

## 2021 Fall Newsletter

We are back in business!

By Ron Frye, Board President

School Board governance in 2020 took on a whole new meaning. Conducting monthly board meetings via Zoom, depending on internet connections from our homes, social distancing and forced mandates made last year's operations quite difficult. Kudos should be given to all Boards of Education for "learning on the fly" best practices to conduct monthly meetings, committee structures, and to continue to govern districts during a difficult time. Beginning this summer, business returned to some normalcy, with our meetings conducted fully in-person and back in our regular Board of Education meeting room.

We feel blessed as a Board of Education to have the dedicated staff at Seneca High School who worked diligently last year to keep the doors open fully, while districts elsewhere were forced to shut down. To put it simply, remote learning did not work locally and, data has shown, it did not work nationally. Responding to a pandemic, each district was tasked to find their own "best practice." It became the Board of Education and administration's job to daily, "learn on the fly" what "best practice" looked like at Seneca High School. I applaud our leaders' efforts because they worked tirelessly to keep those doors open.

As our Board of Education met regularly and fully in-person this summer and school year, we have returned to normal procedural practices. Last year at this time I wrote to you about all the unanswered questions of governing during a pandemic. Now I can share with you that, while still complying with state emergency mandates, the district and school board are fully back in business! I can also share that we are proud of our community. While national news highlights disfunction at School Board meetings, that is not the case here in Seneca. Our meetings have been positive, productive, and high functioning.

Our district focus on "The Seneca Way," has led our staff's professional development efforts this year. Our students have returned to their regularly scheduled classes and activities. With lesser social distancing guidelines, the district has had minimal positive cases and zero school-based quarantines this fall. Our regular educational programming is also being achieved. Last year we offered "grab and go" lunches as students exited the building. This year, lunches, properly social distanced without masks while eating, have returned. We held a non-traditional outside homecoming to much success and appreciation of our students. The Board of Education has returned to a focus on policy, educational programming, compliance, facilities and contracts, and servant leadership.

The SHS Board of Education is proud of the outstanding work of our staff and the cooperation of our students and families. In the pages that follow, you will learn more about how Seneca High School has approached the return to normalcy of schooling during and after a pandemic, in an

effort to provide our students the best possible experience.

On behalf of the entire Seneca High School Board of Education, kudos to the administration and staff for all they have done to make in-person learning possible at Seneca High School and a hearty thank you to the community for your support. Please stay safe.

Return to “Normalcy”

By: Superintendent, Mr. Dan Stecken,

When I was hired last winter by the Seneca High School Board of Education as the next Superintendent, not only was I excited for the opportunity, but I was ready to hit the ground running! Spending the last 17 years working at Seneca High School has been a blessing, not only to me professionally, but also to my family. It is THE job, that I have set goals for, and I am humbled and honored to have the opportunity to work for these students, staff, Board of Education, and our community. My first goal as Superintendent, which was communicated to our Administrative Team in June, was to return to normalcy- to return to the great things that happen inside these four walls of Seneca High School each day, pre-pandemic.

Aside from the serious physical toll the disease takes on those who contract it, COVID-19 seems to have infiltrated every crevice of living, wreaking havoc on even the most basic aspects of our lives. Over the summer we spent many hours and meetings preparing to begin the 2021-22 school year as close to normal as possible. We knew certain mitigations would be forced upon us in the form of mandates, but it is a leader’s duty to search for solutions, not dwell on problems. In July, the Board of Education, after great consideration, research, and discussion, passed a resolution to have local controls determine mitigation strategies and recommendations within the district. As we know that power was removed two short weeks later in the form of gubernatorial executive order. While the forced masking strikes a chord differently with many different people, the reality of our return to normalcy is our doors are open, our students’ educational opportunities are thriving, student extra-curricular opportunities are happening, and even though the social and emotional effects of this pandemic are far reaching, we push forward towards a little bit more normalcy each day.

I love challenges and anticipated working with the Seneca High School administrative team to complete some demanding work to make SHS even better than it was pre-pandemic. No matter the amount of work the Administrative Team would focus on, the reality of COVID would reassert itself on my desk and impact our work. While frustrating and confounding at times, it would be easy to resign ourselves to our station, but that isn’t productive. Our reinvestment and work with the “Seneca Way” has become a powerful and a collaborative success amongst our staff. The transitions of a new Superintendent, new Principal, new Dean of Students, and next year, a new Activities Director, have led to great growth from our mentors. How do we seek to solve problems in a time where many focus on negativity?

On the first day of school, I addressed the faculty with a parable from a John Gordon book called *The Coffee Bean*. A young man sought guidance from his teacher about the misfortune, struggles, and negativity within his life. The teacher responded by conducting a science experiment in front of him. Simply, every one of us faces immense pressure each day, much like being immersed in a pot of boiling water. The teacher took three objects and placed them into three separate pots of boiling water. First, a carrot, strong and hard, was immersed in the boiling water and quickly became soft and weakened by its environment. Second, a fragile egg was dunked in the boiling water. The yoke, like a heart, became hardened. Naturally, we don't want to be like the carrot (soft and weakened) or the egg (hardened) when faced with immense pressure. Lastly, the teacher put a coffee bean into the last pot of boiling water. What did the coffee bean do? It changed the water; it neutralized the immense pressure creating a hearty cup of coffee, transforming the pressurized negativity. My challenge to our staff was not to hide from or avoid the negativity that is out there nowadays, but to be like the coffee bean and find a way to transform the negative. Transformational leadership is found inside the walls of Seneca High School every single day and we are all blessed to work and thrive here.

In the pages that follow, we will attempt to tell the story of schooling at Seneca High School in our efforts to return to "Normalcy." It is an ever-evolving story of unsung heroes making great efforts to give our students the best educational program possible. It is about resilient students trying to make sense of a world turned upside down. We've experienced tremendous successes and epic failures. Despite our fears, aggravation, fatigue, and yearning for a return to normalcy, what strikes me the most about this story is not only our staff, but our students' ability to be like the Coffee Bean and to transform those around us. On behalf of the entire Seneca High School staff, I wish all our families health, happiness, and a joyous holiday season.

New Fiscal Services Director, Mrs. Stacey Gould,

I would like to start by introducing myself: My name is Stacey Gould, and I am the new Fiscal Services Director here at Seneca High School. While the school finance position is new to me, I am no stranger to the world of accounting, auditing, and finance. As a former auditor and CPA, turned financial analyst, I have experienced many different aspects of the profession that has allowed me to bring my knowledge and skills here to Seneca High School.

Born and raised outside of Utica, IL, I was familiar with the town of Seneca but never knew much about it until this past year. Becoming a part of the Seneca family in May, I have witnessed the tremendous amount of pride that people have not only for this school, but also for this community. I feel extremely lucky to have joined this team and am looking forward to many more years as part of the "Fighting Irish."

Now, moving on to more exciting topics – property taxes. Every year, schools throughout the state of Illinois, including Seneca High School, present their tax levy at the December Board of Education meeting. This year marks the end of a two-year extension of an original 7-year agreement with Exelon regarding the valuation of the LaSalle Station. Within this agreement, the taxable value of LaSalle station was agreed upon at \$460 million, as well as the pledge to maintain a constant tax rate of \$1.74838 for all district taxpayers. For the original 7 years of the

agreement, Seneca High School had a property tax rate of \$1.79838, lowering the taxpayer's rate of \$0.05 each year in the 2-year extension.

Arriving at the \$1.74838 tax rate can be a bit confusing, so I would like to remind you of one of the extra steps Seneca High School takes in the levy process called abatement. Sometime in December, you may read in the local newspaper that the amount of tax dollars the district is requesting is over 7% higher than last year's extension, or the amount of actual dollars received. Please remember that, although the district is requesting this amount, we will reduce the levy or "abate" down to the agreed upon final tax rate of \$1.74838. This abatement occurs in the spring, after the district receives its first draft of the extension from the LaSalle and Grundy County Clerks. By levying an amount greater than what we are truly seeking, we can ensure that the "draft" tax rate we receive in the spring is greater than the target and then abate to the precise rate for all taxpayers in the district. This process has been used by our District for the past 8 years as part of the agreement with Exelon, and rest assured, by the time you receive your tax bill in the mail, your property tax rate will be the same as last year.

If you ever have any questions regarding the levy process, tax rates, or any other financial issue involving Seneca High School, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [sgould@senecahs.org](mailto:sgould@senecahs.org) or by phone at 815-357-7048.

Principal Mr. Martin Voiles Retires  
Written by New Principal, Mr. Mike Coughlin,

If you know Mr. Voiles at all, you would understand he's a fly under the radar type of guy. He tried his best to leave Seneca High School without any form of recognition. He was very clear that he did not want any mention of his retirement during the 2021 Graduation ceremony. Fortunately, we were able to celebrate and recognize his efforts over the past ten years during our October in-service day.

We again, thank you for all the early mornings, late nights, lots and lots of windshield time, tough calls, genuine conversations and your true leadership. We know that being a school administrator is always demanding and ever changing with the needs of the school. We thank you for your supportive leadership over the past ten years.

I can't thank you enough for the friendship and mentorship over the past ten years. Seneca High School is better off now than ten years ago because of your leadership as Principal. Thank you!!

The Importance of Parent Involvement  
Written by Principal, Mr. Mike Coughlin,

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all SHS parents to be involved in their child's education. Parent involvement has to be at the top of the list when you break down the academic and social/emotional growth of students. Of course, it is never too late for quality parent involvement, but the earlier the better. It is important that Seneca High School administration and faculty encourages and fosters quality parent involvement. With that in mind, I would again like to highlight and thank all the parents that attended our fall Curriculum Night in August and Parent Teacher conferences in October.

Seneca High School witnessed a nice increase in parent attendance at the October 6th conferences. Prior school years had seen parent attendance around 38% for the evening. Our latest conferences had 46% parent participation. Great job and thank you for attending!!

We would like to see that positive trend continue as we look forward to having our SSP meetings in early February. Just a reminder that these meetings are designed for Freshmen through Juniors and will have more of a post-secondary focus. Also, just a reminder to all parents that did attend the Curriculum Night and Parent-Teachers conferences, be sure you attend the SSP meeting in February to receive a 75.00 discount on your 22-23 registration fees. We look forward to seeing you and collaborating on your child's success that night!

## Normalcy in the Land of the Irish

Written by AD, Mr. Steve Haines

This past Fall sports season was an absolute blast for me to experience. I hope that everyone got a chance to return to the sports arenas to watch the Irish teams in action. This was the first time that all the fall sports competed in the fall since 2019. And, you don't realize how badly you miss something until it is gone. Soccer at Newark HS, Golf at the Creek Golf Course, Cross Country at the FFA Farm, Volleyball in SHS Gym, and Football in the Football stadium made the fall at SHS feel just about normal.

Having students' sections return to volleyball matches in the gym, and Friday night lights and Fighting Irish Football games, were essential to giving our kids some fun and normalcy to their time at SHS. Seneca HS senior Given Siegel says, "It is just fun to be loud and supporting our Irish athletes. We have had great turn out for volleyball and football games. The student section has been so important to the athletes as they have felt like the loud crowd really gives the players momentum to help them win their games." The Seneca HS students have really knocked it out of the park with their involvement at volleyball and football games this fall. The student section has been a vital part of this return to normalcy.

And, it was not limited to athletics. The students were treated to a new way of having a Homecoming. From the Friday afternoon parade to the Homecoming dance in the Bus Barn, the students felt they were able to have that Homecoming pride that we want all of our students to experience. Seneca HS senior Zoe Hougas says, "It felt like it had two years ago. Everyone loved the class games being back and the dance in the bus garage was awesome. I thought Seneca HS did everything possible to allow us to have as normal a homecoming as we could under the circumstances." The parade had some of the biggest crowds on Main Street in years, the FFA ran out of pork chops at the Homecoming dinner, and the football game had the biggest crowd of the year. The way our students adapted to this new idea of a dance in the bus barn, and the community turn out for the Homecoming activities, shows how much our kids and our community wanted the return to normal activities.

We also returned to the stage with the production of *Puffs* as the Seneca HS fall play. We had great crowds attending these performances, and the student actors were phenomenal in entertaining the audience. *Puffs* cast member and Seneca HS junior Calvin Maierhofer says, "It was a fun, fast-paced production with lots of humor and everyone knew their lines. Having a full audience was so much better than last year, the audience would let us know if we landed our

jokes and if they were enjoying themselves which make the cast want to perform at their best.” The cast of *Puffs* put the time in and the energy into the best performances they could in an effort to be a part of something normal.

This past fall was not only a return for the normal fall sports season, with venues full of fans of all ages, but it was also a return to Irish athletes excelling in their sports. Rylee Stenzel had a great senior season on the golf links. She became only the 2<sup>nd</sup> girl’s golfer at SHS to qualify for the IHSA Girls Golf State Finals where she finished 19<sup>th</sup> overall. Her teammate, Noah Quigley also qualified for the IHSA Boys Golf State Finals. The Lady Irish Cross-Country team were Regional Champions and qualified for the IHSA State finals led by Regional Champion Evelyn O’Connor. The Fighting Irish Cross-Country team was sectional qualifiers led by IHSA state qualifier Austin Aldridge. Lady Irish Volleyball had another 20-win season and won their 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive Tri-County Conference Championship. The Fighting Irish Football squad finished their season winning 3 of their last 4 games and falling just short of making the IHSA playoffs. But, the improvement in the Irish quad was tremendous, culminating with an exciting Senior Night victory over Clifton Central 32-26. Also, of note for the football program, the JV football team went 7-1 overall and 7-0 in the Vermillion Conference.

#### Student Recognition

By Dean of Students, Mr. Mark Giertz

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize an outstanding Seneca high school Junior, Dominica Traina. Dominic is being recognized for his caring and huge act of kindness that he displayed on a Friday night at a home varsity football game earlier in September. Dominic took the time out of his night to help a youngster who just needed a “pick-me-up,” and our SHS cheering section wanted to join the fun as well. Dominic and several other students went out of their way to make the young future Seneca HS student feel at home by putting him right up front and getting him involved with their cheers. The smile on all our students’ faces in these pictures below truly show what Seneca HS is all about.

Dominic has helped create a fun and energetic atmosphere over the last 3 years in our school that has helped shape what our exciting student cheering section is. Dominic continuously has an upbeat attitude toward his peers, staff, coaches, and, in this case, young students who may just need a boost for the day. Dominic is very respectful and has become an outstanding role model for our younger student athletes. Dominic and several other students have created a strong Irish Pride and energy within our student cheering section, and this carries with them into our hallways and classrooms.

Along with being a great role model to our fellow SHS student body, Dom has proven to be an outstanding student in the classroom. Dominic’s 4.08 GPA has shown to his teachers, peers, and administration how dedicated he is about his future endeavours. Dominic is enrolled in many upper level and AP classes which proves his drive goes much further than just our athletic cheering sections. Dominic is also a returning varsity boys basketball player this coming year and looks forward to continuing his success on the basketball court.

I am proud to have a young student/athlete such as Dominica Traina in our district showing our

underclassman the true meaning of Irish Pride. Congratulations on this recognition, Dom!

Naviance College & Career Readiness

By School Psychologist, Mrs. Jill Rockrohr,

This Fall, Seneca High School is excited to introduce a college and career readiness platform for students: Naviance. Naviance is aligned with six research-based competencies required for post-secondary success: social emotional learning, interpersonal skills, academic skills, career knowledge, college knowledge, and transition skills. The Naviance platform helps students, schools, and families prepare for post-secondary transitions, including evaluating student strengths and interests, choosing a career pathway, researching post-secondary education options, and even applying to colleges and universities. Our Guidance Department, with support from our excellent IT Department, have begun rolling out many exciting features of Naviance this year, with even more to come.

An essential part of post-secondary preparation involves guiding students to understand their own strengths, areas of growth, and interests. Through brief assessments, our school counselors can help students build a comprehensive profile of their own strengths and challenges, to take charge of their own learning. During the 2021-2022 school year, Mrs. Holman and Mr. Jackson will guide our freshmen students through the Career Cluster Finder, the AchieveWORKS Intelligence Assessment, and the AchieveWORKS Learning and Productivity Assessment. Sophomores will complete the Career Interest Profiler, the Strengths Explorer, the AchieveWORKS Personality Assessment, and the AchieveWORKS Skills Assessment. Juniors will complete the Career Interest Profiler. Throughout their high school career, SHS students will continue to build a profile that guides them toward careers that align not only with their interests but also their personal strengths.

Once students have had the opportunity to identify their strengths and interests, they can use the Career Clusters and Pathways tool to narrow down their field of interest, with descriptions of various jobs and careers in a given field. The Naviance Career Exploration tool can then be used to evaluate these jobs and careers, including the education required, median salary, skills and traits that align with the career, and related majors or careers.

In addition to career readiness, Naviance has many features that will facilitate the college application process. Using the SuperMatch system, students can search for colleges and universities based on nine categories, including location, cost, major and minor degrees offered, admission criteria, diversity, and extracurricular activities. Colleges are assigned a “fit” score based on how well they match a student’s guidelines. Students can then maintain a list of colleges they are interested in as well as where they would like to apply. One unique feature of Naviance is the ability to see anonymous and voluntary data regarding former SHS students who were accepted to each college or university, including GPA and test scores.

Additional useful features include the Naviance Curriculum, in which teachers can assign interactive content to build transition skills, such as financial literacy, stress management, and organization. Our Special Education department is piloting this feature this year as part of transition planning for students with disabilities. In addition, the Naviance platform includes goal

setting opportunities for students, an easy-to-use resume builder, and the opportunity for teachers and counselors to assign tasks to students.

Within the next year, Mrs. Holman and Mr. Jackson plan to utilize Naviance for college applications. Students will have the ability to complete the Common Application and apply to college within the Naviance system. Our Guidance Department will then be able to share transcripts, standardized test scores, and letters of recommendation directly through Naviance as well as keep track of student acceptance. Parents will also have the chance to create their own accounts to follow this process. This will streamline the admissions process significantly for students, families, and our counselors.

Naviance is a tool that will benefit all students, regardless of their post-secondary path. We are excited to have the opportunity to integrate this platform into our transition planning process for all students. Thank you to our Guidance Department and IT Department for taking on this large endeavor for the betterment of our students!

### Teen Dating

By SRO Mr. Ken Sangston,

It has been a great return and start to the school year. The activities and sports have returned on time and the students are filling the stands at school events, which is great to see. The social interaction among one another is very important to everyone, especially students.

The beginning of the school year often means big transitions for young people, these changes are positive and exciting. However, they can sometimes reveal unhealthy relationship dynamics that teens need to be aware of. Most of us think of dating or partner violence as something that only happens between adults. The Center for Disease Control refers to teen dating violence as common. The CDC reports that 1 in 11 high school age females and 1 in 14 high school aged males experience physical dating violence. The violence that takes place is physical violence, psychological aggression, sexual violence, and stalking. Teen dating violence has profound impact on lifelong health, opportunity, and well-being. Unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime. Teens who experience teen dating violence are more likely to engage in drug and alcohol use, develop antisocial behaviors, think of suicide, experience anxiety and depression, and develop risky behavior. If your partner exhibits jealousy or insecurity, invades your privacy, has unexpected bouts of anger or rage, prevents you from talking with other people, falsely accuses you of things, taunts or bullies, blames you for problems, and threatens or causes physical violence, these are red flags to an unhealthy relationship. If you think you may be in an abusive relationship, your voice matters, reach out to a parent, trusted adult, mentor, or teacher. Seneca High School provides many resources for students for academic needs or in a time of crisis. Please reach out to a Guidance Counselor, School Psychologist, Student Assistance Counselor, or School Resource Officer for your wellness needs.

Message from School Nurse, Miss Schmidt,

The COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt been one of the toughest, most grueling years in nursing, and in healthcare in general. It has changed the way health care systems manage patient care and



increased nurses' responsibilities, creating what felt like the "new normal" for me as a nurse. However, in the Summer of 2021, the pandemic brought me an amazing new opportunity to pursue a position here at Seneca HS as a school nurse and instructor.

I was born and raised in Peru, IL and after graduating from LaSalle-Peru Township High School, I attended IVCC where I also played on the softball team. After two years at IVCC, I transferred to OSF Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing in Peoria where I obtained my Bachelor of Science in Nursing initially, and then went back one year later for my Master of Science in Nursing in Leadership Management. I spent over five years at OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center in Ottawa, where I climbed the ladder as first a CNA and then an RN on the Medical-Surgical floor. For the past two years, I was the Inpatient Clinical Educator at the hospital where I planned and performed orientations and any continuing education for the clinical nursing staff.

Transitioning to this role has been a great change. The responsibilities of being a first-year instructor and school nurse during a pandemic have been challenging at times, but I am passionate about my job and grateful for this opportunity. I was lucky enough to begin this position in a district that had incredible success, adapting over the past year to continually offer in-person learning to their students and implementing the return of activities and athletics. Guidance for the 2021-2022 school year has been ongoing and ever-changing, adapting to new masking, distancing, and quarantine rules as they are issued. We are fortunate at Seneca HS to be able to properly distance in the classroom and at lunches to ensure safety for all. All the hard work of administration, teachers and staff has paid off, as we can happily say that there have been no in-school close contacts for COVID-19 this school year.

I have enjoyed my first few months at Seneca HS and look forward to getting to know many more students and families!

August Students of the Month: Audry McNabb, Rookie; Zoe Hougas, Role Model; Brandi Johnson, Most Improved; and Miranda Araujo, Student of the Month

September Students of the Month: Emma Smith, Student of the Month; Aubrie Jackson, Rookie; Faith Deering, Role Model; and Chase Forget, Most Improved

October Students of the Month: Jessica Daggett, Role Model; Falon Terry, Most Improved; Brady Danek, Student of Month; and Ben Biros, Rookie

DAR Good Citizen Award Student Honored

Miranda Araujo was recently honored with the Daughters of the American Revolution (**DAR**) Good Citizen Award for Seneca High School. She is the daughter of Miriam Garibay and Martin Garcia of Marseilles IL.

The Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award honors an outstanding senior who exhibits the qualities of dependability, leadership, service, and patriotism. The selection was voted on by the faculty and staff.

Miranda currently serves as the Chairman of the FFA Leadership Team, the Pollinator Plot Manager and group leader for Conservation in Action, and the Spanish Club Vice President. She is in National Honors Society, FFA, Conservation in Action, Teens Resisting Unhealthy Social Temptations, State Academic Challenge Competition (ACES), Scholastic Bowl, Math Team, Speech Team, Young Philanthropy, Cross Country, Art Club, Drama Club, Spanish Club, Student Ambassadors, plays, and musicals.

Being the recipient of the DAR Good Citizen Award, Miranda will complete an essay that will have the opportunity to advance through state and national levels of judging. The DAR Good Citizens program and scholarship contest is sponsored by the Illini Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

#### 2021 State Scholars

Congratulations to the following Seneca High School seniors for being named Illinois State Scholars:

Madison Mino, Audrey Jenkins, Laura Yegge, Sydnie Trager, Elizabeth Davis, Brady Danek, Case Biros, Peyton Weber, Miranda Araujo, Hanna Beland, Emma Smith.

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission selects Illinois State Scholars based on class rank and ACT/SAT scores. The Illinois State Scholar program is an honorary recognition without any monetary award.

#### 2021 TCC Leadership Conference

On Monday, October 18, 2021, 8 of our high school students were selected to attend the 2021 TCC Leadership Conference in LaSalle, Illinois. Presenter for the conference was Mr. Ted Wiese. Our students participated in many activities throughout the day along with 64 others from schools in the Tri County Conference.

Kenneth Daggett, Kate Biros, Miranda Araujo, Peyton Weber, Dominic Traina, Anna Bruno, Clara Bruno, Peyton McDonald.

#### National Merit Scholarship Awarded to Senior, Peyton Weber

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation has named Seneca High School student Peyton Weber as a Commended Student in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program. Commended Students are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise demonstrated by their outstanding performance on the PSAT exam used for program entry.

## Community Information

By, Superintendent, Mr. Dan Stecken

Over the course of the last school year, former Superintendent, Jim Carlson, continued the Board of Education's collaborative efforts with the district's architects, Wold Architects & Engineers in schematic design of a new multicourt gymnasium addition. Last June, Dr. Carlson held two public forums prior to his retirement, to engage interested community members about the plans. For the past year, the Board of Education's Building and Grounds Committee has engaged in "Schematic Design" of the new gymnasium. The reception to those meetings were well attended and the question-and-answer portions brought great reflection about the project. One of the key drivers in this project was the historical development of the Capital Projects Fund by the Board of Education. In preparation for the gymnasium, the district has saved for many years, knowing that it was needed but saving to build without bonding or adding to the property owner's real estate tax bills. Rather, each year the district has practiced fiscal responsibility and slowly accumulated and built that Capital Projects fund. As of the completion of this year's budget the district will have saved over 60% of the construction costs of this endeavor. It was critical to the Board of Education that no matter what was built the district would not increase property taxes to build the gym, while also building a long-term facility of which the community would be especially proud.

### The Guiding Principles of the Committee's Work:

- Community pride in our end product.

- Multi-use facility beyond "just a gym."

- More family friendly; eliminating early and late practices.

- Tournament facility with the ability to host large venues and multi-team events.

- Engage the community in a transparent fashion.

- Increased community access to the West Campus.

Our work with Wold Architects over the last year has been focused on schematic design, where we sought to layout the footprint of the facility, necessary utilities, court design, external appearance, and fix the South Entrance to the school. As we move forward in our next stage of Design Development, we seek to get more detailed on the specifics of the design. Importantly, our funding mechanism for this project is a historic trend we are proud of, with years of Capital Projects savings. The remainder of our construction costs will be paid through our Operations & Maintenance Fund in the form of short-term debt certificates, but again without bonding by raising property tax rates. Finally, this project will not begin until we have a long-term extension with Exelon's LaSalle Station with a stable property tax value that allows us to predict strategic plans. We are very excited for the future of this project and the future of our district.



## ILMEA District 2 Music Festival

Written by Band/Choral Director, Mr. Luke Windham,

On Saturday, November 6, Anna Bruno, Bailey Johnson, and Elizabeth Davis (pictured from Left to Right) performed in the Illinois Music Education Association District 2 Music Festival, held at Augustana College and Moline High School. District 2 comprises schools from LaSalle County to the Quad Cities and down as far as Peoria. Students who scored well on their district audition will also have the possibility of being selected for the ILMEA All-State Festival in Peoria.

Anna Bruno performed as the pianist for the orchestra, Bailey Johnson played Alto Saxophone in the band, and Elizabeth Davis sang Alto 1 in the choir. The girls rehearsed all day with directors from regional universities, including Northern and Eastern Illinois Universities, and gave a performance in the evening. Congratulations to all three of our 2021 ILMEA District performers!

The Seneca High School Board of Education would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please stay safe!

