



LEYDEN

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 212



Leyden Mascot “Vega” celebrates birthday!

On Thursday, February 12, (2-12!) Leyden proudly celebrated the birthday of our loved Eagle mascot, Vega. Named by students during Leyden High School’s 100th Anniversary celebration last year, Vega has quickly become a symbol of Leyden pride and spirit. Both campuses joined in the fun with birthday celebrations that brought students and staff together to honor the blue and gold eagle who continues to soar at the heart of our school community.

Superintendent's Corner



Dr. Nick Polyak
Superintendent

Dear Leyden Community,

One of the things I love about Leyden is that we have a culture of innovation and forward thinking. Almost a decade ago, a group of our teachers set out to design a new program for our students. The result of their work is our Co.Lab program for freshmen.

Co.Lab is an interdisciplinary approach to coursework. Instead of taking each course independently, moving from classroom to classroom, students in Co.Lab learn their content in ways that connect the information together. Specifically, they earn credits in English, Science, Social Studies, Health, Physical Education, and Digital Literacy. This structure actually earns them additional class credit and builds the capacity in their schedule to take an additional elective course while at Leyden.

Student work is meant to simulate the project-based nature of the world they will live in. While working through the curriculum, they also build skills related to collaboration, confidence, public speaking, empowerment, and community engagement. We now have many years of data and I am happy to report that Co.Lab students are 5% more likely to graduate from our high schools in four years than their peers - many of them earning honors credits along the way!



Multiple times per year, those students hold exhibits of their work. It's an amazing time to see what they have learned and how they have applied it across multiple disciplines and within their own communities. To date, we have entertained hundreds of educators from across the country who have traveled to Leyden to see Co.Lab in action.

Co.Lab is just one example of the programs we have at Leyden that our whole community can be proud of. I'd like to thank all of our educators who constantly strive to innovate and meet the ever-changing needs of our students so that they are ready to take on the world.

With Leyden Pride,
Nick Polyak, Superintendent

State Representative Stephens issues Leyden proclamations

(From left to right) State Representative (20th District) **Brad Stephens**, a lifelong district resident and East Leyden alum, issued official proclamations celebrating Illinois Teacher of Year **Victor Gómez** and Illinois Superintendent of the Year **Dr. Nick Polyak** at a Board of Education meeting this winter.



Public insights guide strategic plan

Leyden announces the findings of its public engagement process as it seeks to design a strategic plan to direct student improvements for the next 3-5 years and beyond.

More than 150 students, parents and staff met with the strategic planning team to provide ideas and insights,

and an additional 60 parents shared thoughts through an online forum. Hundreds of concepts, challenges and ideas were explored, as the depth and range of topics were extensive. From that work, four goal areas emerged that align with Leyden's current mission of Educate, Enrich, Empower:



Focus Area 1:

Freshmen on Track

Ensure freshmen start their high school educational journey strong

Focus Area 2:

Family Partnerships

Facilitate purposeful family partnerships that enrich the student experience

Focus Area 3:

Academic improvement

Help students grow in the areas of English Language Arts (ELA), Math and Science

Focus Area 4:

Life After Graduation

Leverage opportunities for post-secondary preparation

"While we have always had conceptual plans in place guiding our work, this is the first time in recent history that Leyden is committing to concrete numbers that measure progress towards success for our students," said Superintendent Dr. Nick Polyak. "It gives us an opportunity to monitor our actions, see what is having the most impact, and make adjustments in real time as needed to ensure we are moving forward in the best way possible."

Throughout the spring semester, the administration, department chairs and staff, will be designing an action plan aimed at achieving these goals along with measurable data to track progress over the next five years.

"We ultimately want to get to a place where we can promise our families that if students get to school everyday we can guarantee their best chance for success," said Polyak.



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Watch video

One Amazing

Grateful for those who serve



This One Amazing Story features what is quickly becoming a Leyden tradition: Hosting Thanksgiving for the Navy recruits! Our food services team gives up their holiday with family to prepare and serve a traditional meal for our **Great Lakes Navy** recruits. Our **National Honor Society** students, musicians and staff join in to interact and entertain the recruits, who are in the middle of basic training and haven't had a chance to socialize in eight weeks. And, lastly, **Veterans** from the local legion attend and support their fellow servicemen. This video features stories from recruits, food service employees, Veterans, and students who all connect over this very special holiday at Leyden.

Penny, Leyden's support dog

This One Amazing Story has officially gone to the dogs - in the very best way! For the first time ever, we're featuring a four-legged colleague: **Penny**, Leyden's beloved support dog. With a gentle nudge, a wagging tail, and an uncanny ability to know exactly who needs her most, Penny brings calm to busy hallways and comfort to students and staff alike. Penny's impact is undeniable, and she reminds us that sometimes the most powerful support doesn't come from the words we say, but rather, the things we do.



ing Story:

Watch videos



Ashraf Amaya

We bet you might not know we have a former National Basketball Association (NBA) athlete working here at Leyden! Special Education Teacher **Ashraf Amaya** played for the Vancouver Grizzlies and the Washington Bullets for a total of 85 games after a standout showing on the team at Southern Illinois University. In addition to teaching, he also coaches the sophomore boys basketball team. Learn more about this local boy's journey to the NBA and to a teaching career here at Leyden.



Allisson Huitron, Culinary Creative



Get to know West Leyden Senior **Allisson Huitron**, a culinary creative, who has just been accepted to the Culinary Institute of America in New York City. Allison cooked and baked her way through Leyden, taking many of the class offerings throughout her years, and also catering many of the events we have all attended. She is an entrepreneur, who runs a bakery out of her family's kitchen and gets clients through social media.



Teacher receives Illinois Directors of Student Activities Award

West Leyden Special Education teacher **Rob Abouchar** has been selected as a recipient of the Illinois Directors of Student Activities (IDSA) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Award. This honor recognizes educators who demonstrate leadership in creating inclusive and

equitable student activity programs. Mr. Abouchar was nominated by Anne Gruettner for his meaningful contributions and commitment to student belonging. He was recognized at the IDSA awards banquet in February. Mr. Abouchar is retiring at the end of this school year.

A Record-Setting Season for the Leydenettes

The Leydenettes varsity team made history at the IHSA sectional competition, earning the highest sectional score the Leydenettes has ever achieved and breaking the school's all-time high score record. This unforgettable performance was the result of countless hours of hard work, passion, and commitment, making this competition season one to remember.



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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



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