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**For Immediate Release**

**Horace Mann and Illinois Principals Association Announce**  
**2024 Illinois High School Principal of the Year**

Horace Mann and the Illinois Principals Association are pleased to announce that Natalie Page, principal of Sesser-Valier High School in Sesser, has been named the 2024 Illinois High School Principal of the Year. The award recognizes high school principals who have demonstrated a positive impact on their students and learning community. Criteria for the award include:

- Demonstrates a positive impact on education and advocacy for children
- Ensures the school climate is positive and reflects high staff and student morale
- Moves actively to implement the goals and objectives of the school
- Works collaboratively with teachers and other staff to improve the educational program and student achievement
- Involves the community in the life of the school and uses community resources for students.

Natalie Page has served as principal of Sesser-Valier High School since 2015. Page has spent her entire educational career in the Sesser-Valier Community Unit School District #196 as a Kindergarten teacher and First Grade teacher before moving into an administrative role. Page has also been active in the Illinois Principals Association as Region Director and Region Director-Elect for the IPA Egyptian Region, which includes school leaders from Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Perry, Washington, Wayne, and White counties.

Page discussed her attributes as an effective educational leader by sharing the following: “An effective instructional leader has the ability and desire to continually learn and grow. In my tenure as a principal, I have worked to stay up to date on the latest in teaching strategies, student-learning needs, and curriculum. Effective instructional leaders must also be continually reflective so that students have the most effective learning experience possible. I work to provide effective curriculum and instruction along with a space for students to feel loved, secure, and valued.”

“Natalie is highly respected among her peers for her expertise, wisdom, engaging personality, humble demeanor, and, most of all, extraordinary compassion,” shared Jason Henry, Superintendent of the Sesser-Valier Community Unit School District 196. “I have had the pleasure of working alongside Natalie as both a teacher and administrator in the district for almost nineteen years, and she has never merely settled for the ordinary, but strives to reach the extraordinary. She is an exemplary school principal and uniquely worthy of the 2024 IPA Principal of the Year award.”

Dee Ann Schnautz, Asst. Professor at SIU-C shared, “Natalie often reflects on her leadership and has patiently and consistently built a leadership team to focus on students’ academic, social-emotional, and post-high school needs. Community members are involved and partnering with students; graduates

return to the school to let current students understand what is possible; and teachers have been encouraged to dig deeply into curriculum, build relationships with students, and help them thrive...this happened because of Natalie's ability to reflect on her leadership and create buy-in from her staff and community."

The High School Principal of the Year winner was selected from a pool of region nominees provided by the 21 Regions of the Illinois Principals Association. Natalie Page will be recognized at the IPA's Education Leaders Annual Conference in October 2024.

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The Illinois Principals Association is a leadership organization which serves over 6,500 educational leaders throughout the state of Illinois. You can find out more about the IPA at [www.ilprincipals.org](http://www.ilprincipals.org). Visit <http://www.ilprincipals.org/about-ipa/awards> for more information about the IPA Principal of the Year Awards Program.

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