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## Fwd: Illinois Teacher Feature

1 message

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**Jason Bauer** <jbauer@panaschools.com>  
To: Bridgett Heinrich <bheinrich@panaschools.com>

Thu, Sep 8, 2022 at 10:40 AM

September Board Meeting

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools** <execdir@airssedu.org>

Date: Thu, Sep 8, 2022 at 10:14 AM

Subject: Illinois Teacher Feature

To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>



## The Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools



# Teacher Feature - Vinnie Rivera

*The following excerpt is from a story shared by our friends at Rural Schools Collaborative as part of their I Am A Rural Teacher project. Please view the full story on their website: <https://iamaruralteacher.org/stories/vinnie-rivera-mcleansboro-il>*

Vinnie Rivera didn't grow up in a rural place, but he is no stranger to small town life. He had thought about being a teacher before, but it took some persuasion and guidance from the mentors in his life to finally pursue teaching as a career.

"When I went to college the first time, I initially went to be a teacher. By the time I graduated, I didn't have an education degree and I had convinced myself that I didn't want to be a teacher. My mentor, Hector Hernandez, encouraged me to apply for a tutoring job at the school that he worked at, so I did. Within one hour I felt so much regret. I got there and I got to working with students and I was like - 'This is what you should do, this is what you should do.'"

Relationships continue to be a focal point for Vinnie, especially in his classroom. The bonds forged between himself, his band members, and his community are integral to the music program's success.

"One of the advantages about teaching in a small town is the family aspect can go way deeper. I student-taught at a high school that had a band of 180 and there were kids that had never talked to other kids in that band. That doesn't happen here. All these kids - they talk to each other, they respect each other, and we're a really solid family here in Hamilton County. I think that we have that advantage over a lot of bigger programs because we're a smaller program."

On the other hand, a lack of funding and resources can pose a particular challenge to arts programs in rural places.

"Being in a place where I'm the only band teacher in the whole district, you just can't accomplish as many things as you can accomplish in bigger programs that have four or five directors and multiple private lesson teachers for all of the kids."

Still, he remains optimistic:

"At the end of the day, it's still band. Whether it's band in a big town, or band in a small town, it's still band. And if there's one thing in this life I know how to do, I know how to do band."

[Read Vinnie's Full Story Here!](#)

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## Other Illinois Teacher Features from I Am A Rural Teacher



## Podcast: Barb McArthy and Suzy Tomm



## Written Feature: Emily Driscoll and Erica Zieren

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# Have a story to share? Submit to I Am A Rural Teacher today!

Contact Rural Schools Collaborative



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