The Leaflet

Winter 2023-24



Elmwood Park High School Junior Divina Zamudio sings her solo song *Please Come Home for Christmas* during EPHS' December concert

ELMWOOD PARK COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 401 NEWSLETTER

401 ELMWOOD PARK COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Construction

During our construction showcase events this past fall, we unveiled our newly renovated spaces at John Mills Elementary School, Elmwood Elementary School and Elmwood Park High School.

Community members filed in to see the new learning spaces and renovations construction crews were hard at work completing.

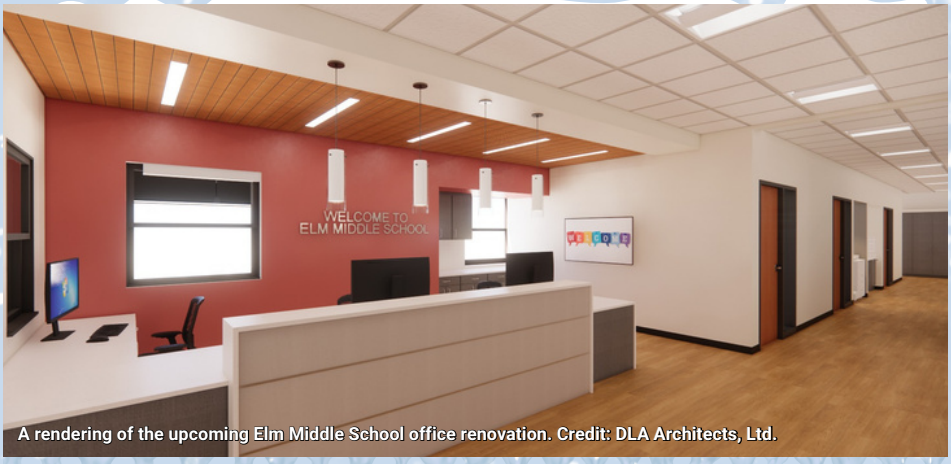
“They were great events that allowed our families and community members to see our updated spaces and all the work that has been done,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Leah Gauthier.

Students led community members on tours of the new spaces, highlighting the work that has been done since 2022.



Elmwood students show community members the new learning hub

As one chapter of construction wraps up, another begins! Elmwood Park High School’s auditorium will be getting a makeover. The stage will see several upgrades including a new projector and a new sound and lighting booth.



A rendering of the upcoming Elm Middle School office renovation. Credit: DLA Architects, Ltd.

Elm Middle School will also be getting a makeover including a main office renovation and new athletic bathrooms.

“I’m so grateful for our entire team to be able to be together in the new space,” says Elm Principal Ashley Groeneveld.

The Board of Education approved a $500,000 grant to fund the projects at Elm. Construction at the high school is scheduled to begin during spring break and finish before the end of the school year. Construction at the middle school is scheduled to take place over the summer and finish before the 2024-25 school year begins.

Ongoing projects at the elementary schools will also conclude this summer with new roofs and landscaping. Scan the QR code below to stay up to date with construction.

Scan the QR code to access our construction page

epcusd401.org/construction



A rendering of decals outside the upcoming Elm Middle School office renovation. Credit: DLA Architects, Ltd.

EPHS Decade Wall

Calling all EP residents! We need your help on our Decade Wall project. The wall will feature stories, pictures, memorabilia and much more. We need you, the community, to help. Interested in participating? Check out our website! **epcusd401.org/decadewall**

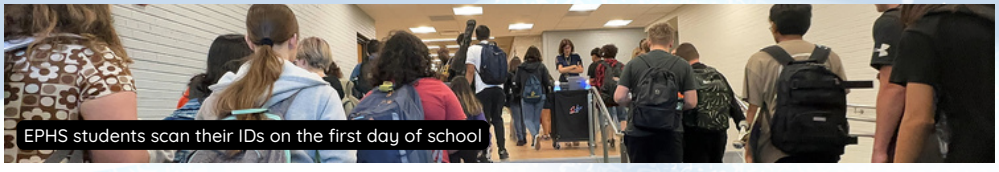
School Safety

School safety continues to be a top priority at EPCUSD 401. Several measures were implemented ahead of the 2023-24 school year to help secure our buildings.

EPHS and Elm students now scan their IDs as they enter school while staff members monitor scanning systems. The system updates attendance and notifies the monitoring staff member of any alerts or flags about the student as they scan their ID.

“The ID scanning works to increase our buildings’ security to keep students and staff as safe as possible,” says Julie Tsagalis, Director for Safety and Security.

EPCUSD 401 will continue to evaluate and strengthen its security practices after receiving a $500,000 grant.



EPHS students scan their IDs on the first day of school

Check out our new spirit stores! We have a range of brands from Nike to Gildan.

epcusd401.org/spiritstore









EPCUSD 401 Music

Music is in the air at EPCUSD 401. All grades have been singing their hearts out this past semester. Multiple middle and high school students were selected for prestigious music festivals. The participants at the Illinois Music Education Association are listed below:

Elmwood Park High School
- Ethan Kendrick, band, senior
- Roy Zuniga, choir, senior

Elm Middle School
- Isabella Nieto, choir, sixth grade
- Maddie Collins, choir, seventh grade
- Jacob Torres, choir, seventh grade
- Sophia Aquino, choir, eighth grade
- Kate Kondela, choir, eighth grade

Zuniga was also selected for a regional honors choir at the Midwestern American Choral Directors Association that will take place in February.

These students managed this extracurricular opportunity alongside their in-school concert preparations.

While some upper-level grades already had performances this year, most younger students were eager to go on stage for the first time.

“I try to instill a sense of pride in my students and figure out how I can feature their talents and their abilities,” said Elmwood Music Teacher Meredith Dabbs.

Dabbs’ first graders, second graders and after-school choir all had concerts. The holiday shows were one day before winter break, putting everyone in the holiday spirit!

The same grade levels performed at John Mills as they sang similar winter-themed songs.

“When they perform, it’s the most excitement they’ve ever felt,” said John Mills Music Teacher Sarah Altshuler.



John Mills first graders perform during their winter concert

Performances at John Mills included choreography created by Mrs. Hagstrom and Mrs. Penczek’s first and second grade classes.

Elm Middle School’s music programs held their concerts as well; it was the first time each grade performed this year. Elm Band Teacher Stephen Hawk loves seeing his students grow as the year goes on.

“I like to see the students grow and build confidence with their skills,” says Hawk.



Eighth grader Gabriel Sarris and seventh grader Kateryna Mukha perform during Elm’s band concert

“I love teaching new music and finding a way to make it instantly accessible and interesting to the kids,” says Elm Choir Teacher Mike Popplewell.

Solo performances by Elm choir students included eighth graders Elise Kanable on *Carol of the Bells* and Alicja Rusek on *Wintertide*.

Band and choir at the high school had their second concerts of the year. Following their “Kaleidoscope” concert in October, the two groups came with plenty of experience under their belt.

“We're able to just jump right into the music for the second concert,” said Choir Director Grant McEachern.

Choir songs included *White Christmas* while the band performed holiday-themed tunes, including selections from “The Nightmare Before Christmas.”

“It's musically challenging, and the students stepped up to that challenge,” said EPHS Band Director Kyle Rhoades.

Career Exploration

EPCUSD 401 continues to offer unique and exciting learning opportunities for its students. At Elm, students can take health science and architecture, which are two new career studies courses this year.

In health science, students learn about different types of careers in healthcare including physical therapy, occupational therapy and much more.

“In addition to learning what careers are out there, I want students to start getting an idea of what careers they are interested in, along with the steps to get there,” says Health Science Teacher Jack Doyle.

In total, nine different career opportunities are offered at the middle school that lead into the high school’s career pathway programs.

At the high school, criminal justice is a course that offers students a career pathway. Lessons center around the legal system and what employment opportunities are ahead for students.

“We try to provide students an opportunity to see what it would be like if they continue with this career path,” says Criminal Justice Teacher Jacquelyn Regnier.

Another class, senior seminar, recently held an exercise to prepare students for interviews. EPCUSD 401 Instructional Coaches interviewed the students for fictional positions in different industries like food service and child care.

“I feel like if you haven’t had a job interview, this experience is really helpful,” said student Mari Vega.



Senior Mari Vega is interviewed by Instructional Coach Vanessa Woof

Want to work for us? Check out our job openings!
epcusd401.org/careers

Want to advertise with 401?
Email **brittens@epcusd401.org**

Source
Sam Britten, Writer & Photographer
Dave Porreca, Photographer
Aaron Celmer, Editor

Stories Around the District

At EPCUSD 401, we have many unique stories to tell from students and faculty to staff and alumni. Check out some of the great stories we told this past semester!

EPCUSD 401 thanks all former and current service members

On Veteran's Day, we honored the service members of our schools and community. Elmwood Park Community Unit School District 401 thanks you for your service!



National Honor Society supports Adopt-A-Kid

National Honor Society students at Elmwood Park High School supported the local Adopt-A-Kid Christmas program, buying presents for families in need. More than 100 gifts were donated in the effort.

WE ARE 401: Michael & Leo Irizarry, a passion for creating art



Artistic creativity runs deep in Michael and Leo's family. Their parents are professional tattoo artists, their uncle is a cartoonist and their grandparents are artists as well.

Spanish classes raise money for charitable causes

Elmwood Park High School students raised money by selling bracelets and bags made by Nicaraguan and Guatemalan artists. The proceeds went back to those local artists. The students raised $900.

Scan the QR code to see more district news

WE ARE 401: Sue Shultz, custom made for EPHS Theatre

For a quarter century, Sue Shultz has been the costume designer for EPHS' theatre program. In her time volunteering, she has assisted with nearly 50 EPHS theatre productions.



Upcoming Events

We are at the halfway point! Here are some key dates to mark on your calendar in 2024:

- Feb. 14-15: Parent-Teacher Conferences
- March 15-16: EPHS Spring Musical
- March 25-29: Spring Break
- June 6: Last Day of School

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Dr. Leah Gauthier
Superintendent of Schools

401 ELMWOOD PARK
COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

