



# SWAP

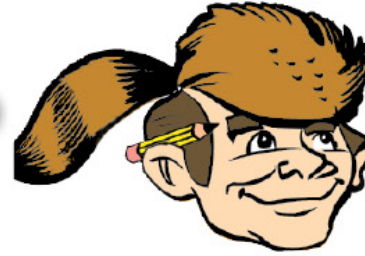
New land at Northwood  
SEE PAGE 3

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# THE ELYRIA SCHOOLS Pioneer Press



VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

Fall 2020

WWW.ELYRIASCHOOLS.ORG

## Open, honest communication is key

**Ann Schloss**  
Superintendent

We're back — officially off and running for the 2020-21 school year.

Let me begin with a simple but sincere thank you. We're all traveling uncharted waters but in keeping our sights set on what's best for our students and community, and in working with exceptional, dedicated partners we've accomplished much in the days, weeks and months leading to our return to school.

Since last winter it's been a whirlwind, to say the least, but we're beyond delighted to welcome students back into their neighborhood schools.

Many of these schools are all-new buildings, as you know, which adds an extra layer of excitement to the start of the year.

There's also the ongoing challenges we face — as a school district and as a community — with COVID-19.

As a district, we've taken many steps to prepare for the physical return of staff and students.

Safety has, of course, been our



ANN SCHLOSS

leading priority through it all.

Even before the Ohio-ordered closure of schools last March, we worked hand-in-hand with Lorain County Public Health and the Lorain County Educational Service Center to navigate the twists and turns of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a county team of school superintendents and under the guidance of Health Commissioner Dave Covell, we developed a guide to reopening schools that not only accounted for risk levels but put strategies in place to lessen those risks in school settings.

Some of the direct results included new board policies that now require face coverings be worn while on school grounds and while on buses. It also involves policies that follow

See **SCHLOSS, 2**



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS



New Northwood Campus features a stunning “gathering stair” inside the main entrance of the middle school wing. The stairs offer theater-style seating for students with built-in device connectivity.



## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES FOR ELYRIA SCHOOLS

- Preschool morning: 9:10 a.m. to 11:40 a.m.
- Preschool afternoon: 12:40 p.m. to 3:10 p.m. (EECV and Hamilton)
- Elementary: 9:10 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.
- Middle School: 7:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.
- High School: 9 a.m. to 1:10 p.m.

## SCHLOSS

From 1

social distancing guidelines in classrooms and common areas of schools, as well as strategies to limit the movement of students each day within the school buildings.

New cleaning protocols were established in Elyria schools that align with recommendations by the Ohio Department of Health.

As we proceed with all these precautionary measures to limit the spread of viruses in our schools, we must ultimately acknowledge that the possibility of transmission remains, despite our best efforts.

When a confirmed case of COVID-19 presents in the school setting, the district will work directly with the Lorain County Public Health system in notifying parents and staff.

Openness and good communication have been our guiding principles through this challenging environment.

We are working diligently each day to keep parents, staff, students and community members informed of the many happenings within Elyria Schools. If you have any questions or ideas about the recent school openings or other events, we welcome your inquiries and comments at [ask@elyria-schools.org](mailto:ask@elyria-schools.org).

*Ann Schloss is superintendent of Elyria Schools.*

# Living in a virtual world

**Amy Higgins**  
Communications director

Connectivity, that hallmark of modern education, has taken center stage in the 2020-21 school year.

It's true all across the nation — and it's true in Elyria Schools, too.

About one third of Elyria Schools students are using the virtual model this year, opting to engage in learning entirely from home.

With the first full day of school on Monday, Sept. 14, 2020, many students are relying on the Virtual Academy education model to connect with their teachers online in real-time — without ever leaving home.

What makes it exciting for many students is that Elyria teachers are actually teaching the courses in real time through Google Classroom and Google Meet. Students get to see their teachers and their fellow classmates during their daily meet-ups.

Many other Elyria Schools students are opting for a hybrid learning model, wherein they attend in-person classes two days a week and then online courses and home learning two days a week.

Elyria Schools Academic Services Director Natalie Matthews and her talented team of educators have been instrumental in shaping these incredible offerings to Elyria students.

"Last year's quick transition to virtual learning showed us immediately what our strengths are, as well as highlighting areas where we could improve our online services," Matthews said. "We know there will be challenges along the way, but we feel confident that our students and staff are now positioned to enjoy an outstanding online educational experience this fall and beyond, if need be."

Matthews said the district is looking forward to getting students back in the classroom for in-person learning.

"But it's of course contingent on developments with the coronavirus this fall," she



MARTY YADON / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

The gymnasiums of the new elementary schools feature interactive playgrounds through a system called 'Lu.' The system software runs traditional exercise programs but also programs to reinforce learning. Staff members are testing the system at the new Ely Elementary in this photo.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Back to school information is available at [elyriaschools.org](http://elyriaschools.org), including school supply lists for hybrid and virtual learning, Chromebook requests, internet service requests for those eligible, transportation information and many other important topics.

said. "The teachers and staff have learned new ways to engage students, both with online models and with in-person models.

"This has never been done before to this extent," Matthews said. "It has truly been incredible to see the level of talent and expertise emerge at every level — from IT services to teaching to food service and custodial. Countless people have stepped up to fill new roles and meet needs that have become essential in this new environment."



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Prospect Principal Jess Barwacz records a virtual Open House message for families from the Elyria High School television studio.

Area residents can take pride knowing that many of the city's students will also have the opportunity to enjoy the new learning environments in the recently constructed school buildings.

New buildings this year are Hamilton Elementary (pre-K-4), Ely Elementary (K-4) and Northwood Campus (K-8). Check out tours of the buildings at Elyria Schools Pioneer TV on YouTube.



# New buildings, new land: Careful finesse yields positive results

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

Year 2020 has earned itself a “most improved” notation in the Elyria books for ushering in a trio of stunning new schools.

The new Hamilton Elementary, Ely Elementary and Northwood Campus are all up and running.

They’re the first of five brand-new schools slated to open this year and next. The campuses of Westwood and Eastern Heights will open next year.

The Elyria Board of Education, Superintendent Ann Schloss, consultant Paul Rigda and a core team of school and state administrators have worked side by side these past few years to finesse every detail of this immense construction project.

Residents may remember an article in last winter’s edition of Pioneer Press by Elyria Board President Greg Elek (go to [www.elyria-schools.org/](http://www.elyria-schools.org/) for the full story).

Elek detailed the myriad of challenges the team faced from the get-go when unforeseen construction costs threatened to derail the budget.

He also revealed the creative, out-of-the box solutions the team came up with to save millions in potential cost overruns, all while protecting the 21st Century design of the new buildings.

This week, the Board took another giant step in securing the project finances.

The Elyria Board of Education approved an agreement with the City of Elyria on Sept. 16, 2020, to essentially swap old school properties for new land near the Northwood Campus.

The deal is through the city’s Community Investment Corporation. It includes the buildings of Franklin, Oakwood and McKinley — all of which have been or will be shuttered at the end of the 2020-21 school year, as more new buildings come online in 2021.

In return, Elyria Schools received approximately 10 acres of land by Northwood Campus that will effectively serve as a natural buffer between the new Northwood property and neighboring parcels.

The concept came up nearly 18 months ago in discussions between Elyria Board President Greg Elek and former Mayor of Elyria Holly Brinda.

Brinda began the process with



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

McKinley school, along with Franklin and Oakwood elementary schools, are part of a land swap agreement between Elyria Schools and the city of Elyria.

backing by Elyria City Council members to investigate options for redeveloping the land.

The properties are attractive for many reasons.

Oakwood’s property, for example, directly connects to property the city already owns and that houses West Park.

When Brinda left office, Council President Vic Stewart spearheaded the project on the city’s behalf.

“City Council members thought what better way to help their city than to expand the park at Oakwood, to encourage new business development on the south side of Elyria, and to assist the hospital with the property right next door to ensure that they will continue to be able to land their helicopter

in critical care situations,” Elek said.

“When these conversations began with Mayor Brinda, she was very excited about using all of our properties for economic development because there’s a section in the Ohio Revised Code that allows a school district to trade properties with the municipality that it’s in,” Elek said.

“This was something that our consultant, Paul Rigda, and our attorney advised us on,” he said. “And it just seemed like a win-win to be able to save all of those funds for demolishing and abating the properties. We could put them back into the project and assist the city with economic development.

The city and school district

negotiated back and forth on specific properties.

They decided the first property agreement would be Oakwood, McKinley and Franklin for the parcel of land over by Northwood, Elek said.

“After that agreement, we discussed looking at other properties,” he said.

“This agreement took a considerable amount of time but it was well worth it,” he said. “It’s going to save (the construction project fund) about \$1.5 million.”

Looking ahead, the Elyria Board of Education intends to go to auction with the Northwood Middle School property (more than 20 acres) on Gulf Road and to explore possibilities with interest that’s been shown in the proper-

ties of Crestwood and Prospect.

“The Elyria Board of Education and the staff of Elyria Schools is very appreciative of the passing of the bond issue to build new schools,” Elek said. “The core team of leaders on this project has been diligent with tax dollars and continues a non-stop effort to review all options on how those tax dollars are used to get these facilities built.

“I’m so thankful for the team and their dedication and diligence in negotiating the many challenges of this project,” he said. “Everybody has done a great job and it’s just amazing from where we started to where we’re at now to get these schools built.”



# Elyria Schools: Strategic response to COVID-19

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

With the shifting state of COVID-19 locally and abroad, Elyria Schools has taken great care to design an educational plan that aligns with the state-designated "risk levels" set by health officials.

This helps the district prepare

for changing scenarios with COVID-19 that might up the public health-level warnings or likewise lower the risk levels should conditions begin to improve.

For example, the in-person/virtual hybrid model of learning that the district has offered this fall aligns with the state's elevated risk levels.

If the risk level increases at any time, the school district can consider going to a full virtual model.

If the risk level decreases significantly for an extended period, the district is fully prepared to transition to a four-day model of attendance, with the ultimate goal of returning to a five-day-a-week schedule.

Safety remains the utmost concern at every step.

Before sending children to school, parents must check their child's temperature and overall general health on a daily basis.

If a child is exhibiting any signs of illness or symptoms of COVID-19, parents must keep them home from school.

It's important to report daily absences to the school's main office. Absences for illness will be excused.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website offers ample resources to help understand symptoms to watch for that may indicate a COVID-19 infection.

## TIME TO LATHER UP!

Handwashing is important to staying healthy

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

When it comes to stopping illness in its tracks there's no substitute for good-old fashioned hand washing.

According to the CDC, hand washing education in the community can dramatically reduce illness.

To give you a sense of how good handwashing practices can reduce the spread of common illnesses, read on.

The CDC said hand-washing education:

- Reduces the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 23 to 40 percent.
- Reduces diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems by 58 percent.
- Reduces respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by 16 to 21 percent.
- Reduces absenteeism due to gastrointestinal illness in schoolchildren by 29 to 57 percent.

Handwashing also is the first line of defense in slowing the spread of COVID-19, according to public health experts.

But there's more to handwashing than meets the eye.

The CDC recommends cleaning hands a specific way to avoid getting sick or spreading germs to others.

• Use clean, running water (warm or cold) to wet hands. Avoid using standing water. Hands can be recontaminated if placed in a



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Restroom facilities in the new schools are located within the grade-level wings and the sinks sit outside the facilities off the main hallways. The "no-touch" faucets and soap dispensers turn on and off automatically. Hand sanitizer is located in the classrooms if sinks are not present.

basin of standing water that is contaminated.

• Use soap to effectively lift soil and microbes from the skin. According to the CDC, studies show no added health benefit in consumer use for antimicrobial soap over plain soap; both work just as well (this doesn't include

healthcare settings.)

- Rub hands together with the soap, lathering the backs of your hands, between fingers and under nails. The friction that's created helps lift dirt and microbes from the skin.
- Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds. (Hum "Happy Birthday"

twice from start to finish.)

- Rinse well under clean, running water.
- Dry hands with a clean towel or let air dry. (Wet hands can more easily transfer germs.)

Soap and water are the leading agents in reducing all types of germs and chemicals on the

skin but if they aren't available, sanitizer with a 60 percent alcohol rate or higher is an option according to the CDC.

Hand sanitizer should be applied to the palm of the hands and rubbed all over the surfaces of the hand until the hands are dry, the CDC said.



# Full supply of kindness



PHOTO COURTESY AMANDA BELCHER

The Elyria Schools is fortunate each year to receive donations of school supplies from local businesses, civic and charitable organizations, and individual community members. The contributions are formally recognized at school board meetings in the Board of Education minutes. Some of this year's generous donors are pictured here: Youth members of 'Leaders of Today' and Director Marsalis Hammons delivered hundreds of backpacks and supplies to Hamilton Elementary School. United Way of Greater Lorain County collected many supplies for students of Elyria Schools. Mercy Health also made a large contribution of assorted school supplies to the district. Special thanks to all individuals and organizations who support and partner with the Elyria Schools.



PHOTO COURTESY AMANDA BELCHER



PHOTO COURTESY ADRIANNE SCHEITHAUER



PHOTO COURTESY ADRIANNE SCHEITHAUER











# In the know with Elyria Schools

Amy Higgins  
Communications director

The Elyria Schools Communications Office is your resource for timely updates on school happenings.

If you appreciate receiving news online, you can find us at [www.elyriaschools.org](http://www.elyriaschools.org).

If you prefer news updates through the fast-paced world of social media, follow us at Elyria City Schools on Facebook and Instagram, and at Elyria Schools on Twitter.

If you enjoy a little screen time during the day, be sure to check us out at Elyria Schools Pioneer TV on YouTube and on Channel 1022 through Spectrum Cable.

If you like to kick back with the well-worn feel of a newspaper, watch your mailbox for the quarterly publication of Pioneer Press, an eight-page tabloid-style newspaper delivered to all homes in Elyria four times a year.

To flip through the pages of some of the district's key virtual "photo moments," find us at Elyria Schools on Flickr.

We're continually seeking ways to stay connected and strengthen relationships with our school community.

The COVID-19 disruption to education led us to new paths in communication.

Video, a mainstay in the district's robust communications program, holds more importance than ever.

Take for example the extraordinary construction project in Elyria Schools that's been ongoing since 2016.

During the COVID-19 shut down of school facilities, the district was unable to offer public tours of the schools that were poised to permanently close at the end of the 2019-20 school year: Windsor, Ely, Franklin and Northwood.

We did the next best thing: Virtual tours!

We shared fun facts and historic tidbits about each building as we guided viewers through the buildings for final video walkthroughs.

These tours — along with virtual tours of the new schools — and so many other video stories can be found at Elyria Schools Pioneer TV on YouTube.


We're also connecting with parents and community members

# ELYRIA SCHOOLS

## PIONEER TV

### SPECTRUM CABLE CHANNEL 1022

### YOUTUBE THEELYRIASCHOOLS



through a new district e-newsletter called, "Learning at Home."

If you're not on the distribution list for this essential news bulletin you will find it linked on the district's social media sites and at [www.elyriaschools.org](http://www.elyriaschools.org).

Parents can opt in to receive the "Learning at Home" newsletter automatically by providing their child's school with a current e-mail address or by requesting to be added to the distribution list at [ask@elyriaschools.org](mailto:ask@elyriaschools.org).

This fall, the Elyria Schools Communications Office is adding a new tool to the toolbox: the Petey Podcast!

This on-air interview-style program will be a fount of Pioneer positivity.

As always, parents and residents are encouraged to reach out anytime to ask questions, express concerns or to share ideas by emailing [ask@elyriaschools.org](mailto:ask@elyriaschools.org) or by calling the communications office at (440) 284-8203.



Elyria Schools Pioneer TV on YouTube and on Channel 1022 is now airing Elyria High School Pioneer Varsity Football.



# Architectural elegance



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

New schools feature consistent design elements inside and out. Exteriors offer beautiful brickwork and splashes of color. Curved sidewalks and interior drives give the school a welcoming, park-like feel. Below at left, the new Ely retained classic stonework from the old Ely.





# Schools bark loud, bark proud!

Amy Higgins  
Communications director

Guess who is the newest member of the Cleveland Browns Foundation team?

Elyria Schools, that's who!

Elyria was invited to be a Learning District in the organization's "Get 2 School, Stay in the Game" initiative aimed at keeping kids engaged and present in education.

Members of the Cleveland Browns Foundation said they were impressed by the whole-child approach Elyria Schools takes to education and welcomed the district into the Stay in the Game Network of partner districts.

That network currently includes about 15 districts in Ohio, including Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

The work of the Cleveland Browns Foundation's Stay in the Game initiative aligns perfectly with work the district is already engaged in to address absenteeism.

As a partner, Elyria Schools will receive free resources and tools through the Cleveland Browns Foundation as well as some untold surprises to come. (Is a visit from Cleveland Browns mascot, Chomps, in our future? Stay tuned!)

Watch for the official "Stay in the Game" logo in schools and ready yourself for some fun!

Go Pioneers and go Browns!



GRAPHIC PROVIDED

## Free meals for all schoolchildren in 2020

Amy Higgins  
Communications director

All Elyria Schools students are eligible to receive free school meals through Dec. 31, 2020, in accordance with new USDA guidelines.

Aramark, the foodservice arm of the Elyria Schools, also operates a weekly meal service at Elyria High School. The bagged meals are distributed 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Wednesday near the West Avenue parking lot of Elyria High.

Students attending school through the hybrid plan will receive their meals at school.

Students learning virtually from home can pick up meals at the weekly distribution or request delivery service through Aramark.

Aramark recently re-launched the after-school dinner program that runs 4 to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday from Elyria High School. All students are invited to participate in this program.

These food service offerings come at a critical time, as the COVID-19 pandemic has dis-

rupted household incomes and led to food insecurity for countless Americans — including thousands right here in northeast Ohio.

To give you a sense of the need: Second Harvest food bank and its partners serve nearly 50,000 meals each month to people struggling with hunger.

According to Second Harvest, the child food insecurity rate in Lorain County and the Second Harvest service areas is about 20.5 percent — which means more than 22,000 children are struggling with hunger.

It's likely the COVID-19 pandemic has only served to worsen this picture.

Elyria Schools has continued its partnership with Second Harvest, offering monthly food pantries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The food pantries are continuing with distribution from Ely Stadium. The new calendar for these services can be found at [www.elyriaschools.org](http://www.elyriaschools.org).

### MOBILE FOOD PANTRIES TO CONTINUE

The Elyria Schools and Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio will continue hosting mobile food pantries throughout the 2020-21 school year.

The mobile pantry will take place at Ely Stadium from 4 to 6 p.m. according to the following schedule.

The United States National Guard will assist with distributions at the Ely Stadium site through December 2020.

2020  
September 21  
October 5, 19  
November 2, 16  
December 7, 21

2021  
January 4, 25  
February 1, 15  
March 1, 15, 29



ANN SCHLOSS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

The National Guard distributes food at Ely Stadium.

April 19  
May 3, 17

June 7, 21  
July 5, 19



# Wings of learning



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Grade-level wings feature unique colors that are consistent in all new schools. Color paths throughout the schools lead students “home” to their grade-level wings.





# Thank you, Elyria.



3

all-new schools  
opening 2020.

2

more coming  
in 2021.

1

vote  
changes a city.