

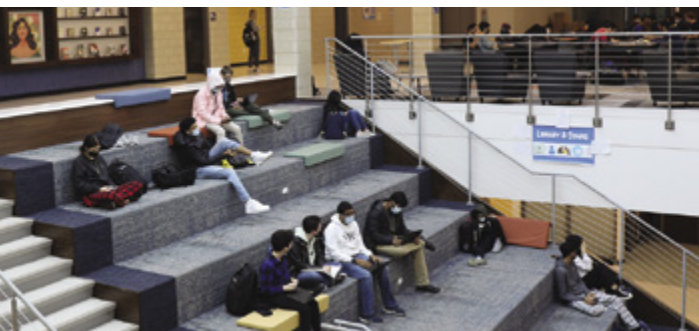


FALL 2021

Students Benefiting from New Spaces



The Maine West cafeteria remodel project is scheduled to be completed in January of 2022. This is a view from the second floor of the cafeteria.



Students at Maine East use the gathering stairs in the newly renovated Center Court area at the school. The space includes the library and many areas for students to collaborate.



Students utilize the new student commons area at Maine South to collaborate on projects, work together and socialize during free periods.

When students arrived at school this fall, they were greeted with quite a surprise: spaces in their school buildings looked completely different and were much more conducive to learning. The goal of the ongoing construction projects at Maine East, Maine South and Maine West high schools are to improve safety and security, provide updated plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems and to create spaces for students that are more functional.

At Maine East, the newly remodeled Center Court area is now the hub of activity in the school. It includes the library, offices for student support personnel and collaborative spaces for students to work and study. It includes gathering stairs that students utilize throughout the day. The other major areas of renovation include the cafeteria and weight room/fitness center.

The major change students are using at Maine South is the student commons area that includes collaborative learning space with comfortable furniture designed for group learning. In addition, the library media center has been remodeled and it connects to the new commons area. Finally, the remodeled cafeteria area and kitchen are now complete.

At Maine West, the new fieldhouse opened last spring and is now being utilized on a regular basis for gym classes, practices and competitions. Several other construction projects are nearing completion, including a remodeled two-level cafeteria that will be the center of the school.

“The theme among all of these projects is an open, collaborative concept for learning,” says Superintendent Dr. Ken Wallace. “This is the type of environment students will find in many colleges, universities and companies when they join the workforce. Our role is to prepare students for the future and the renovations are a piece of helping us reach that goal.” ■

Want to learn more about the construction projects, watch videos about the progress or see photos of the work inside the schools? Visit the district website at www.maine207.org/construction.

National Recognitions Aplenty for District 207

Educators across the nation are learning from the everyday practices in District 207. Among the areas of interest include the district’s career experience focus, teacher coaching program and technology innovation. These approaches have led to several national recognitions for the school system.

“All of this is based upon doing what is best for students,” Superintendent Dr. Ken Wallace says. “We are rethinking what high school looks like, meeting students where they are and talking about where they want to be in the future. We are discussing return on investment with students when we discuss college, career, trades or other potential paths.” ■



Kayla Hansen, Career Coordinator at Maine West High School, discusses potential internships and career experiences with a student. The discussions with students focus on return on investment to help determine their best path forward.

School District Selected as a National Demonstration Site by AASA

District 207 was selected recently for the AASA’s Learning 2025 Network of demonstration districts. A select few districts across the country are being invited by AASA, The School Superintendents Association, to be a part of this process.



AASA invited select districts to apply to be a demonstration district. Only educational systems that exemplify student-centered, equity-focused practices with a solid commitment to the whole learner, anti-marginalization, and a future driven outlook are selected as demonstration districts. The goal is for each selected district to become lighthouse learning systems and serve as beacons for other educational systems.

“District 207 represents a national standard of excellence that other districts throughout the country can learn from,” says Co-Chair of the AASA Learning 2025 Committee Bill Daggett. “At the same time, the district is also always striving to get even better.

Participating in Learning 2025 will enable the district to do both. We are very pleased to have them in the network of our nation’s leading school districts.”

AASA has implemented this program for many reasons, including the fact that the pandemic laid bare profound issues that have been evident for decades but have been addressed with minimal success.

This recognition is an attempt to share successful practices across the country that other school districts can emulate.

“No one does this work alone,” says District 207 Superintendent Dr. Ken Wallace. “We have been very blessed in District 207 to learn from others and now we can share our approach to creating better student learning conditions more widely. Seeing the evolution of our district to become a true learning community is something that I’m incredibly proud of, and it is the driver for how we serve students.” ■

District Invited to Join League of Innovative Schools

Digital Promise recently announced 37 districts, including District 207, will join the ranks of the League of Innovative Schools. The new cohort extends the network’s reach to 125 districts across 34 states.

“We are honored to join the League of Innovative Schools and be able to share our innovation journey and learn from other top school districts across the country,” says District 207 Superintendent Dr. Ken Wallace. “The students are the beneficiaries of our innovative approaches in many key areas. Our students’ lives are literally being impacted in a positive way due to our efforts to re-think the mantra that ‘we have always done it this way’ and instead think about what is possible in our schools and classrooms.”



According to Digital Promise, this year’s League of Innovative Schools cohort represents high level innovation. This year’s districts were selected based on many factors including the school system’s impact on student learning and demonstrated commitment to racial, digital and educational equality.

As part of the announcement, it was stated: “Maine Township High School District 207—the first district in the country to leverage cloud computing—was well-positioned for the shift to remote learning in 2020, so they focused their efforts on real-time coaching and adult learning to support teachers. The district’s Adult Learning program regularly convened teachers around “Problems of Practice” topics to strengthen their learning culture and provide a trusted space for sharing challenges and questions.” ■



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Students and Teacher to Represent Illinois at the Special Olympics U.S. Games

Two students and one teacher have earned special honors from the Special Olympics. Jake Besenjak and Katrina Hassman will be the Illinois Special Olympics Youth Leadership Experience representatives at the 2022 Special Olympics U.S. Games in Orlando, Florida next June. Teacher and coach Michelle Dwyer was selected to be the Special Olympics Illinois U.S. Games bowling coach for the Illinois Team.

The two juniors are the only students from Illinois selected for this honor and will learn about national trends, gain insight on Unified Sports, learn marketing and publication skills and participate in a legacy project prior to the Orlando event while serving as Co-Chairs of the Youth Activities in Illinois. The Youth Leadership Experience is an opportunity for selected students to learn about inclusion through a variety of activities and training opportunities.

Dwyer has been instrumental in developing inclusive athletic and recreational opportunities for students with disabilities. Maine South has been recognized nationally as a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, as well as an elite program by ESPN as part of its 2019 Honor Roll of Champion Schools. ■

Maine South Principal Dr. Ben Collins (at microphone) celebrates teacher Michelle Dwyer (far left), Katrina Hassman (holding flowers) and Jake Besenjak (far right) for their recognition from the Special Olympics.

