WINTER 2026

LEYDEN

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 212









Inspirational Eagles named at Leyden High School District

Story on Page 3.



Dr. Nick Polyak
Superintendent

Superintendent's Corner

Dear Leyden Community,

Happy New Year!

As we look forward to resolutions and self-improvements, we too at Leyden focus our lens on what's next for the students of our communities. With the guiding mission of "Educate, Enrich, Empower," we celebrate our growth in these areas while keeping our momentum on progress as we make our way through the school year.

EDUCATE

I am pleased to share that this year's Illinois State Report Card reflects meaningful and measurable progress across our district. The gains we see - particularly in academic proficiency and graduation rates - are a direct result of the commitment shown by our students, staff, families, and community partners. Districtwide English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency rose from 21% to 43% in just one year, and Math proficiency increased from 20% to 32%. These improvements, paired with our graduation rate rising from 85% to 88%, show that Leyden students are meeting higher expectations and building the skills necessary for success beyond high school.

ENRICH

This year, both our female and male athletes had access to new and emerging opportunities! The first athletic competition on our new turf field this fall was the debut game of our new girls flag football team. They had a large turnout for the team and are looking forward to building on this year's momentum. The boys also added bowling to their list of athletic options, and enjoyed their first season on the lanes. We value opportunities for enrichment and know that students who are engaged in extracurricular activities are better connected to school and peers.

EMPOWER

We launched a robust dual degree program with Triton in 2023 and have seen the program double in student enrollment during those three school years. This year, 23 students are earning high school and college credits concurrently, and will graduate Leyden with a high school diploma and an associate's degree. This offers students an opportunity to reduce college costs and accelerate their path to a degree or career credential.

We are proud of the direction we are heading, and we are energized by the responsibility that lies ahead. With the continued partnership of our families, staff, and the entire Leyden community, I am confident that we will build on these improvements and ensure that every student leaves Leyden prepared for a bright and fulfilling future.

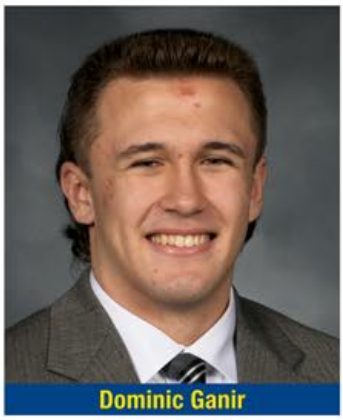
With Leyden Pride,
Nick Polyak, Superintendent



This One Amazing Story features **Angelina Fakhoury-Siverts**, East Leyden alum and trailblazer as the first-ever female football player in the West Suburban Conference. Today, Angelina continues to break barriers as the Vice President of Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer at City of Hope Cancer Center–Chicago. Her journey from the Leyden field to hospital leadership is a story of courage, dedication, and compassion.

Watch video


Julio Andujar Araujo


Dominic Ganir


Jacob Ganir


Jesus Rosa Gomez

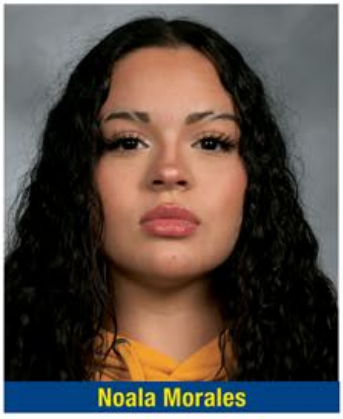
Inspirational Eagles

named at Leyden High School District


Lily Mason


Francisco Melendez


Hilliana Mendoza


Noala Morales


Lizeth Romero


Angel Marcos Payan


Maylen Parra Sales


Jacob Sanchez

On December 10, the Chicago-O'Hare Rotary, in partnership with Leyden High School District 212, honored the following twelve students in its 11th annual Inspirational Eagle Awards: **Julio Andujar Araujo**, **Dominic Ganir**, **Jacob Ganir**, **Jesus Rosa Gomez**, **Lily Mason**, **Francisco Melendez**, **Hilliana Mendoza**, **Noala Morales**, **Lizeth Romero**, **Angel Marcos Payan**, **Maylen Parra Sales**, and **Jacob Sanchez**.

The purpose of these awards are to expand what is typically acknowledged in terms of academics and athletics, and instead to honor students for accomplishments in self improvements, overcoming adversity, and contributions to the community.

Scan the QR Code for the full story

Leyden High School District 212 appoints



The Leyden High School District 212 Board of Education is pleased to announce the appointment of Katy Boehm as its newest member. Boehm will fill the vacancy left by the recent passing of her mother, longtime Board Member Sandra Boehm, serving the remainder of her term through the spring of 2027.

A proud Leyden alumna, Boehm brings deep roots in the community and an impressive record of service and educational involvement. She currently serves as a school librarian at Scott Elementary School, in one of

Dr. Nick Polyak Named 2026 Illinois

An independent panel commissioned by the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) has named Dr. Nick Polyak, Superintendent of Leyden High School District 212, as the 2026 Illinois Superintendent of the Year. The highly competitive selection process judges nominees on the following criteria: academic achievement, preparing students for the future, social-emotional support, teaching and instruction and leadership. This honor recognizes Dr. Polyak's exceptional leadership, visionary initiatives, and unwavering commitment to educational excellence at the local, state, and national levels.

"Dr. Polyak's recognition as the 2026 Illinois Superintendent of the Year is a testament to his dedication to student success, equity, innovation, and the development of future leaders in education," said Leyden Board President Greg Ignoffo. "Being a superintendent isn't a job, it's a calling. This is a 24/7/365 job, and we know that he is wrestling with monumental decisions on where we are going with our district, our students, and our community, and he just makes it look so simple."

Dr. Polyak has served as an educator for 27 years and has held the role of superintendent for the past 17 years. Since taking the helm at Leyden in 2013. He has led transformational change focused on the guiding principle of "What's Best for the Kids."

"First and foremost, Nick is a very positive human being," said Maine Township District 207 Superintendent Dr. Tatiana Bonuma. "He always looks at every situation and every person in the very best possible light. He is also very focused on providing students opportunities and access."

Under his leadership, Leyden has completed more than $200 million in facility modernization projects, updating 60- and 100-year-old buildings, without raising local property taxes. A pioneer in educational technology, Leyden was one of the first three school districts in the nation to adopt Chromebooks in 2012, and was an early adopter for the movement for e-learning implementation well before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Polyak also supported the reimagining of the student experience through innovations like Co.Lab, a groundbreaking interdisciplinary freshman program that breaks down traditional content silos. He has championed extracurricular opportunities, adding e-sports and flag football, to create new pathways for student connection and engagement.

"He always makes us feel like we belong, no matter where we are at," said Student Board Member Jonathan Guerrero.

Beyond Leyden, Dr. Polyak has made a profound impact across Illinois by investing in the next generation of educational leaders. He has developed and taught the Illinois Aspiring Superintendent Academy for over a decade, mentoring thousands, with more than 100 past participants currently serving as superintendents throughout the state.

"Everytime we work together, I feel like I leave sharper, and I know that the people we work with leave sharper too," said Northshore District 112 Superintendent Dr. Michael Lubelfeld.

Katy Boehm to Board of Education

Leyden's valued partner districts, and is an active member of the Franklin Park Library Board. She was also a member of the planning committee for Leyden's 100th Anniversary Gala and has shared her time and talents with the Leyden marching band and color guard for 17 years. Her volunteerism and professional dedication reflect a lifelong commitment to learning, literacy, and public service.

"Katy embodies the spirit of engagement and community that defines Leyden," said Board President Greg Ignoffo. "Her experience in education, her leadership in local organizations, and her thoughtful approach to service make her an exceptional addition to our Board. While her mother's legacy will always be part of Leyden's story, Katy has earned this appointment entirely on her own merits."

The District extends its deepest appreciation to the Boehm family for their ongoing contributions to the Leyden community. The Board looks forward to working with Katy as she helps continue the District's mission to educate, enrich, and empower all students.

"Leyden has always meant so much to me and is truly a special place," said Boehm. "The opportunities Leyden students have, from academics to athletics to music to service to trades, are truly remarkable. I look forward to collaborating with the board members and administrators to continue building and supporting these incredible opportunities for all Leyden Eagles. I'm honored to continue my mom's legacy of service while bringing my own perspective as both an educator and alumna."

Superintendent of the Year

Nationally, Dr. Polyak has led three AASA (The School Superintendents Association) leadership cohorts and taught aspiring superintendents through blended programs that connect leaders across states. His influence as a thought leader in education is reflected in his five published books, his decade of work running the international #suptchat on Twitter/X, and his keynote presentations delivered on five continents.

"I haven't done any of this alone - I'm incredibly grateful to my colleagues, mentors, and friends across Illinois and beyond who have supported and inspired me," said Dr. Polyak. "I am also truly blessed to serve as the Superintendent at Leyden, where the Board, teachers and staff are the reason we are able to accomplish such innovative programs for kids. I can't wait to see where they want to go next, and how I can support them in their pursuits of excellence."



Dr. Polyak (left), pictured with Mr. Victor Gomez, Dr. Julie Lam, and Vega, the Leyden mascot. This is the first time in history that one school district has both the Illinois Teacher of the Year (Gomez) and the Superintendent of the Year simultaneously.

Dr. Polyak was publicly honored by the IASA during the Joint Annual Conference, which includes participation from the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), and the Illinois Association of of School Administrators (IASA), held in downtown Chicago, November 21-23. Thousands of school board members, administrators, and industry professionals were in attendance. The Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) is the state's premier advocacy organization for school administrators with nearly 1,750 members.

Watch video

One Amazing Story:



This One Amazing Story features **Gabby Bienkowska**, Leyden alum and a proud new graduate of Illinois State University's Construction Management program. Gabby is now putting her skills to work with International Contractors, Inc. - and her very first project brought her right back to Leyden. She's part of the team leading our current renovation projects, making her return especially meaningful. Don't be surprised if you spot her in the halls, helping shape the future of the school she once called home!

Watch video

Leyden honors the service of Sandra Boehm

Leyden High School District 212 extends its heartfelt condolences on the passing of Sandra Boehm, a dedicated member of the Board of Education and a long-time resident. Boehm served the schools and its communities for 13 years, always working with integrity, vision, and a deep commitment to students.

Throughout her service, Boehm championed initiatives that strengthened opportunities for all learners, supported our teachers and staff, and helped guide the district through times of both growth and challenge. Beyond the boardroom, she and her family were deeply involved in the music community at Leyden. She was a trusted neighbor, friend, and advocate for the arts.

"We know this loss will be felt deeply across our community," said Superintendent Dr. Nick Polyak. "Our thoughts, our prayers, and our sympathies are with her family and loved ones. We invite our school community to join us in remembering Sandy with gratitude for the years of leadership, compassion, and dedication she gave to Leyden's students, families, and staff."



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Leyden High School District 212 is an equal opportunity institution, committed to compliance with all applicable state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination. This includes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, order of protection status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, homelessness and marital/parental status, including pregnancy.

As required by S.B. 898, you may go to Leyden's website to view our budget at: www.leyden212.org

East Campus
3400 Rose Street
Franklin Park, IL 60131

West Campus
1000 N. Wolf Road
Northlake, IL 60164

Leyden District 212 Board of Education

Board of Education meetings are in the East Campus Board Room


Mr.Gregory T. Ignoffo
President


Mrs. Gloria Murawska
Vice President


Mr. James A. Lima
Secretary


Mr. Joseph Trevino
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Mrs. Lisa Anthony
Member


Katy Boehm
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Mr. Cesar Garcia
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Student Member (W)