

The Irish Highlighter

Seneca High School's Semi-Annual Newsletter – Fall 2018

Board of Education - School Board President, Ron Frye

Tradition vs Change

Beginning with Thanksgiving, the “holiday season” is ripe with tradition. From what we eat to where we gather to how we celebrate, tradition has a special role in our lives. As I think back on the traditions in my life, however, I realize that these sacred customs never really stay the same. Gradually, new people, locations, and ideas influence these traditions, sometimes revolutionarily and other times evolutionarily. So to it is with schooling. Reflecting on our own high school experiences quite understandably evokes feelings of nostalgia. We remember the good ole days of our past and naturally want those experiences to continue for our kids and grandkids, while also desiring things to be better for them than they were for us. I guess we want the best of both worlds.

The work of the Seneca High School Board of Education takes place in an environment characterized by this tug-of-war between tradition and change. SHS has many proud traditions it relishes while at the same time working to ensure our students have the necessary programs and experiences to succeed in the rapidly changing modern world. We can neither change for change's sake nor cling to an educational system that no longer has relevancy. Instead, we strive for a balance between that which stands the test of time and that which challenges the status quo. In the end, we are always trying to do what is best for our students. In the pages that follow, you will see examples of our efforts to honor our traditions while giving our students the best programs and environment with which to grow and learn.

The current Seneca High School Board of Education Members are:

Ron Frye, President; Sara Olson, Vice President; Rich Hamilton, Secretary; Jason Eltrevoog; Cory Yandell; Joe Johnson; and Mark Victor.

The Importance of an Education – From SHS Superintendent, Dr. James Carlson

At Seneca High School, we operate on the belief that high school is not the end but rather a means to an end. That is, while earning a high school diploma is a proud milestone, it most often is not sufficient to begin a life of personal economic viability. In fact, the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University found that by 2020, 65% of all jobs will require some type of education and training after high school. This does not mean all students must get a 4-year college degree; however, it does strongly indicate that a high school diploma is no longer sufficient for a great number of life-supporting careers.

To assist our students in obtaining the knowledge and skills for life after high school, we work hard to ensure our core curriculum and career and technical education courses are up-to-date, providing the necessary rigor for post-high school success. Additionally, we provide students with opportunities to earn college credit while still in high school. The following SHS courses

allow students an opportunity to earn college credit:

Advanced Placement Language and Composition (3)
Advanced Placement Literature and Composition (3)
Speech (3)
College Algebra (4)
College Trigonometry (3)
Calculus I (5)
US History to 1865 (3)
US History to Present (3)
General Psychology (3)
Early Childhood Education II (3)
Basic Nursing Assistant Training (8)
Medical Terminology (3)
Welding (4)
Engineering Graphics II (3)
Athletic PE (2)
Exploration of American Music (3)

Additionally, some relatively new courses offered at SHS are also designed to prepare students for their futures, including Algebra III, where students who receive a grade of C or higher are able to take credit bearing courses in college instead of a non-credit bearing remedial course in mathematics. We also now offer Broadcast Journalism, Computer Programming, Graphic Design, Robotics, and Vocational Math.

Success in school is predicated on a partnership between the school, home, and the student. The knowledge and skills taught in school are critically important to future success, but perhaps the most important habits our kids can develop that will lead to success after high school are known as soft skills. Soft skills are “people skills” and relate to how one works with others. Regardless of one’s profession, employers want individuals who 1) show up on time; 2) work hard; 3) are persistent, honest, and positive; 4) are good communicators; and 5) get along with their co-workers. The best way to develop soft skills for the workplace is to ensure they are being developed in high school. Students who come to school every day, work hard in their classes, don’t quit when things get tough, follow the rules of good behavior, and maintain a positive outlook are sure to be successful in and out of school.

As we near Christmas break, on behalf of the Seneca High School Family, I wish you and those you love a safe and joyful holiday season.

Message from our Chief School Business Officer (CSBO), Dan Stecken

Several authors have written about the “Magic of New Beginnings.” Well, transitioning from a classroom teacher to the Chief School Business Official not only has made for a whirlwind start to the 2018-19 school year, but it also has been a pleasant new beginning to my career. In

addition to my new administrative position in the District Office at Seneca Township High School, we also have a new bookkeeper, Mrs. Lesley McGuan, and a new district office secretary/bookkeeper, Mrs. Nadine Maierhofer. After our start on July 1 of this year, we have been diligently working to continue the successful district financial ratings of our predecessors.

Each year we present our annual tax levy at our December Board of Education meeting. In December of 2013, we reached an agreement with Exelon's LaSalle Station that determined the taxable value of Exelon and also set the valuation of the nuclear power plant at a constant rate tax rate of \$1.79838 for seven consecutive years; thus, the levy years of the agreement are from 2013 to 2019. So, as the taxable value of the station increases, our school district must engage in a process of abatement to ensure the tax rate remains constant at the \$1.79838 value. In the 2017 levy tax year, the station was valued at \$430 million. In the 2018 levy tax year, the station value is \$435 million. Finally, in the 2019 levy tax year, the station will be valued at \$460 million. Due to the change in the taxable value of the plant, we will be asking for more than 5% of the previous year's extension. This process requires a hearing advertisement in the newspaper. Please note that before you receive your tax bill, we will abate our request down to the \$1.79838 constant rate so that the property tax rate you and all taxpayers pay will remain at \$1.79838.

At our November Board of Education meeting, we presented our board members with the 2018 Levy and preliminary 2019-2020 Budget. On November 14, we presented a big picture balanced budget. We are pleased to present a balanced budget for the 2019-20 school year, which will be adopted at the December Board of Education meeting. This budget will be amended at the September 2019 budget hearing.

Seneca High School's Newest Additions – From the Desk of SHS Principal, Mr. Marty Voiles

Seneca High School is thrilled to announce seven new teachers have joined the SHS staff to begin the 2018-2019 school year. With a high rate of retiring staff over the last several years, SHS is beginning to take on a different look! The administration is happy to have these folks join our highly skilled SHS teaching staff and project these individuals to become leaders in our building for many years to come. Please read the following bio's on each of our new teachers and introduce yourself the next time you visit our campus.

Mr. Tim Brungard – Physical Education

Mr. Brungard joins the SHS staff after teaching seven years at Seneca Grade School. In addition to teaching Physical Education courses, Mr. Brungard serves as an assistant coach in both Baseball and Cross Country.

Noah Champene – English

Mr. Champene brings six years of teaching experience (all in the Peotone School District) to SHS. Mr. Champene is currently teaching English I, English II and Public Speaking. Additionally, Mr. Champene just completed his first year as Head Volleyball coach and led the Lady Irish to an all-time school record for wins in a single season with a record of 31-6-1 while capturing Regional and Sectional Championships. Congratulations to Mr. Champene and his Lady Irish squad!!

Mr. Levi Derber – Special Education

Mr. Derber comes to SHS after teaching six years at LaSalle-Peru Township High School. Mr. Derber's assignment consists of teaching Math, History and Resource within the Special Education Department. This fall Mr. Derber served as an Assistant Coach in the football program and will assume similar duties this spring with the boys and girls track programs.

Ms. Allie Lardi – Special Education

Ms. Lardi is the second new teacher in the Special Education Department and joins the SHS staff after teaching two years at Saratoga Elementary School in Morris, Illinois. Ms. Lardi will be teaching English and Resource while assuming Assistant Coaching responsibilities in the volleyball and basketball programs, respectively.

Mrs. Bridget Losoff – Science

Mrs. Losoff joins the SHS staff after teaching for seven years at Ottawa Marquette High School. Mrs. Losoff will be teaching various levels of Chemistry and Physics and will serve as the Head Coach of the SHS Scholastic Bowl team.

Ms. Becca Peebles – English

Ms. Peebles is a 2018 graduate of Illinois State University and enters the 2018-2019 school year as a first year teacher. Ms. Peebles will be teaching AP Language, Creative Writing, English IV and Speech. Ms. Peebles is an advisor in both our TRUST and Drama Club programs and serves as a Sponsor for the Sophomore class.

Mr. JR Welsh – Social Studies

Mr. Welsh joins the SHS staff after teaching thirteen years in the Peotone School District. Mr. Welsh is currently teaching Current Issues and World Studies. Mr. Welsh's extra-curricular involvement includes serving as an Assistant Coach of the SHS Scholastic Bowl team and is a Co-Sponsor for the Freshmen class.

We welcome our new staff members to our SHS family, and we wish them the very best in their first year at Seneca High School!

Go Irish!!

Message from Student Success Counselor, Joan Lockridge

New Trends Link Attendance to Future Success

STHS always looks for new developments in the workforce in order to share information that can benefit students. These trends bring awareness to important factors that can give our youth an advantage as they move into adulthood. Thus, attendance is a frequent topic of discussion among school administrators, teachers and parents. Although it is important for students to stay home from school if they are sick, chronic absenteeism is a problem that many school districts experience. Students who are chronically absent from school are more likely to fall behind academically and less likely to have a positive attitude toward school. This issue can negatively

affect a young person's life.

The 2017 Workforce Management Trends Survey has revealed that employers value attendance rates over performance rates alone. The expansion of a healthy work ethic stems from the mindset of showing up and being ready to take on whatever challenges that may come one's way. Good attendance requires a strong skill set: motivation, perseverance, planning, and the ability to manage emotions when faced with negative experiences. These characteristics are highly regarded because they prove to be more reliable than performance alone. The survey revealed that employees with a good attendance record may not always function at the top but will consistently provide results that benefit their company over an employee that has a good performance record but does not adhere to good attendance practices.

Nurturing good attendance practices will allow for future success. Good attendance habits can be difficult to develop, but this habit is an important life skill. The lessons learned from overcoming personal challenges that hinder good attendance is valuable. It is possible that with these new findings, colleges, military recruiters, and employers will begin to weigh a student's attendance rates when deciding on admission, scholarship, and employment. It is important for families to consider these findings while helping their son or daughter navigate his/her high school experiences, as it could possibly lead to great prospects for their future.

Teacher Retirements – Mr. Brown, Mrs. Ferguson, & Mr. Houchin From the Desk of Assistant Principal, Mike Coughlin

During the 2018-2019 school year, we are celebrating Mr. Don Brown, Mrs. Mechthild Ferguson, and Mr. Kirk Houchin, all of whom will be retiring at the end of this year. The Seneca High School Board of Education, administration, faculty, and staff want to thank them for their 87 cumulative years of service. Please read further to learn more about these three respected educators.

Mr. Don Brown has taught U.S. History at Seneca High School for thirty-five years. In addition to teaching, he has worn many hats in the coaching field, but in the last several years of his career, Mr. Brown has served as an assistant varsity coach in both the football and softball programs. Mr. Brown received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from Illinois State University. He enjoys spending time with his family, golfing, reading, and following the Cubs and Packers. We are sure that Mr. Brown and his wife Becky will be spending many miles on the road, as they make many trips to Wrigley and Lambeau to watch his favorite teams.

Mrs. Mechthild Ferguson graduated from the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Bonn, Germany, with majors in Chemistry and Mathematics. She eventually moved to the United States and started teaching at Waltham Junior High School. She has been teaching math at Seneca High School for eighteen years, and she has really enjoyed being a part of the Seneca faculty. In December 2004, she earned her Master of Science degree, and in 2006, she finished her Master of Education degree from the University of St. Francis. Mrs. Ferguson enjoys gardening, baking, traveling, and running. Her summers are devoted to visits with her family in Germany and traveling with her husband, Pete. This summer she and Pete went to the Polar Circle, visiting Svalbard/Spitzbergen and Iceland. Mrs. Ferguson has coached the Math Team, the WYSE Team, and is a National Honor Society sponsor.

Mr. Kirk Houchin started his teaching career at MVK High School in December of 1985. Thirty-four years later, he will be hanging up his baseball cleats. Mr. Houchin has been a constant presence in the Guidance Department and baseball program for the past twenty-nine years. He received his bachelor's degree from Illinois State University and later earned his Guidance Counselor degree. Mr. Houchin also coached baseball at MVK Middle School for many years. He enjoys spending time with his family, reading, working in the yard, and attending sporting events. We are confident that Mr. Houchin will be fishing and attending some baseball games at Wrigley in the near future.

We want to thank Mr. Brown, Mrs. Ferguson, and Mr. Houchin for the unmeasurable difference they have made in so many lives at Seneca High School. Students and staff, alike, will miss them in so many aspects of daily life at SHS. We certainly want to thank them for everything that they have done for SHS! We wish them beautiful days ahead as they relax, read some good books, and spend some time at the ol' ballgame!

From the Desk of Activities Director, Steve Haines

Beginning of a New Era in the Land of the Irish

This school marks a new era in the Land of the Irish. After 39 years, Seneca High School left the Interstate 8 Conference and joined The Sangamon Valley Conference for Football and wrestling, and the Tri-County Conference for all other sports and activities. So 2018 marks our new venture into new conference affiliation. This past fall was the first season in the new conferences, that season left us with a lot of things to be proud of in the Land of the Irish. While I can sit here today and list a few challenges and other benefits to the change, overall the change has been a positive. Although the cross country teams brought home the only conference titles it was the ability for all our teams to be competitive in all matches and games that made this change so worthwhile. Remaining competitive gives athletes that sense of confidence and confidence allows athletes to go and do things they may not have thought they were capable of doing.

The challenges do include some of the additional travel. We have tried to balance the travel distance of the conference schools with the travel distance of our non-conference games. As much as possible, we have tried to schedule the majority of our non-conference games within 30 miles. Scheduling schools like Serena, Newark, Ottawa, Morris, Coal City, Reed Custer, and Streator is our way to balance the longer trips in these new conferences. In the new football conference, the travel was also considerable, but it did allow us to schedule Ottawa Marquette for the first time in over 20 years. Again, this game required much less travel, and also allowed us to revisit a long time rivalry.

Another challenge has been the struggle to schedule lower level games. As of now, Seneca has participation numbers that allow us to schedule games for freshmen. These games have become harder and harder to find. Not only within the new conference, but with all schools in our area. It seems that participation numbers are becoming more and more of a challenge.

Even with these challenges, the benefits of seeing our kids having a chance to be competitive in each and every game they play, far outweighs the negatives. As we look to give our students the most positive and rewarding experience we can, thus far, the changes we have made have done just that.

Here are just a few of the highlights from this past fall:

Irish football came within one game of reaching the IHSA playoffs finishing 4-5.

The fresh-soph football team had a great season going 6-2.

Golf had 1 Boy and 1 girl golfer qualify for Sectionals (Brett Yegge and Rylee Stenzel).

Only the 3rd time in school history Seneca had a young man qualify for the IHSA Golf state final, Brett Yegge.

Varsity Volleyball team had a remarkable season. Overall record for the season was 31-6-1. 31 wins – a school record.

Volleyball post-season is where the magical run happened. Lady Irish Volleyball in the Elite 8 playing a Super-Sectional for the first time in 33 years.

Boys & Girls Cross Country brought home countless trophies from the various invitationals.

Girls & Boys Cross Country teams qualified for the IHSA State finals and this is the first time for that to happen in over 30 years.

Christopher Collet was your Class 1A IHSA Cross Country Individual State Champion!

Safety and Security – A Message from SRO, Ken Sangston

My name is Ken Sangston, I am the School Resource Officer at Seneca High School. I have over 25 years of law enforcement experience and joined the Seneca Police Department in July 2018 for the sole purpose of becoming the School Resource Officer at SHS. I can tell you I'm very excited to be here. As I write this, we are several months into the school year. I have enjoyed meeting students, teachers, staff and parents throughout the past months. You may have even seen me working sporting events, outside before and after school, or at other school activities. The administration has taken a proactive approach to ensuring the safety of the students and the security of the campus and has entrusted myself and two security monitors, Jeff Cole, and Margi Weber, in carrying out these measures.

I have many responsibilities at Seneca High School related to safety and security. My main responsibility is to protect the students and staff while they are at school, and to help create a safe learning environment. I have been involved with the administration in reviewing and implementing the emergency plan and its procedures. In addition to the safety measures, I have been involved in an educational element. I have been in the classroom speaking on various topics to help our students. In October we observed Safe Teen Driver Week with daily activities, educated parents in drug awareness by bringing in the HERO trailer from Will County State's Attorney's Office, and have been involved in mentoring students. In the near future an e-cigarette and vape educational program will be given to students and the younger students at the grade schools, in conjunction with the SHS TRUST club. I will be working with the FFA to develop an Operation Prom Night in April, and I will be training the faculty and staff in ALICE, this is a procedure to respond to an emergency on campus and to further lockdown procedures.

Again, I am very honored to act as a resource to students, staff, parents, and the liaison between the police department and Seneca High School. I am available during school hours at 815-357-5022, ksangston@senecahs.org, and you can learn more about me on the school website staff page.

From the Desk of School Psychologist, Jill Rockrohr Teens and Anxiety

According to a national study from Harvard Medical School, approximately 32% of adolescents, ages 13 to 18, experience anxiety disorders. Of these teens, 8% have a severe impairment. Prevalence of any anxiety disorder among adolescents is greater among females (38%) than among males (26%), with rates generally staying consistent throughout the teen years. Given these staggering statistics, it is important to

understand the role that anxiety plays, when it can be considered an impairment, and how parents can help.

Everyone experiences anxiety in certain situations. Anxiety serves to protect our bodies from something that our brain considers to be dangerous. When our brains perceive a threat, they surge our bodies with neurochemicals (including adrenaline) to make us stronger, faster, and more alert in order to fight or flee the threat. This response is healthy when there is actually a threat and generally goes away within a few hours. For individuals with anxiety disorders, however, this response activates too often or too quickly. In these situations, anxious feelings are very intense, can go on for weeks or months, and can get in the way of a teen's ability to learn, socialize, and enjoy daily life. Research shows that untreated children with anxiety disorders are at a higher risk of poor school performance, substance use, and missing out on important social experiences.

What can you do if you feel your teen is struggling with anxiety?

Talk to your teen about it in a nonjudgmental way. Let him or her know that anxiety is normal, and other teens go through similar experiences.

Help your teen understand his or her own symptoms of anxiety. Symptoms can look different for everyone, but some common signs include the following:

- Racing heart
- Shaking hands
- Feeling dizzy or short of breath
- Problems with sleeping or eating
- Difficulty concentrating
- Angry or emotional outbursts
- Avoidance of school or social events

Encourage health habits for your teen, including good sleep habits, healthy eating, and exercise.

Talk to your teen about any unhealthy ways he/she might be coping with anxiety, such as drug or alcohol use.

Help your teen develop a toolbox of healthy coping skills, such as journaling, talking to friends, exercising, or listening to music.

If you feel that your child's health or safety is in danger, seek out additional support. At SHS, our guidance counselors, school counselor, school nurse, and school psychologist are available to speak with parents regarding concerns about their child. Family doctors and local counselors are also important resources. Unfortunately, while anxiety disorders are highly treatable, only 37% of those suffering are actually receiving treatment.

Community Connections:

FCA Service Projects

Seneca High School Fellowship of Christian Athletes have completed two service projects during the first semester.

On September 29th the FCA went to the Feed My Starving Children facilities in Aurora, Illinois to pack boxes of food for countries in need. Feed My Starving Children accepts volunteers in their facilities to fill and package food, then box the food to be shipped to countries in need across the world. FCA students gave up their Saturday night to join together to serve for this cause with Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Maierhofer attending as well.

Locally on October, 28th the FCA completed the 3rd Annual Trick or Soup event in the village of Seneca. FCA students

went door to door to collect food from the residents of Seneca who chose to participate. The food was collected and distributed to the food pantry at the First United Methodist Church. Lynn Hobbs, who runs the food pantry, was overwhelmed by the residents' generosity this year! The FCA group collected enough to fill the floor of a 16x6 enclosed trailer. Our collection total exceeded last year's donations. Thank you to all the students, Mr. Baker, Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Vroman, and Mr. Kirkton for their help. The FCA members would like to thank everyone who participated for their generosity!

Conservation in Action Pollinator Plot Update:

The Conservation in Action group (CIA) would like share an update on the SHS Pollinator Plot built in the spring of 2016. This summer the pollinator plot was in full bloom, attracting many native species of insects and other wildlife to the roughly acre in size area. The pollinator plot can be found by the baseball fields on the south side of the school property, adjacent to Rat Run Creek. The purpose of the area was to take an unused grass area and convert it into an area that would attract native pollinators. This area can be used as an outdoor learning space for Seneca High School and the community. CIA members take care of the pollinator plot year round.

Pollinating species of animals worldwide are declining due to habitat loss, pesticide usage, and climate change according to many organizations like the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Agriculture. The CIA club at Seneca High School is urging people to plant native plants in their yards to fight habitat loss of native plants, so pollinators can survive. Winter is a great time to plant native seeds in preparation for spring!

If you have any questions about native plants or how to get involved in your own yard with native plantings, contact Terry Maxwell at tmaxwell@senecahs.org

Local Banks Donate Prizes to Reality Store Event at Seneca High School

Every year Seneca High School hosts an event called the Reality Store. All sophomore students participate in the Reality Store to learn about the costs of living. Students get a "paycheck" with fake money in it, and using the money, the students have the chance to spend one month's salary on the necessities of life including housing, utilities, transportation, insurance, groceries, entertainment, clothing, etc. Besides Seneca High School, the event is made possible by Busey Bank of Mazon, and the First Midwest Bank of Seneca. As well as sending representatives to work at the Reality Store, the two banks even brought prizes to be given away through a random drawing. Busey Bank winners were Nathaniel Aldrich of Mazon and Cody Carvell of Seneca, and the First Midwest Bank of Seneca's winner was Alaina Coop of Verona.

The Official Penny War Results 2018

The Penny War this year was very successful. A big thank you to all who contributed to this year's competition! Because of your generosity local charities and food pantries will benefit. In today's economy the money raised this week will benefit those in need. The paper money alone totaled over \$350.

Coming in 5th Place and earning 1 point for the Irish Games is the Junior Class. The Juniors had very little pennies donated.

In 4th place earning 3 points is the Sophomores. They had good penny contributions but a lot of cash that was put in their containers.

Edging out the Sophomores, in 3rd place earning 5 points is the Faculty/Staff. Thanks to faculty/Staff penny contribution we were able to place 3rd. The Faculty/Staff had over \$90 in paper money!

The Freshmen and Seniors were too close to call going into the last day. Because of an orchestrated plan, this

year's penny war champions are: The seniors! They will earn 10 points and are in 1st place in the Irish Games. Coming in 2nd place despite the large amount of pennies donated, earning 7 points are the Freshmen!

Special Award Winners

2018 DAR Recipient:

Isaac Brockman was recently honored with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Good Citizen Award for Seneca High School. He is the son of Jason and Miranda Brockman of Verona.

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.

Isaac is an excellent student, and is extremely involved at Seneca High School and in the Community. Isaac serves as the senior class president. He is a member of the FFA, Math Team, Student Ambassadors, Teens Resisting Unhealthy Social Temptations (TRUST), and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He is on the Cross Country, Basketball, and Track Teams and was initiated into the National Honor Society and is the NHS President.

Being the recipient of the DAR Good Citizen Award, Isaac has completed 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.

Boys and Girls State Winners:

Seneca High School is pleased to announce that Kohlton Babcock was selected to attend the American Legion Boys State and Rebekah Chapman was selected for Girls State at Eastern Illinois University this past June. The sponsors were Seneca American Legion and the American Legion Women's Auxiliary both of Seneca. American Legion Girls/Boys State is among the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for U.S. high school students. Hundreds of junior students from Illinois high schools participated at Eastern Illinois University.

Kohlton Babcock is the son of Todd and Rachael Babcock of Seneca and Rebekah Chapman is the daughter of Bobby and Stephanie Chapman of Mazon.

