

Spring 2021



LEYDEN

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 212



Leyden student artists , **Khushi Patel** and **Daniel Alvarado** were Gold medal winners for their works of art titled respectively, *Reflecting Beauty* (above) and *Gesture* (at right) in the 2021 Midwest Region Scholastic Art & Writing competition.



Superintendent's Corner



Nick Polyak, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Hello Leyden Family,

As we hopefully near the end of this pandemic, I am reminded of a quote that is attributed to Abraham Lincoln that I believe captures the moment: "We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses."

We have all experienced great loss throughout this pandemic. We have lost loved ones. We have missed out on time with friends and family. Our students have lost graduations, sports seasons, and many of the aspects of the high school experience that create lifetime memories. To be sure, this "rose bush" has had significant thorns and those losses are real and significant.

This "thorn bush" also has roses though. Our students have learned a new sense of resiliency that will be a defining quality of their generation. We found new and different ways to connect with one another and to make memories. We created a new way to run our schools and much of what we have learned will benefit and improve our practices moving forward.

While we cannot ignore the "thorns" of this pandemic, let us also celebrate the "roses." I am always excited to share what is happening at Leyden, and I thank you again for all you do to support our students and our community!

With #leydenpride,
Nick Polyak

Construction Summary

Just one week before the pandemic forced school closures, Leyden students and staff walked the halls of newly renovated and constructed sections at both East and West.

In February 2021, nearly one year later, the lights came back on in classrooms and students walked the hallways again. It was a new beginning in so many ways, and in terms of our new facilities, it was a long-overdue debut.

Highlights Include:

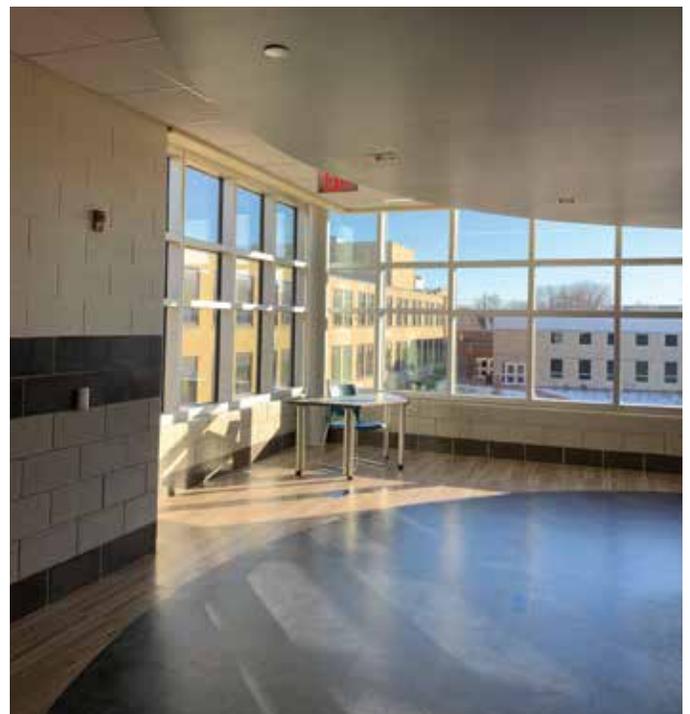
East:

- Safe and secure entrances
- Cafeteria, coffee shop, and student commons area
- Greenhouse
- Aquatic center
- Preschool and daycare center
- An arts wing, housing choral and instrumental music
- Locker rooms
- (4) Science labs
- Numerous repurposed, renovated spaces, including a wrestling gym

West:

- Safety enhancements, including updated P.A. system
- Cafeteria, coffee shop and student commons area
- Library
- (4) New classrooms and (4) renovated classrooms
- Catering kitchen
- Building addition

"We are grateful to our community, our families, our elected officials, and our local businesses for their continued support of our district," said Superintendent Dr. Nick Polyak. "This support allows us to offer our students the best possible experience."



Leyden's Scholastic Art & Writing Winners 2021

Leyden student artists had an incredibly strong showing of 2 Gold medal winners, 8 Silver Key recipients, and 9 Honorable Mentions in the Midwest Region.

Gold key recipient **Daniel Alvarado** said of his graphic design piece, titled *Gesture*, "This is one of my favorite pieces because I was able to incorporate a lot of different techniques and subtle alterations to the image so there are a lot of different things going on all at once."

Leyden's second Gold key recipient is **Khushi Patel**. Her winning photograph is titled *Reflecting Beauty*. Khushi explained, "When I went out to shoot, it was Fall so there were leaves everywhere, I brought a mirror to experiment with, and it was dark. I hadn't done a photoshoot in the dark before so I was trying it out for the first time."

The following artists were honored:
East: **Annaliese To, Ariana Sosa, Cyrril Reyes, Daniel Alvarado, Dany Rangel, Julia Skoczen, Khushi Patel,**

Sophia Perez and Tahnani Pinero;
West: **Yuliana Diaz, Molly Kasch and Julie Nambo.**



Artist: *Annaliese To*
Title: *Wisdom Fading*
School: *East*



Artist: *Molly Kasch*
Title: *Sea Monster*
School: *West*



"The aquatic center, tennis courts, and turf field will have a significant impact on our current and future Eagles. The aquatic center has not only increased space for our swimming programs but has allowed us to offer diving to our athletes and hopefully Water Polo as a sport in the near future. The multi-use turf field will decrease the frequency of athletic cancellations due to weather-related conditions. What's more, our Leyden P.E. classes will also benefit from the new spaces."

— Rick Mason, Assistant Principal

"This space is so much more than a traditional library. With a modern maker space, reading and math centers, a quiet study room, a stage and more, this has become an even more central part of the whole high school. The library is now a pride point for the students, the staff and the community. Students want to congregate there and use all of the resources the library has to offer."

— Janine M. Asmus, West Leyden Librarian



Inspirational Eagles named at Leyden High School District

On March 16, the Chicago-O'Hare Rotary, in partnership with Leyden High School District 212, honored twelve students in its sixth annual Inspirational Eagle Awards. The purpose of these awards is to expand what is "typically" acknowledged in terms of academics, and instead to honor students for accomplishments in improving or maintaining academic excellence, attendance, behavior and overall citizenship. Congratulations Inspirational Eagles: Precious Cotto, Endy Didovic, Jhenne Harden, Sabrina Lazzara, Bryan Luna, Roaa Marei, Kristian Martinez-Salas, Nelly Mejia-Gutierrez, Laisha Muneton, Dany Rangel, Kayley Reith and Fernando Ruiz.



Precious Cotto

Precious had a difficult life, specifically battling depression while putting up a hard exterior throughout her time at

Leyden. This led to a number of issues in and out of school, from ditching class, to substance abuse, fighting, and ultimately being arrested. Slowly, Precious learned to trust herself and will now be joining the U.S. Army after high school. Precious would like to recognize Mr. Soczewa.

Endy Didovic

This pandemic was also hard on Endy, whose parents struggled in their jobs. Endy thought fast and turned his passion for Science into a job to help support his family. Endy was hired as a Pharmacy Technician. Seeing



the immense need, Endy became Immunization Administration Certified. He has since helped give COVID vaccinations throughout the Leyden community. This life-altering experience led him to apply and later be accepted to the Chicago College of Pharmacy in their accelerated doctorate program. Endy would like to recognize Mr. Pazol.

Jhenne Harden

What makes Jhenne Inspirational is how she learned to strike a balance. While her academics are

impeccable, she has spent countless hours in Cheer and Poms. She has been part of the Leyden Bears Youth Football and Cheerleading team as a teen coach for several years. Additionally, she is the captain of Leyden's Cheer team. It's often thought that the quality of a high school is the sum of its teachers, programs, and facilities; rather, it's students like Jhenne that make Leyden a special place to be. Jhenne would like to recognize Ms. Cobo.



Sabrina Lazzara

Sabrina joined the Leyden family as a sophomore transferring from Trinity High School. One of the most

challenging periods in Sabrina's life is when her father was in the hospital. Worrying so much about her father's health made it difficult to eat, sleep, and be the good student she has always strived to be. At Leyden, Sabrina was able to find her career path and work on a post secondary plan. Sabrina would like to recognize Mrs. Reynolds.



Bryan Luna-Carreno

Bryan is a strong, independent young man with a great heart. He has maintained academic success in spite of adversities he has faced. Before Leyden, Bryan attended Rhodes School. He had excellent grades and attendance. From

the outside it appeared like Bryan had the perfect life, but as we know, things aren't always what they seem. Bryan watched his father struggle in so many ways, and ultimately this experience reaffirmed Bryan's commitment to lead a clean life. Bryan would like to recognize Mr. Henning.



Roaa Marei
Crisscrossing the world several times Roaa learned some life lessons. Life can be unfair at times. It's hard not having her father here

with her. Through these experiences Roaa has learned to handle the curve balls that life can throw at you. She thrived academically through rigorous A.P. coursework and socially through 44 different clubs including Key Club International where she serves as a student board member. Finally, and most importantly, by giving back through community service. In fact, she had logged over 160 hours of community service while at Leyden. Roaa would like to recognize Ms. Funes and Ms. Heppeler.

Kristian Martinez-Salas

Classes weren't connecting for him. As a result his Freshman year wasn't pretty. Luckily



Kristian was referred to our Tapestry program. Using a family-centered approach, Tapestry Student Advocates meet one-to-one for mentoring. They provide social-emotional support, and goal setting. With this support everything changed for Kristian. His Junior and Senior year Kristian took rigorous A.P. and Dual Credit courses securing early college credits. Beyond academics Kristian got involved more at Leyden. Kristian would like to recognize Ms. Olivas.

Nelly Mejia-Gutierrez

Nelly left the comfort of her home to travel to the U.S. to learn English and study. While learning English did not come quickly or easily for Nelly she gritted her way to where she is now. She took extra classes in the summer. Besides challenging herself academically, she gives back to her peers by being a member of the Excellence Club where she can explore all that Leyden has to offer while acting as a role model to her ELL peers. Nelly would like to recognize Ms. Baran-Janco.



Laisha Muneton

Laisha grew up in a Spanish-only-speaking household. While this gave her the benefit of culture

and language, it did present some challenges during her education. Slowly things began to "click." She began taking education courses and joined the Future Educators club. There she was able to write lessons, and teach others. Her desire to help others didn't stop with education either, she joined Operation Snowball as well. In this organization the goal is to spread kindness throughout the school and community. Laisha would like to recognize Mrs. Maldonado.

Dany Rangel

Dany migrated from Mexico to the U.S. at the age of 14 not speaking any English. In addition, Dany has



struggled with identity issues for most his life and just recently found himself. With the help of his amazing ELL teachers, Dany was able to quickly move from ELL courses to A.P. courses. Along the way he fell in love with another language, French. Besides being trilingual, his talent and dedication allowed him to take A.P. Studio Art this year where he continues to succeed. Dany would like to recognize Mrs. Rosen.



Kayley Reith

Kayley is the first female baseball player in Leyden history. She knows that being a trailblazer puts a

spotlight on her, whether she wants that or not. But instead of shying away from this attention, she has learned to embrace her status as a role model for other athletes who break the gender barrier. Kayley would like to recognize Mrs. Gudex.

Fernando Ruiz

Fernando has consistently been a leader in his classes, attends regularly, and is focused on



engaging with course materials. His grades demonstrate that he tries hard, regardless of personal struggles he may face in advancing academically. Fernando has progressively worked toward taking more challenging coursework each year he has attended West Leyden. Fernando would like to recognize Mrs. Gonzalez

TIP: To view their full stories, scan the QR code with your phone's camera.



Board of Education crafts statement on equity and justice

In support of the district's continued focus on equity and justice, the Leyden Board of Education recently adopted a statement exemplifying these core values. This is the culmination of six months of work, where the Board:

- Reviewed related articles from the Illinois Association of School Boards and the National School Board Association;

- Looked deeply into the work of other districts for ideas of language and design aspects;
- Considered the district mission and vision statements to ensure alignment.

"We feel that this captures who we are at Leyden and who we want to be as we continue to improve to best meet

the needs of all of our students, staff and community, said Board President Greg Ignoffo. "Like our District Commitment says, we will continue to work towards equity and justice for all. This is an ongoing process that requires constant introspection and must be at the forefront of everything that we do."

School Board Equity and Justice Statement

The mission of Leyden High School District 212 is to Educate, Enrich, and Empower our Students and Communities. This is accomplished by always keeping a focus on our vision of "Doing What's Best for the Kids." Leyden High School District 212 believes in the importance of equity and justice by committing to:

EDUCATE

Raising the achievement of all students while eliminating differences in academic achievement based upon race, family income, disabilities, sexual identity, gender identity, status as an English learner, or any other factors.

Recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse staff that enhances the school community in regard to age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, sex, sexual identity, and gender identity.

ENRICH

Establishing and strengthening community partnerships (social service and health agencies, community organizations, businesses, universities, etc.) to address the needs of students and families.

Ensuring that equitable distribution of resources throughout the district is based on individual student, building, and community needs.

EMPOWER

Continue monitoring and adapting anti-discrimination and anti-racist practices, policies and procedures to ensure that each student and staff member is afforded a respectful, inclusive, and supportive learning environment.

Ensuring all board members and staff examine and change educational practices, policies, and processes that might contribute to and perpetuate historical disparities to those who have been marginalized in society by their identity, cultural or economic status.

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
Member



Mrs. Lisa Anthony
Member

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.



Mrs. Sandra Boehm
Member



Mr. Cesar Garcia
Member



Ms. Amanda Le
Student Member



Ms. Cassandra Diaz
Student Member

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

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1000 N. Wolf Road
Northlake, IL 60164

Thank you to those who contributed photos to this edition of the newsletter.