Kerr also noted several important initiatives are underway in **U-46**, including **U-46 Rising**, the introduction of a grade 6 through 8 middle school model and infrastructure projects. An internal candidate would already be familiar with these efforts and able to offer more effective oversight from the start, she said.

In the past few months, the board has reviewed search firm presentations done in other districts and liked Hazard, Young, Attea’s survey methods and reporting products, she said.

“They also recently worked with another local district on an internal superintendent search,” she said.

The Schaumburg-based firm will assist with processing applications and conducting community surveys, forums and focus groups.

“The board wants community input on what people would like to see in a new superintendent and what they believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the district,” **Kerr** said.

The firm will present its search plan at the March 20 board meeting.

“We hope to conclude this process by the end of May, either by selecting an internal candidate or deciding to expand to a larger search,” **Kerr** said.

Kerr did not say how much the district is paying the firm for its work or if **interim Superintendent Suzanne Johnson** has applied for the job.

Johnson, deputy superintendent of instruction, was appointed to the interim job last month after **Tony Sanders** resigned to become Illinois state superintendent of schools.

She is a second generation graduate of **Elgin High School**, a second generation **U-46 educator** and a lifelong **U-46 resident and parent** who has spent her entire career working for **U-46**.

Sanders' base salary for the 2022-23 school year was more than \$269,000. The starting salary for the new superintendent has not been announced.

For updates and more information on the search process, go to u-46.org/superintendentsearch.

Mike Danahey is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

– Daily Herald –

Susan E. Kerr: 2023 candidate for Elgin Area School District U-46 board

March 15, 2023



Susan Kerr

Bio

Town: Bartlett

Age on Election Day: 66

Occupation: Retired

Employer: Retired

Previous offices held: U-46 school board (2015-present)

Q&A

Q: Why are you running for this office, whether for reelection or election the first time?
Is there a particular issue that motivates you?

A: I am running for my third term because the district has major initiatives that I would like to see completed.

These include 1.) The transition to a grade 6-8 middle school and the expansion of preschool. This will involve curricular revisions, support for teachers and students, and boundary changes. 2.) The expansion of U-46 rising, an initiative which is bringing rigor, collaboration, and critical thinking into the classroom. I have been impressed not only by the presentations the board has received on this subject, but also by the student engagement and enthusiasm I have seen on my visits to classrooms. 3.) The introduction of an International Baccalaureate (IB) program to the academy at Elgin High School 4.) Multiple building projects if the referendum passes.

Q: What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

A: Curriculum development in U-46 is a detailed process which has several stages before a curriculum and/or its accompanying resources come before the school board.

It begins with a "call to committee" which gathers together teachers and administrators to outline the curriculum, identify resources and professional development, and pilot the program.

The curriculum is vetted by the Instructional Cabinet and Instructional Council before it comes before the school board. It is the role of the school board to ask questions, look at the financial implications, and vote.

It is also the role of the board to listen to concerns from parents about the curriculum and bring those to the attention of the administration.

Q: Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

A: There are no curriculum issues within the district that I am concerned about, but I believe the board and administration must closely monitor legislation in Springfield.

Some of the legislation includes mandates that, while well-intentioned, add additional subjects to the school day or may not allow much local flexibility.

The board and administration must work with local legislators, the Illinois Association of School Boards, and the Illinois State Board of Education to ensure our views are heard.

Q: How do you view your role in confronting policy or curriculum controversies: provide leadership even if unpopular, give a voice to constituents -- even ones with whom you disagree, or defer to state authorities?

A: As a leader I try to listen to all sides of an issue and to understand the concerns that are being voiced. I try to weigh all the facts and do what is best for the children of the district.

Curriculum controversies are difficult, but U-46 gives parents the option to request an alternative assignment or resource for their child.

Q: Concerns are growing regarding a new resurgence of the pandemic. If another massive outbreak of infectious disease occurs, what have we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic that will guide your decision making?

A: If there is another massive outbreak of an infectious disease, I would hope that we would not have to close schools again. My decisions, however, will be guided by experts in the field of public health, including our local health departments and Illinois Department of Public Health.

Q: Describe your experience working in a group setting to determine policy. What is your style in such a setting to reach agreement and manage school district policy? Explain how you think that will be effective in producing effective actions and decisions of your school board.

A: In the past eight years I have worked collaboratively with my fellow board members. My style is to listen to other points of view and to work toward reaching a consensus. We have done this when reviewing our board policies and negotiating the superintendent's contract. As board president I am frequently in contact with other board members to get their views on various issues.

Q: What makes you the best candidate for the job?

A: I care about students and their education. I want U-46 to be an outstanding district with great opportunities. I want our staff to love working in this district. I want our communities to be proud of us. I am willing to work hard to make that happen.

Q: What's one good idea you have to better your district that no one is talking about yet?

A: I would love to see one or more magnet elementary schools in our district.

**– Daily Herald –
Kathleen "Kate" Thommes: 2023 candidate for
Elgin Area School District U-46 board**

March 15, 2023



Kathleen "Kate" Thommes

Bio

Town: Elgin

Age on Election Day: 48

Occupation: Educator

Employer: No answer given

Previous offices held: **Elgin School District U-46** board since 2019

Q&A

Q: Why are you running for this office, whether for reelection or election the first time?

Is there a particular issue that motivates you?

A: Since April of 2019, I have enjoyed my time on the U-46 board of education and would like to continue to serve our students, families, and schools. I have a unique perspective

as an educator, parent, and community member that allows me to consider all sides of an issue.

My own children have participated in special education, Dual Language, Academies, the arts, and athletic teams. I am a former U-46 educator and a present member of a labor union. My family has called U-46 and Elgin home for over 20 years.

I am motivated by our community and schools. Our programs, classes, and teachers prepare our students for the greater world.

On the board, we have started good work with the Unite U-46 initiatives and our diversity and inclusion efforts. We have a balanced budget. We have well thought out plans to expand our schools. We have brought in new curriculum, updated our board policies, and I would like the ability to continue with those, and more.

Q: What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

A: The teachers and staff in U-46 are well qualified to determine the best choices for our students. They have an extensive process with committees made up of multiple members from multiple schools and departments asking for input from all relevant sources.

Each piece of curriculum brought to the board has been well reviewed and well vetted, narrowed down from multiple choices.

As a board member, I have been given the opportunity to review multiple pieces of curriculum and as an educator, I feel well qualified to do so.

Our role is to review the curriculum with an eye to the district's mission and goals as well as the students and their needs. Our role is not to second guess or micromanage the experts in student learning and growth.

Our role is to support the teachers and staff with growing and developing the programs and curriculum that make our students successful during and after their time in U-46.

Q: Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

A: While the board of education reviews and approves all curriculum put forth by teachers and staff, they should not be micromanaging the curriculum choices made by teachers and staff in U-46.

The issues arise when a board of education oversteps that role and prevents teachers from doing what they do best.

We do have an important role in continuing the district's mission of educating all students. All Means All.

Curriculum should reflect the students who attend our schools. It should reflect the 21st century. It should reflect the diversity, inclusion, and equity the board of education has as district goals.

The board of education is responsible for the greater picture, not the bits and pieces.

The teachers in U-46 do an excellent job of choosing and implementing an excellent curriculum. I look forward to supporting them as they continue to do so.

Q: How do you view your role in confronting policy or curriculum controversies: provide leadership even if unpopular, give a voice to constituents -- even ones with whom you disagree, or defer to state authorities?

A: The primary role of a board of education is guiding and implementing policy. Our present U-46 board does this well.

We spent a significant portion of our meetings in spring 2022 updating board policy. I am very proud of my role in those updates.

Our community members had, and continue to have, many ways to reach out to board members, and we appreciate it when they do.

Emails, phone calls, social media outreach, even conversations in grocery stores and high school gyms help make it clearer and avoid confrontations and controversy. Even when I disagree with the input, I always appreciate a different perspective from different experiences and beliefs.

Good leaders keep their eye on the end goal: all students getting a quality education that prepares them for a world we are entering. Good leaders continue to do what is best for students, teachers, and our schools by listening to all stakeholders and making the best choices available to them.

Q: Concerns are growing regarding a new resurgence of the pandemic. If another massive outbreak of infectious disease occurs, what have we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic that will guide your decision making?

A: COVID taught us all so much about so many things. We learned about how fragile life is. We learned that our entire world can change in the space of just a couple weeks. It taught us that students can be resilient and need additional help and support. It taught us that teachers can be resilient and need additional help and support.

We learned that there are no perfect decisions. We learned that we can overcome a lot when we work together. As a present board member, we will continue to follow our public health departments' guidance. Since U-46 covers three counties and the state of Illinois, we have a lot of pieces to manage.

If we were to have another pandemic, I know that we need to continue listening to all stakeholders. We need to be agile and willing to adapt and change with a moment's notice. Above all though, doing the best we can for all students, rather than just one group's needs or another's louder shouts needs to be the goal.

Q: Describe your experience working in a group setting to determine policy. What is your style in such a setting to reach agreement and manage school district policy? Explain

how you think that will be effective in producing effective actions and decisions of your school board.

A: I have worked for the last 4 years on the U-46 board of education and the last 20-plus years in education working to create and implement policy and curriculum.

I have found that the best way to move forward is to listen to, and consider, all sides to each concern.

All stakeholders deserve a voice when making decisions affecting U-46. I work to educate myself about all of the issues in every decision. I rely on the knowledge and skills of administration and my fellow board members. I willingly admit that I don't know it all but am willing to learn all that I can.

As a board of education member, I have proven that I am ready, willing, able to determine policy and to make the tough decisions. As a longtime educator, I have the skills and knowledge to be effective in making decisions regarding curriculum and policy in U-46.

Q: What makes you the best candidate for the job?

A: I am an excellent choice to maintain my seat on the U-46 board of education because I have proven that I am an effective leader who listens to and supports the students, families, and teachers of U-46.

I plan on continuing to do so. My years of experience as an educator and parent have prepared me to do the work needed to keep U-46 successful.

My family is invested in U-46. One of my children is finding great success in college because U-46 prepared her well. The other two are continuing to get ready for the world because of U-46. My family is invested in our communities and what they offer. I would be honored if my community elected me to serve another 4 years.

Q: What's one good idea you have to better your district that no one is talking about yet?

A: U-46 has grown and changed so much in the 20-plus years I have been involved. We have built new buildings, diversified staff and curriculum, and provided a quality education for thousands upon thousands of students.

One thing U-46 has done well is to generate ideas for new programs and classes. Our ideas grow and develop from the community we have created; the people who make U-46 better. Rather than one person determining the ideas and directions, we do better when we work together and grow ideas as a unit.

All means all, again. We are truly better together. As a board member, I will continue to set policy and strategic goals to provide students, staff, and the community the ability and space to do what they do best, make U-46 even better via ideas.

– Daily Herald – Heather LH Manzella: 2023 candidate for Elgin Area School District U-46 board



Heather LH Manzella

Bio

Town: Elgin

Age on Election Day: 52

Occupation: Substitute teacher

Employer: Schaumburg School District 54

Previous offices held: None

Q&A

Q: Why are you running for this office, whether for reelection or election the first time?
Is there a particular issue that motivates you?

A: I'm running because our students are failing, our tax dollars are not being spent efficiently, and I want to ensure that curriculum is appropriate and focus on improving academic and life skills.

Q: What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

A: The school board is the final decision on approving which curriculum is purchased by the district.

Q: Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

A: Yes. According to the Illinois State Board of Education's most recent report card, 53 of the 57 schools in **U-46** are failing to educate students to proficiency levels in English, math, and science.

Q: How do you view your role in confronting policy or curriculum controversies: provide leadership even if unpopular, give a voice to constituents -- even ones with whom you disagree, or defer to state authorities?

A: My role is to actively listen to input from parents, teachers, administration, and the community and bring those concerns and ideas to discussion with other Board members. I believe in open communication and exchange of ideas -- even when opinions are drastically different.

Q: Concerns are growing regarding a new resurgence of the pandemic. If another massive outbreak of infectious disease occurs, what have we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic that will guide your decision making?

A: We have learned that masks do little, if anything, to lessen the spread of COVID; lockdowns are detrimental to our students socially and academically; and that vaccines without proven long term efficacy have the potential for devastating adverse reactions. If there are new factors which are widely researched and proven by a variety of scientists and epidemiologists, I am willing to take those into consideration.

Q: Describe your experience working in a group setting to determine policy. What is your style in such a setting to reach agreement and manage school district policy? Explain how you think that will be effective in producing effective actions and decisions of your school board.

A: I worked with a committee on PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) to determine how best to introduce and implement the system within our school. I actively listen, offer suggestions, and work with others to reach agreement.

Q: What makes you the best candidate for the job?

A: I'm passionate about student success.

Q: What's one good idea you have to better your district that no one is talking about yet?

A: Smaller class sizes that focus on progression of subject matter based on individual mastery.

– Daily Herald –

Chanda Schwartz: 2023 candidate for Elgin Area School District U-46 board

March 15, 2023



Chanda Schwartz

Bio

Town: Bartlett

Age on Election Day: 46

Occupation: Admissions officer

Employer: Northwestern University

Previous offices held: U-46 Community Advisory Council (CAC) chair, Unite U-46 Community co-chair, Alignment Collaborative for Education (ACE) operating board member, U-46 CAC vice chair, U-46 CAC Specialized Student Services Committee co-chair, DuPage Area Moms board of directors vice president, Mothers & More DuPage Chapter co-chair, and Mothers & More DuPage Chapter secretary

Q&A

Q: Why are you running for this office, whether for reelection or election the first time?

Is there a particular issue that motivates you?

A: I am running for school board because I am passionate about serving and giving back to our community. I started serving in the district to stay informed and contribute to moving the district forward.

As a parent with two students who attend U-46 schools, I have learned the ins and outs of navigating the district and advocating for a student with special needs. I have enjoyed getting to know members of our I want to bring my experience and service in the district to the school board. I value education and I care about supporting the needs of all students. I believe in academic success for all and that when we support our staff, we support our students.

Q: What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

A: The Curriculum & Instruction department designs curriculum. We also have the U-46 Instructional Council, an advisory group who makes recommendations to the superintendent and board of education related to curriculum and other areas.

The school board is guided by board policy in adopting and monitoring curriculum. It is the superintendent of the district who recommends a comprehensive curriculum that is aligned with specific criteria.

The school board's role is to adopt a curriculum, upon recommendation of the superintendent, that satisfies the specified criteria per board policy.

community, serving alongside parents, community members, and staff.

Current curriculum is monitored, reviewed, and reported to the school board through a curriculum review program developed by the superintendent.

Q: Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

A: With the advancements of artificial intelligence and the buzz around ChatGPT, there is a shift that will need to happen in our educational system in the near future.

Figuring out what that shift will look like and how to adapt is important. With this technology, the answers to most traditional homework questions are just a few keyboard clicks away.

It will be important to understand how this technology may be leveraged as a potential tool in teaching curriculum and doing so without compromising the originality of student assignments.

Furthermore, we can expand how we teach about the advancements of technology and how students can leverage them.

Q: How do you view your role in confronting policy or curriculum controversies: provide leadership even if unpopular, give a voice to constituents -- even ones with whom you disagree, or defer to state authorities?

A: When confronting policy or curriculum controversies, balance is key. I am flexible, thoughtful, and objective in decision making. There should always be space to give a voice to constituents, even ones with whom I disagree. It is important to understand concerns as these are necessary conversations to move forward in governance and as a community.

There will be times when leadership, even if unpopular, is needed and there will be times when we will have to address issues at the state level. If there are mandates at the state level, communication on how they may affect our district is important.

Q: Concerns are growing regarding a new resurgence of the pandemic. If another massive outbreak of infectious disease occurs, what have we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic that will guide your decision making?

A: During the pandemic, we learned how to adapt to the constantly changing guidelines and mandates. Our district worked with three county health departments, adhered to

state and federal guidelines/mandates to mitigate risk, and continued to educate our students.

They provided equitable access to technology, internet, and food.

Looking back on how we adapted, understanding what worked well, and recognizing areas for improvement will guide my decision-making in how we proceed should another outbreak of infectious disease occur.

We will need to work together to make the best decisions in order to continue educating our students, minimize learning loss, foster mental wellness for students and staff, and adapt as needed.

Q: Describe your experience working in a group setting to determine policy. What is your style in such a setting to reach agreement and manage school district policy? Explain how you think that will be effective in producing effective actions and decisions of your school board.

A: While serving on the executive committee of the **U-46 Community Advisory Council** (CAC), the committee has had to review our policies and amend bylaws.

During the pandemic, we had to modify our meeting model and consider policy changes. I have also served in other board roles in nonprofit organizations, helping to develop policies. My style is to listen to all views when working to reach an agreement and manage policy.

It is also important to regularly review policies for effectiveness and assess risks to understand how policies will impact our district, staff, and students.

As a school board member, I will be a voice for those who are not in the room and an advocate for the **U-46** community when policy decisions are being made. I will listen to understand while collaborating with fellow board members to determine policy and govern effectively.

Q: What makes you the best candidate for the job?

A: I have lived in the district for 21-plus years. I understand navigating the district as a parent and advocating for students with special needs.

I have served the district in various capacities through community involvement and leadership. I have worked to inform parents, be a voice, promote engagement, and support students and staff. I am committed to continuing this work. I am collaborative, thoughtful, and objective in decision-making.

I have professional experience in software engineering, project management, nonprofit administration, board governance, and university admissions.

I am passionate about serving our district and community to foster the conditions for student success. I believe that I will bring a balanced approach and broad perspective to the school board.

Q: What's one good idea you have to better your district that no one is talking about yet?

A: We lost significant face-to-face interaction through the pandemic. Mass communication through technology doesn't always reach the families whose students may have special education needs.

Reaching out to families who do not know about the specialized student services resources in our district and creating a partnership with families can help to broaden our reach.

This could be in the form of a family partner/liaison who is assigned a group of families in our district to reach out to them personally and ensure that they are aware of the services available to their students.

– Daily Herald –

Samreen Khan: 2023 candidate for Elgin Area School District U-46 board

March 15, 2023



Samreen Khan

Bio

Town: Bartlett

Age on Election Day: 44

Occupation: Government consultant

Employer: State of Illinois

Previous offices held: None

Q&A

Q: Why are you running for this office, whether for reelection or election the first time?

Is there a particular issue that motivates you?

A: Coming from a family who has valued public education, and a product of public education, I hold this human right our country provides to its highest value.

As the daughter of a professor of biology, who taught in public universities and colleges for over 45 years, I strongly value the opportunity of education for all. I decided to run for the **U-46 school board** after navigating district policies and programs for my child, who had received Early Intervention at home.

As a single-mother, I was thrilled to have access to the amazing Pre-K programs for my son at U-46.

As a board member, I will ensure that our teachers and staff are supported, while being held to the highest standards. I will make the success of our students my number one priority.

I will be an advocate for students and will work to guarantee that they graduate with the skills needed to be successful in life and contributing members of society.

Q: What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

A: The school board plays a crucial role in setting and monitoring the curriculum. The school board is responsible for setting education policy and guidelines subject to state and federal laws and regulations.

While ISBE's Standard and Instruction Department determines milestones for academic achievement, the Teaching and Learning Department at U-46 is charged with adopting state standards and developing curriculum presenting to the board for approval.

The board has the authority to approve or amend the curriculum that is based on best practices and research driven. To ensure the curriculum is meeting the needs of students and making progress toward academic goals, the board should evaluate progress from reviewing student test scores and other data to determine if the curriculum is meeting the standards.

This being said, it is critical to be inclusive of teacher's voices, experience in the classrooms, and ensuring they are involved in any curriculum development and approval.

Q: Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

A: Noting the transition back to classroom learning post-pandemic may have been challenging for students, it is important to find innovative ways to encourage that re-engagement.

The latest School Report Card shows a slight decrease in math and science achievement in the district pre pandemic vs post pandemic. I would like to learn how the board can support staff and teachers in the classrooms to address these overall achievement gaps.

Q: How do you view your role in confronting policy or curriculum controversies: provide leadership even if unpopular, give a voice to constituents -- even ones with whom you disagree, or defer to state authorities?

A: In confronting policy or curriculum controversies, it is pertinent to first follow a brief process of elimination to understand jurisdictional capacity. If the policy or curriculum does not lie under Illinois State Board of Education authority and is deferred to regional school boards to address, it is critical to listen to constituent comments while studying precedence in the matter.

The board is guided to provide leadership, ensuring student safety for any policy or curriculum controversy. It is critical for the board to uphold student success and education to provide a safe platform for constituents to raise questions and concerns.

Moreover, it is critical to build collaborative relationships and partnerships with families and community, business, nonprofit, higher-education, education support organizations, and governmental leaders, to influence and expand educational opportunities and experiences to meet the needs of students.

Q: Concerns are growing regarding a new resurgence of the pandemic. If another massive outbreak of infectious disease occurs, what have we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic that will guide your decision making?

A: We have learned to rely on the CDC and the Illinois Department of Public Health to help guide schools in the event of a public health disaster. If jurisdiction is granted to

regional school boards and municipalities to manage the situation, it is critical to form a collective decision to mitigate the spread and control future diseases based on best practices and public health guidelines.

Q: Describe your experience working in a group setting to determine policy. What is your style in such a setting to reach agreement and manage school district policy? Explain how you think that will be effective in producing effective actions and decisions of your school board.

A: I have 20 years of experience working in multiple group settings to create and implement policy. When I served as the governor's surrogate in Illinois, I collaborated with a variety of stakeholders including federal, state, and local elected officials, community leaders, and individual constituents.

When leading and coordinating discourse especially as it related to policy, I found it instrumental to remain neutral and provide a safe platform for all voices to be heard.

Encouraging continuous stakeholder engagement and community outreach will be a priority for me on the school board from coordinating focus groups, surveys, and in-person meetings. It has been my experience that the most effective policies are the ones in which the community experiences a direct beneficial impact from and has been a part of in developing.

As for elected officials it is imperative to maintain open lines of communication with the community in order to ensure the best policy decisions.

Q: What makes you the best candidate for the job?

A: My son attends U-46 schools and as a taxpayer in this district, I am greatly invested in serving on the board in order to preserve and improve the quality of education for our children.

Moreover, from my experience both as a government liaison and subsequently as a private consultant, I understand the importance of building relationships with private and public sector stakeholders. I also understand the importance of ensuring that policy recommendations are data driven and take into account stakeholder concerns.

I have extensive experience working with budgets and program management, and look forward to contributing to a collaborative environment that will yield greater academic excellence for all of our students. I believe the importance of creating collaborative relationships and partnerships to influence and expand educational opportunities and experiences to meet the needs of students in U-46.

Q: What's one good idea you have to better your district that no one is talking about yet?

A: I would like to study academic achievement and graduation rates from all income levels and schools across the district. It is my duty as a board member to ensure that every student is granted the same quality of education and resources across the district, and I will be an advocate for those students and teachers.

Findings should be data driven to understand which schools low-income communities are attending and examine: rate of graduation, test scores, attendance rate, and teacher to student ratio in classrooms comparing this data to schools across the district.

If a correlation is present between low-income population and not, I would like to understand what support and services the teachers and students need to experience a comprehensive academic experience. If data suggests there is no correlation of disparity in classrooms/education, it is the responsibility for board members to sit in classrooms to understand challenges in the classroom to support our teachers.

– Kane County Connects – High School Mock Trial Tournament Held in Kane County

March 15, 2023

By Kane County Connects Staff

On March 4, high schools from in and around the Kane County area converged at the Kane County Judicial Center for the annual High School Mock Trial Tournament. The tournament saw teams from 14 area schools compete and collaborate in 2 mock trials per team, with each trial presided over by a judge from the 16th Judicial Circuit.

The trials were evaluated by about 30 volunteers from the local legal community, including 12 attorneys representing the Kane County Public Defender's Office and the Kane County State's Attorney's Office. The teams competed for 1st through 3rd place team awards and individual awards for best lawyer and best witness. Chief Judge Clint Hull gave opening remarks for both the participants and the volunteer evaluators as well as presiding over mock trials.

He was joined in judging the event by Judge Reginald Campbell, Judge Bradley David, Judge William Engerman, Judge Keith Johnson, Judge Michael Noland, Judge Charles Petersen, and Judge Divya Sarang.

More than 150 participants from the area high schools listed below were hosted at the Kane County Judicial Center to compete in the event, with the team from Southland College Prep securing the overall title.

1. Southland College Prep
2. De La Salle Institute
3. South Elgin
4. Main South
5. Bartlett High
6. York High
7. Stevenson H.S.
8. Normal West

9. Barrington
10. CPSA
11. St. Charles North
12. Homewood-Flossmoor
13. Naperville North
14. Elgin H. S.

– Examiner of Bartlett –

(This article also ran in the Examiner of Streamwood/Examiner of South Elgin.)

Student musicians given recognition by U-46 board

March 15, 2023

By Seth Hancock

Musicians from **School District U-46 high schools** were recognized by the Board of Education at its meeting on Monday, March 6.

Recognized were 10 students who were named All-State Musicians by the Illinois Music Education Association (ILMEA). The students performed with other musicians across the state in January in Peoria for the ILMEA annual conference.

Also recognized were two students who were chosen to play in the pit orchestra for the All-State Production of “Shrek the Musical” at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, also in January.

“We are proud of the strength of our **U-46** music programs and the dedication of our music teachers to help our students be the best they can be. These accomplishments by our exceptional student musicians speak volumes of their commitment to excellence and pride in their musical growth,” said Jaimie Giraldo, coordinator of fine arts, for a **U-46** press release.

All-State Musicians from Bartlett were senior Eric Fox (honors chorus) and juniors Zoey Helle-Kuczynski (future music educators symposium) and Ethan Wankel (all-state chorus).

From South Elgin were seniors Alejandro Diaz (honors chorus), Haley Leuze (all-state chorus) and Taylor Picha (honors band).

From Elgin were seniors Madeline Center (honors chorus) and Stephanie Skrabacz (all-state band) as well as junior Diego Gomez (future music educators symposium), and from Larkin was senior Madelyn Dobbek (honors band).

The musicians chosen for the pit orchestra were Streamwood sophomore Sarah Ballenger and Bartlett junior Sarah Walser.

Additionally, the board recognized Hector Hernandez, Jr., a math teacher at Elgin's Larsen Middle School. He was honored, the district press release stated, "for being selected to head the crew of the All-State Production. Hernandez co-leads the Larsen drama club and is the executive director for the 2024 Illinois High School Theatre Festival."

– Examiner of Bartlett –

(This article also ran in the Examiner of South Elgin/Examiner of Streamwood.)

U-46 Board approves variety of expenses, IGA

March 15, 2023

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 unanimously approved \$944,998 in expenditure items, an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with Hanover Township and school fees for the 2023-2024 school year at its Monday, Feb. 27 meeting.

The largest item is \$640,000 (operations and maintenance fund) with International Contractors for an owner's representative, or construction manager, for the upcoming work to convert **Bartlett's Hawk Hollow** from an elementary to a middle school.

The proposal states that the "size and scope" of the project is the rationale for the need for an owner's representative.

With Northwestern University Center for Talent Development, approved was \$108,600 (federal funds) for "summer enrichment programming" for "students in gifted programming," the proposal stated.

The district will spend \$94,160 (operations and maintenance fund) with Sound Productions to purchase auditorium equipment for its high schools, \$58,200 (federal grant funds) with Virtuoso Education Consulting for a so-called "disproportionality" consultant and \$44,038 (operations and maintenance fund) with Russo Power Equipment for the purchase of snow removal equipment.

The IGA will allow Hanover Township use of facilities for programs, such as open gym, at five elementary schools: **Bartlett, Hanover Countryside, Ontarioville, Sunnydale and Timber Trails**.

The school fees for the upcoming school year will be waived for the third straight year due to the windfall of excess federal funds from COVID bailouts over the last three years. This is expected to be the final year of the fee waiver, said **Dale Burnidge, director of financial operations**.

Optional fees will remain the same including \$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), parking permit (\$100), athletic participation fee per sport (\$150), athletic fee for

football/lacrosse (\$200) 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.

Also approved by a 7-0 vote was \$6.8 million in itemized bills.