

Mrs. Raff named PA Teacher of the Year

Pequea 6th-grade teacher picked from 12 finalists

Pequea Elementary sixth-grade teacher Elizabeth Raff has been named the Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year for 2022.

Mrs. Raff, a teacher at Pequea since 2014, was selected from 12 finalists who participated in the Pennsylvania Teacher of

the Year Conference, held in Hershey on December 5.

"We are thrilled that she is being recognized for all of her hard work and dedication," said Penn Manor superintendent Mike Lechlitter. "Elizabeth's classroom is a dynamic place for her students to learn and grow. She creates a space where students are encouraged to explore ideas in a supportive and respectful environment."

As Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Raff will represent Pennsylvania teachers at the state level by speaking at conferences, leading workshops and professional development sessions and visiting school districts, colleges and universities across Pennsylvania. She also will be a candidate for the National Teacher of the Year Award.

Mrs. Raff was nominated for the state award by two previous Teacher of the Year nominees, Jeff Kuntz of Punxsutawney, and Maria Vita, a Penn Manor High School



Mrs. Raff leads her students in an exercise to help them define literary terms.

psychology teacher who was a finalist for the 2019 award.

Mrs. Raff's classroom is decorated in an Alice in Wonderland theme and features a large library with books in every genre, as well as a raised stage where students can present poetry, book reports and original music to the entire class.

She encourages movement among her students and leads them through physical exercises that help them understand parts of speech, literary conventions and other lessons.

More **MRS. RAFF** on Page 7



Pequea sixth-grade teacher Elizabeth Raff holds her PA Teacher of the Year award following the award ceremony with Noe Ortega, PA Secretary of Education, and Sherri Smith, deputy secretary.

School district adds girls' wrestling program

Penn Manor has a new sport for girls this year – wrestling.

The Penn Manor school board approved the addition of a school-sponsored girls' wrestling team in November for students in grades 7 through 12.

Penn Manor became only the second school district in Lancaster County and the 23rd in Pennsylvania to offer girls' wrestling, although several other schools have more recently started programs.

Interest in the sport has been exceptional, according to head coach Jason Fellenbaum.

"When we petitioned for the creation of a girls' wrestling team at Penn Manor, we honestly thought it would be a team of just two or three girls this first year. To have 10 girls on this team for the entire season is awesome," Fellenbaum said.

"We plan to recruit and continue to get the word out during the off-season. Our goal is to have a team of 30 girls next season."

Team member Samantha Shaw, a high school freshman, said



Participants in the new girls' wrestling program pose for a team photo.

More **WRESTLING** on Page 4

New superintendent to be named in April

The search for a new superintendent for Penn Manor School District has been under way since the beginning of the year.

Applications for the position were accepted until February 18, and initial interviews were scheduled for March 8 and 10. A second round of interviews with finalists was scheduled for March 22 and, if necessary, March 24.

The school board is expected to announce the candidate it has selected for the superintendent's job on April 4. The board will then formally approve a contract with the new superintendent, who will begin working no later than July 1.

Special education changes announced



From left, Theresa Kreider, Julie Yost and Peggy Anastasio.

Penn Manor's longtime director of student support services, Theresa Kreider, has retired after 20 years with the school district.

Dr. Kreider stepped down in December and was replaced by the former assistant director of student support services, Dr. Peggy Anastasio, who has more than 20 years of experience in special education at Penn Manor.

Julie Yost, who joined the Penn Manor staff in 2000, has been named assistant director of student support services.

Dr. Anastasio had served under Kreider as assistant director since 2007. From 2002 to 2007, she was a learning support teacher at Manor Middle School. She also was a Penn Manor elementary teacher of the gifted in 2002.

Dr. Anastasio received her doctorate in educational leadership from Immaculata University in 2015 and her master's in leadership for teaching and learning from Millersville University in 2008.

She received her principal's

certification in supervision of special education in 2008 and her bachelor's degree in elementary and special education in 2001, both from Millersville University.

Julie Yost served as secondary special education consultant and K-12 special education coordinator at Penn Manor since 2020.

She previously was K-6 special education coordinator from 2015 to 2020. Julie began her career at Penn Manor in 2000 as a learning support teacher at Pequea Elementary School.

Julie received her special education supervisory certificate from Millersville University in 2017 and her principal certification and master's degree in educational leadership from Alvernia University in 2011.

She earned her bachelor's degree in special education and elementary education from Clarion University in 1997.

Please join us in welcoming Peggy and Julie in their new roles.

Message from the superintendent

Many in the Penn Manor community are aware that earlier this year, I announced my departure from Penn Manor School District, effective June 30, 2022. At the beginning of February, I was appointed the next superintendent of the Harwood Unified Union School District in central Vermont.

I have been truly blessed to be part of the Penn Manor community since 1997. Two of my three children were born here, and all three of them graduated from Penn Manor.

My decision to step down from this position was both personal and professional but can be summed up as an overall feeling that I have concluded my chapter in Penn Manor. When you look at many of the projects I'm currently engaged in, it felt like this timing was a logical conclusion for my superintendency.

I firmly believe that Penn Manor will now be best served by a new superintendent who is able to look at the needs of the school district with fresh eyes.

Since my appointment as superintendent in 2009, I have enjoyed leading a highly effective administrative team, an outstanding faculty, and a dedicated support staff in our efforts to make Penn Manor a premier school system recognized in Lancaster County and throughout Pennsylvania. While I am proud of many of our accomplishments, the following stand out:

- Improvements to academic achievement as evidenced by Penn Manor's inclusion since 2015 on lists such as U.S. News & World Report's Best High Schools edition, outstanding scores in the PA School Performance Profile and the Future Ready PA Index, and our first district school – Letort Elementary – recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2019.

- Development of instructional technology initiatives, including Open Campus PA, as well as a successful 1-to-1 laptop

program featuring Open Source software.

- Sound fiscal management. Penn Manor is ranked 413 out of 500 school districts for expenditures per student, while still performing within the top tier of districts in Pennsylvania.

- Renovations to Martic, Pequea, Conestoga, and Central Manor Elementary Schools; the new Hambright Elementary, which is Penn Manor's first "new" school since 1960; and, finally, the extensive rebuilding of Penn Manor High School.

- The first public school district to partner with the Samaritan Center to implement TeenHope, a depression/suicide prevention program for students.



Mike Lechlitter

As I was considering my next steps, the bar was set very high, and I found just one place that meets those expectations and affords me the opportunity to both learn and help lead. Over the past four years, my wife, Mary Edith, and I have regularly traveled to Vermont, as our youngest child attends the University of Vermont.

Early in my search process, I discovered the opening in Harwood, and it became evident to me that this was the place I wished to spend the next chapter of my career.

As I conclude my time at Penn Manor and look to my transition to a new position, I have been reflecting on the last 25 years of my life in this school district and assure you that these years have been truly amazing. I am forever grateful to the entire community for your support and encouragement during my career.

Thank you, and go Comets!

- Dr. Mike Lechlitter

(717) 872-9500, ext. 2223

mike.lechlitter@pennmanor.net

Twitter: @mlechlitter

Elementary, middle schools earn U.S. News honors

Named among the top schools in PA and county

Five Penn Manor schools have been ranked among the top 10 public schools in Lancaster County and among the top 25 percent of public schools in Pennsylvania by U.S. News and World Report.

Manor Middle School was ranked No. 3, and Marticville Middle was ranked No. 7 of the 22 public middle schools in Lancaster County, according to U.S. News, which released the rankings in October.

Manor was ranked 151st of the 939 Pennsylvania middle schools included in the report, and Marticville was ranked 225th.

In addition, three Penn Manor elementary schools ranked in the top 10 countywide in the U.S. News report.

Conestoga Elementary was ranked seventh, Central Manor was ranked ninth, and Letort was ranked 10th of the 71 public elementary schools in the report. Statewide, Conestoga was ranked 147th of 1,752 schools, Central Manor was ranked 223rd, and Letort was ranked 225th.

The other rankings for Penn Manor elementary schools are: Martic — 12th in Lancaster County, 256th in Pennsylvania; Eshleman — 13th and 261st; Pequea — 15th and 289th; and Hambright — 37th



Letort, Conestoga and Central Manor Elementary School and Marticville and Manor Middle School are ranked among the top 10 public schools in Lancaster County and among the top 25 percent of schools in Pennsylvania.

U.S. News & World Report evaluated the schools based on students' math and reading proficiency and the schools' socioeconomic demographics.

and 890th.

U.S. News ranked the schools based on students' math and reading proficiency and each school's socioeconomic demographics. Any school scoring in the top 30 percent in each state is considered "high achieving."

The rankings are the latest accolades for Penn Manor, which has earned seven

straight Best High School awards from U.S. News. In 2021, Penn Manor High School was ranked No. 2 in Lancaster County and 71st out of 678 high schools in Pennsylvania.

Penn Manor superintendent Mike Leichter said the school district has been able to maintain high academic standards despite recent challenges related to the pandemic.

"The core mission of Penn Manor is to provide an outstanding education for our students," he said. "While it has been necessary to focus on other areas beyond our control recently, our teachers remain committed to ensuring that our students leave our schools with the skills necessary to succeed."

FFA poultry team places among the top 10 in U.S.

The Manor FFA Poultry Evaluation Team earlier this school year placed in the top 10 nationally at the FFA National Convention.

The team of Lizzy Strickler, Jenna Smith, Carly Railing and Molly Gehr — all Penn Manor sophomores — earned a gold ranking and placed ninth out of 37 teams in the National Poultry Evaluation Career Development Event, held October 28 at the Indiana

State Fairgrounds.

Individually, Carly Railing and Jenna Smith earned gold rankings, and Carly placed 17th out of 148. Molly Gehr earned a silver medal.

During the competition, the students had to take a written test on poultry management, complete a team problem-solving activity on poultry nutrition and processing, evaluate live hens and broilers, grade eggs and



From left, poultry evaluation team members Carly Railing, Lizzy Strickler, Molly Gehr and Jenna Smith.

chicken carcasses based on USDA criteria, and identify retail poultry meat cuts.

Also at the national convention, 2020 Penn Manor graduate Darby Conrad

received the American Degree, the highest honor in FFA.

Penn Manor is proud of these young ladies for their impressive accomplishment.

Fall and winter sports teams have stellar seasons

Girls' basketball team earns first L-L League title since '75

Penn Manor student athletes had outstanding fall and winter sports seasons, with several teams and individuals qualifying for district and state honors.

During the fall season, the **field hockey team** was Lancaster-Lebanon League champions and qualified for District 3 playoffs on the way to a 17-5 record under first-year coach Rachel Suter.

In addition, Suter was named Section 1 Coach of the Year, and the team earned an L-L League Academic award.

The **golf team** compiled an impressive 21-4 record and

placed second in Section 1 and fourth in the L-L League Championship.

Golfer Keegan Dings placed third in the L-L Tournament and was a PIAA State Qualifier.



Rachel Suter

The **girls' soccer team** went 17-4 and placed first in Section 1 with a 9-1 record. The Comets also earned the L-L League championship and made it to the District 3 quarterfinals.

Girls' tennis player Catherine Rabatin placed first in singles in the L-L League and District 3 tournaments and was a state



Girls' bowling team members and coaches, above, celebrate their Eastern Pennsylvania Bowling title. The girls' basketball and soccer teams are picture below.

quarterfinalist.

The Penn Manor **football team** went 5-5 record, its best in several years.

Winter sports teams also fared well.

The **girls' basketball team** earned its first Section 1 L-L League title since 1975 and was a semifinalist in the league tournament. Lily Sugra was named Section 1 MVP, and head coach Megan Collins was named Section 1 Coach of the Year.

The **girls' bowling team** earned the Eastern Pennsylvania Bowling title, and Corinne Smith, Eva Brubaker, Lacey Slaymaker, Kala Wasche, Willow Hee and Hope Leaman qualified for the state tournament.

Boys' wrestling team member Travis Clawson was a state qualifier, and Penn Manor's newest team – **girls' wrestling** – quickly made a name for itself.



Kaitlyn Clawson placed fifth in the state tournament, and she and Anisa Orr placed in the top three in the Central Region Championship.

Congratulations to these student athletes and coaches.

Wrestling: Girls' program

Continued from Page 1

she was excited when she learned of the new program.

"I wanted to do wrestling when I was younger but my parents wouldn't let me join the boys' team, so I was happy they made a girls' team."

Maddie Wagner, a Penn Manor freshman, said her favorite moment of the season was "winning my first match and getting my hand raised."

What Anisa Orr, a Penn Manor sophomore, loves about the sport, she said, is "the satisfaction and adrenaline rush when you pin someone."

According to national statistics, girls who wrestle are not usually involved in other sports, so wrestling can give them a stronger connection to the school community.

Wrestling also provides a new opportunity for girls to earn scholarships to

post-secondary institutions, and wrestling ranks second among all sports for producing first-generation college students.

Participation in girls' wrestling programs has grown by 200 percent in recent years in Pennsylvania, and there's a movement under way to get the sport officially sanctioned by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

Penn Manor has competed this season with teams from McCaskey, Manheim Township, Gettysburg, Cumberland Valley, Governor Mifflin and other schools throughout Pennsylvania.

Every Penn Manor team member has won at least one match, and at a recent tournament hosted here, four Comets wrestlers placed first or second in their weight class.

"Overall, this season has exceeded expectations," Fellenbaum said.

Commencement to be held outdoors for Class of 2022

Penn Manor High School's commencement will be held outdoors for the second year in a row.

The graduation ceremony for the Class of 2022 is scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, June 1, 2022, in Millersville University's Biemsderfer Stadium.

The rain dates are Thursday, June 2, or Friday, June 3.

Each graduate will receive eight tickets for the ceremony.

Former student builds pergola at Conestoga

Eagle Scout project, completed in fall, creates a year-round gathering space

Anders Nordstrom was considering ideas for his Eagle Scout project last year when he thought about doing something to benefit his old school.

Anders, who attended Conestoga Elementary from first through sixth grades, asked school officials for ideas for a project to benefit students, and they came up with idea of building a pergola behind the school.

After nearly a year of planning and design work, Anders, fellow members of Boy Scout Troop 146 and volunteers completed the massive wooden pergola, which stands over two benches near the school's community gardens, in mid-November.

"The finished project looks very nice, and I am incredibly happy with the result," said Anders, who is in his senior year at Penn Manor High School. "Seeing it up all in one piece really is amazing, especially after a year of planning."

Shortly after work began in October, Anders ran into a glitch when the crew wasn't able to dig a deep enough hole for one of the support footers. So they relocated the project to a more suitable site.

"The pergola is a great addition to the garden program and Edible Classroom, which provides lessons to all students at Conestoga."

**— Dr. Scott Keddle
Conestoga principal**

The project was truly a community effort, with friends, family and local businesses assisting the Boy Scouts by contributing labor, funds and/or materials. Among the companies that helped out were Advantage Meter Concrete, Broderick's Landscape Contracting, Lezzer Lumber and Penn Stone.

"The pergola is a great addition to the garden



PMHS student Anders Nordstrom poses with Conestoga Elementary School students at the new pergola he helped build at his former school.

program and Edible Classroom, which provides lessons to all students at Conestoga," said Scott Keddle, Conestoga principal.

The pergola provides a shade structure for garden education programs during the school year and in the summer.

"We love that students and staff can enjoy this gathering space all year round," said Beth Horst, co-founder of Edible Classroom.

Anders plans to study geology in college and pursue a career as a paleontologist.

The Penn Manor community is very appreciative of his efforts.

Hambricht celebrates Martin Luther King's legacy

Students at Hambricht Elementary honored the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. in January by participating in an essay contest and an assembly.

Third-grader Lucy Lewis submitted an essay to the Crispus Attucks Martin Luther King Essay Contest and was named winner of the elementary category.

Lucy wrote about how she has a dream for "everyone to treat each other the same, no matter who they are, or what they are. That helps the whole world because we can all work together and get rid of hate. Just like Dr. Martin



Lucy Lewis

Luther King Jr., I believe that my dream can come true."

Lucy was honored for her essay at the MLK Day Breakfast, held in Lancaster on January 17. You can watch Lucy reading her essay here: <https://tinyurl.com/2z826e7e>

On January 20, Hambricht 5th-graders got to hear first-hand about King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech from Jim Jordan, who attended the 1963 address in Washington,

D.C.

Jordan talked about how moved he was by King's words and the positive energy of the crowd, which included people from all walks of life.

"I had goosebumps on my arms and shoulders because King was such an eloquent speaker," Jordan told the students. "He was mesmerizing"

Jordan then responded to questions from the students, who had listened to the speech earlier in the week while learning about King's legacy.

Jordan was invited to speak by his niece, Amy



Hambricht fifth-graders listen to Jim Jordan talk about witnessing Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech in 1963.

Wall, a Hambricht academic support teacher.

Fullerton named head of IU13 board

Congratulations to Penn Manor school board member Dr. Joe Fullerton, who was recently elected president of the Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 board of school directors.

IU13 is an education service agency governed by a 22-member board of directors that includes school board representatives from each of the 22 districts within IU13, including Penn Manor.



Joe Fullerton

"We are fortunate to have Dr. Joe Fullerton elected as the new IU13 board president," said Dr. Brian Barnhart, IU13 executive director. "He has a thorough understanding of our comprehensive work and strategic priorities, and he is an outstanding leader in every aspect."

Dr. Fullerton is vice president of the Penn Manor school board and has served on the board since 2013.

He is employed as assistant director of the Career, Technical & Customized Education (CTCE) division of the Chester County Intermediate Unit.

Two new members join PM board

The Penn Manor Board of School Directors has two new members this year – S. Frederick Herr and Loren R. Brown.

Brown and Herr were elected in November to serve four-year terms on the board, along with Nicki Nafziger and Chris Straub, who were re-elected.

The new members replaced David Paitzel and Dr. Richard Frerichs, who chose not to run for re-election.

Herr is self-employed, and Brown works as an assistant fire chief.

"I am a Penn Manor graduate and parent, and I have multiple nieces and nephews in this great district," Brown said, when asked why he wanted to serve on the board.

"I want to do my part to ensure that Penn Manor remains an exemplary, innovative and inspiring school district that strives for each student to achieve personal success and be prepared for the world ahead."

Herr is the latest member of his family to serve on the board, after his father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

"With two children at Central Manor Elementary, I am delighted to be on the Penn Manor school board,"



From left, new members Loren R. Brown and S. Frederick Herr are sworn in to the Penn Manor school board, along with Chris Straub and Nicki Nafziger.

he said. "I want to make my time count by doing my part to keep Penn Manor great."

Following the swearing-in of the members, the board voted to appoint Herk Rintz and Dr. Joe Fullerton to serve one-year terms as president and vice president of the nine-member board.

The other board members are Dell Jackson, Donna Wert and Mitchell Sweigart.

Frerichs lauded for longtime service

Dr. Richard Frerichs has spent more than two decades in service to Penn Manor, and when he stepped down from the school board on November 15, he received a major honor from the school district and the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

School board president Herk Rintz estimated that Frerichs spent about 9,000 hours – roughly equivalent to a full year of time – serving on the all-volunteer school board since he attended his first meeting in December 1997.

"You have truly been an outstanding board member, and you've been a mentor to every board member in this room," Rintz told Frerichs.

Nathan Mains, PSBA chief executive officer, presented Frerichs with a PSBA Distinguished Service pin – one of only nine people in the field of education to earn the honor.

"You have truly been an outstanding board member, and you've been a mentor to every board member in this room."

— Herk Rintz
School Board President

Mains said Frerichs was a mentor to him, as well, when he took over the CEO role at the PSBA.

During his 24 years as a Penn Manor school director, Rich served three years as board president and one year as president of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

In addition, he played an active role at the PSBA for years, serving as chair of the Pennsylvania Public Education Foundation and as a member of the



From left, superintendent Mike Leichter, former school board member Rich Frerichs, current board president Herk Rintz, and PSBA CEO Nathan Mains.

EdPAC and Insurance Trust Boards.

Dr. Frerichs received the PSBA Allwein Advocacy Award in 2016 for his efforts on behalf of Pennsylvania's public schools.

Also honored November 15 were school directors Chris Straub, for 12 years of service, and Joe Fullerton and former member David Paitzel for eight years of service each.

High school project in final stages of completion

New auxiliary gym, fitness center under construction

Phase 3 of the Penn Manor High School construction and renovation project is under way and is expected to be substantially completed by the time the 2022-2023 school year starts on August 29.

After completing the classroom portion of the project last summer, workers are now building a new auxiliary gym, weight room, fitness center and locker rooms next to the existing gym.

Work also will begin on a project to upgrade and modernize the high school's cafeteria and kitchen facilities.

In addition, workers will be dismantling and removing the temporary metal building that served as an ag shop and gymnasium.

The old library/administration offices will be converted into an area housing a technology suite, large-group instruction space and health/physical education



Work is proceeding on a new auxiliary gymnasium in the final phase of the Penn Manor High School renovation and construction project.

classrooms.

Over the summer, the district's administrative offices will move from Manor Middle School into dedicated space at the high school.

Final site work, including grading and

landscaping, new parking lots, sidewalks and lighting, also will be completed in the coming months.

We appreciate the patience of students, staff and the Penn Manor community as this project has progressed.

Join our team

Penn Manor School District is hiring for a variety of positions for this year and 2022-2023.

The district routinely has vacancies in teaching and coaching positions, as well as support staff in the following areas:

- Food service
- Coaching
- Custodial
- Maintenance
- Secretarial/clerical
- Health room nurses and substitute nurses (RN/LPN)
- Cafeteria, building and playground aides

We offer competitive wages and benefits, along with on-the-job training.

You can see our current vacancies on the district's employment website here: <https://www.pennmanor.net/employment/>

In addition, you can call



Head custodian Mike Ressler is part of the team that keeps Manor Middle School clean.

our Human Resources Department at 717-872-9500, ext. 2247, to arrange an interview.

For many positions, we offer on-the-spot interviews daily, from 8 to 10 a.m., in the Penn Manor School District Offices, 2950 Charlestown Road, Lancaster, PA 17603, located next to Manor Middle School.

Please consider joining our dynamic staff of employees, who are working each day to improve our community, one student at a time!

Mrs. Raff: Teacher of Year

Continued from **Page 1**

At the conference in Hershey, one of Mrs. Raff's former students, Stella Thomas-Wenger, introduced her to the audience. Now a ninth-grader at Penn Manor High School, Stella praised her former teacher for the way she engaged and encouraged students to not only learn, but to respect each other's perspectives.

In a letter of recommendation to the Teacher of the Year review committee, Stella's mother, Marlisa Thomas, also had high praise for Mrs. Raff.

"Our family is so grateful that our daughter found a place in Mrs. Raff's unique sixth-grade classroom. She was nurtured each day and challenged to grow and succeed, not just academically, but in her awareness and maturity."

Since her appointment as Pennsylvania's top teacher, Mrs. Raff has received commendations from members of Congress and the state Legislature.

She taught in Philadelphia for two years before joining the Pequea staff. Mrs. Raff graduated from Messiah College with a degree in elementary education and completed her master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Penn State University. She is currently pursuing her principal certification through Penn State.

Elizabeth lives in Lancaster Township with her husband, Jeremy, and their children, Emma and Owen.

Penn Manor is honored to have Mrs. Raff on our teaching staff and wishes her the best as she shares her expertise with teachers from across Pennsylvania.

Board of School Directors

Carlton Rintz, President
Dr. Joseph Fullerton, Vice President
Loren R. Brown
S. Frederick Herr
Wardell Jackson
Nickole Nafziger
Christopher Straub
Mitchell Sweigart
Donna Wert

Ex Officio Members:

Christopher Johnston, Treasurer
Cindy Rhoades, Board Secretary

Administration

Michael Leichliter, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Philip Gale, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent, Secondary
Jerry Egan, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent, Elementary
Christopher Johnston
Business Manager



Twitter: @pennmanor

Website: www.pennmanor.net



P.O. Box 1001
Millersville, PA 17551

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Non-profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lancaster, PA
Permit No. 996

Above & Beyond newsletter is published by Penn Manor School District. If you have questions or comments, please contact Brian Wallace, Community Relations Coordinator, at 872-9500, ext. 2241, or by email: brian.wallace@pennmanor.net.

It's a new era for music, drama at the high school

Ranck Auditorium hosts first in-person plays, concerts

The new Ranck Auditorium at Penn Manor High School has been bustling with students and audience members enjoying live theatre and musical performances for the first time this year.

Students performed the fall play, *Clue*, and the spring musical, *Addams Family*, on the new stage, which also has hosted concerts, assemblies and awards programs throughout the year.

While slightly smaller than the old auditorium, with 916 seats, the new space is a vast improvement.

It includes roomy, comfortable cushioned seats; dedicated dressing rooms, instrument storage and costume



Students, above, perform a scene from the fall play "Clue" onstage in Ranck Auditorium. Below left, orchestra members rehearse for a performance.



preparation areas; and a lobby area with tables, chairs and space for concessions.

The performance space features a built-in sound system with 14 wireless microphones, a digital LED lighting system that greatly reduces heat buildup and a new HVAC system to keep temperatures comfortable for performers and audience members alike.

A garage door provides backstage access, making it easier to move instruments and props on and off the

stage, which features new drapes and a large-scale projection screen.

The opening of the auditorium coincides with the 50th anniversary of musicals at Penn Manor High School, which presented its first – *Finian's Rainbow* – in 1972, the same year the school's thespian troupe was chartered.

You can see a listing of musicals performed over the years at <https://blogs.pennmanor.net/mmintzer/penn-manor-productions/spring-musical-history/>.