



*-Go Cardinals!-*

WINTER 2022  
NEWSLETTER

## **A WORD FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT**

**By Dr. P.J. Caposey**

Meridian Community,

This update took me a while to compose. Before I get to the personal updates that I feel necessary to share, I wanted to take a moment to highlight some of the incredible things the faculty, staff, and students are doing so far this year.

As I believe all of us can attest, this year simply feels normal, and that, at times, has felt like a big enough win in and of itself. In addition, we are starting to see the progress and continuation of much of our work that was started before the Pandemic.

We are proud to be one of the first schools in the area to amend our curriculum to follow the new research following the science of reading. This included an intensive amount of professional development for our elementary staff and has resulted in immediate results. We had made a similar curricular shift in elementary math shortly before the Pandemic, and the gains, as demonstrated in our STAR data, indicate those efforts are starting to take hold, and student performance is improving.

At the junior high we continue to focus on writing across the curriculum with our partner, ThinkCERCA. Under the leadership of the junior high administration, we have pushed and guided ThinkCERCA as a partner, leading to Meridian being featured on their website as a model school for implementation of a rigorous writing curriculum.

The high school has maintained its high level of achievement, being named one of the top high schools in the state for the sixth consecutive year. In addition, we were fortunate to have multiple students earn National Merit recognition and over ten students named Illinois State Scholars.

Outside of the academic realm, we also had a very successful late summer and fall. Athletics had a great fall season highlighted by a Big Northern Championship for our football team. We also have maintained an over 99% on-time delivery rate in transportation, have increased our menu selection in food services, have increased our support and wraparound care in the health services department, and have reached a

level of aesthetic quality to the outside of our buildings that we have not seen in the last decade.

Additionally, we were the recipient of two major grants totaling over a 1 million dollars this Fall. The first will help us to create secure vestibules to better keep our students safe and the second will serve to improve our technology. In both areas, we are region leaders in what we are already doing, but these grants allow us to improve upon already existing strengths.

This brings me to the hard part. Making the announcement that I would be leaving the district at the end of June 2024 was extremely bittersweet. The Meridian community is a wonderful place to serve and I have been lucky to work here for a decade. My hope is that I left this district better than I found it and prepared to successfully withstand the challenges that come with leadership transition.

Simply put, thank you. These past ten years have been the most challenging and rewarding of my professional career.





## Happenings In The Transportation Department

**REMINDER!** Flashing yellow lights means that a school bus is coming to a stop.

### PLEASE USE CAUTION!

A vehicle behind the bus must slow down, prepare to stop, and **CAN NOT** attempt to pass. Oncoming cars should adjust speeds to 20 miles per hour or less and prepare to stop.

It is also your responsibility as a safe driver to be following the bus at a distance that allows stopping when the lights are flashing without it posing danger to you or the students on the bus.

We understand that stopping for a school bus may be an inconvenience, but we ask you to please observe the law and do so. Our primary concern is the safety and security of our students and we want to partner with you to ensure that all students arrive at school and then back home safe and sound. Below is a link to a video that can be found on the district Facebook page:

[https://fb.watch/9A\\_KykVw\\_c/](https://fb.watch/9A_KykVw_c/)

The Transportation Department has been busy using multiple training opportunities for our students to learn about bus safety. We provided in-school safety assemblies at all 4 of our buildings in the months of August and September this year. We cover emergency procedures and proper bus behavior. This is followed up by our simulated emergency bus evacuations in October that all bus riders participate in. For our elementary students we also have a "Bus Safety coloring contest" which takes place in October. The pictures are voted on by the Transportation Department. Six winners are chosen, one from each grade. Winners are then announced and recognized at the Board of Education meeting in November. This year we also decided to have a pizza party/field trip for the winners that will take place at the Bus Garage.

To help assist with student safety, the Transportation Department is happy to announce the addition of our new crossing guard. Please give a friendly wave to Shannon Miller as you drive by on 72 & Pine St before and after school.

Students going home with another student after school is being highly discouraged. We currently have one bus that is almost at capacity, so we will only allow extra riders on this bus upon Driver approval. Thank you for your understanding of this.

We are always welcoming new people to our team. We are in need of substitute bus drivers and substitute van drivers. We will do all the training you need in house.

As we enter into our winter driving season, please keep in mind that our driver's Number 1 priority is your student's safety in getting to and from school and school activities. When the roads appear to be a little tricky to navigate, know that your driver is doing their best to be on time, but taking all the necessary precautions to arrive safely. This would be a great time to be using your "Here Comes the Bus" app to track your bus to know for sure if your bus is on time.

**HERE COMES THE  
BUS SCHOOL CODE  
NUMBER:**

**86342**



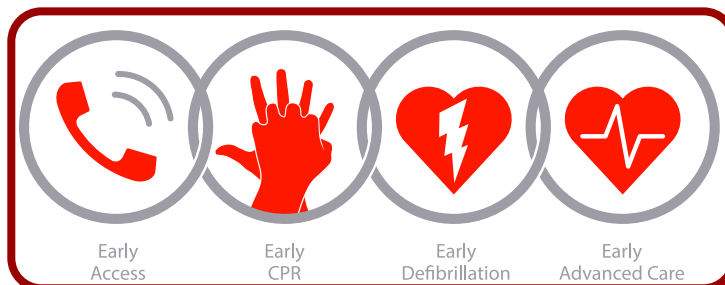


## CPR Training

Since the beginning of the school year, 61 staff members have successfully completed a CPR training course. The class goes over how to perform CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) on a person in cardiac arrest as well as how to use an AED (automated external defibrillator). We are able to provide the training in-house through our health services department that has 2 American Heart Association certified instructors on staff.



### Chain of Survival







**This school year has been a wonderful return to some semblance of normalcy.** It has been wonderful to see our students making gains in reading and math and I cannot wait to see where we end up by the end of the school year. It's hard to believe that we're approaching the end of the 1st Semester.

This year we have been working hard implementing a new ELA curriculum and it has been amazing to see our students progress. This program focuses on ensuring that our students are gaining the foundational skills necessary to become great readers and the background vocabulary and knowledge to be successful learners moving forward. I am excited to continue to see us grow and develop in utilizing this great new tool.

We had a great Halloween parade and even better weather to go along with it. It was great to see students so excited and have such a great crowd of parents and community members cheering them on.

I want to extend a huge thank you to Mrs. Zern and our Kindergarten and 2nd Grade classes. All of the students did an exceptional job, as always, and I am incredibly grateful for the immense amount of work that Mrs. Zern puts in to help prepare our students for these opportunities. Thank you, as well, to the parents and family members who come and make these concerts such great events for our students.



I am looking forward to moving into the Spring and our visit for Leader in Me Lighthouse Certification. We have been a Leader in Me school for 5 years and this year are applying for Lighthouse Certification. This honor is reserved for the few schools that are excellent examples of what the Leader in Me program stands for and see great results from its implementation. We're excited to be applying alongside Monroe Center and look forward to hopefully sharing out great news this spring.

Finally, thank you to the parents who have been involved with our Parent Advisory Council. As a reminder, we meet at 4:30 PM on the 1st Thursday of each month both at Highland and virtually through Google Meets. If you would like to be a part of this, please let me know and know that all are invited to join. We spend time talking about the direction of the school, initiatives, and ways that we can continue to improve. As always, you can reach me at [jmullikin@mail.meridian223.org](mailto:jmullikin@mail.meridian223.org) or (815) 520 0893.

**Joe Mullikin, Principal**

# Monroe Center Grade School

**This time of year, I'd like to start off the Winter Newsletter with some gratitude for our Meridian families, students, and staff.** It's incredible to think that the end of 2nd quarter is upon us and we are approaching the holiday season for many. We are so grateful for our families and the way in which everyone has moved into this year with such a positive attitude and the nature in which you prepared your students for the work being done. Thank you to our volunteers that have been on the parent advisory committee here, our PTO, as well as those that have supported the classrooms, teachers, and our students in many ways. The work we do could not be done without your help and participation. I'd like to share some of the highlights of this first semester so everyone knows of the work our students and staff are doing.

As I'm writing this to you, we are in week 19 of the school year and by the time you read this, some of our data no doubt will have changed yet again. I'd like to share the highlights thus far so you can be as proud of your students as we are. Our 3rd graders came in this fall and moved from 28% of students at or above the 50th percentile benchmark in reading to showing now at least 44% at or above in reading and with the 2nd semester ahead of us, I cannot imagine what they will accomplish. This means that now 44% of our students are at or above grade level and still moving. The work that's being done has been exceptional. 3rd grade math is no doubt going to have incredible results when they start the year off in the way they did, moving from 56% of students at or above the 50th percentile to over 73% of our students meeting and exceeding the benchmark as I write this note.

Reading is growing daily in 4th grade as well, moving from 46% in August to 55% of students being at or above grade level now, while we do have a way to go, the fact that we are now moving more than half of our students up and over that benchmark already, I've no doubt there will be more movement in the winter months.



Math has been unbelievable in 4th grade. They have moved from having 64% of our students at or above the benchmark to 78% of our students meeting or moving over that mark, and for the first time in my experiences in this building we have an entire class that has 100% of their students at or above grade level (above the 50th percentile) in 4th grade. Our teachers are taking that time in our late starts to discuss in PLCs (professional learning communities) what each other is doing to achieve such results. This time that the district & community has allowed us on these days is priceless and allows for these critical conversations necessary to help our students achieve these goals.

5th grade is moving forward in stride as well. Our students' reading went from having 39% of our students above the benchmark in the fall to now over 43% and when looking at most classrooms, students are leveling up within each testing period in the right direction towards

being at or above our reading level goals. With consistency in math moving from 64% at the beginning of the year to over 70% now at or above the 50th percentile. We're all looking forward to reporting out to you the changes when we complete our next progress monitoring in the upcoming year.

My gratitude in this message goes out to everyone that supports our students in and out of the building. Our students have been so proud to add to our live bar graph at the front of the building that indicates their growth in both reading and math, as well as our getting to celebrate our readers at assemblies like we've done in past years. This year there have been a number of changes with the rigor of both our reading and our intervention programs, our continued learning and movement towards standards-based grading, and the work that our students are doing to participate in great conversations in the classrooms alongside our educators in the building. None of this work could be done without each of you, all that you do with your children at home, and the partnerships you have created with our teachers. We are so very thankful to each of you for your time, support and your ability to help us be better and grow each year alongside our students.

**May your Holiday Season be filled with Joy and Peace,**

**Mrs. Deana Simpson  
Monroe Center, Principal**





**Meridian Junior High staff and students are enjoying what feels to be a more “normal” school year.** The energy in the building is positive as learning and building community are kept at the forefront. Our students have continued to shine as their learning has progressed since our initial benchmarks in August.

In addition, our students are participating in the Leader in Me program in various capacities, including a Student Lighthouse Team. This program, according to Leader in Me founders, is an “evidence-based, comprehensive model that builds leadership and life skills in students.” The purpose of the Lighthouse team is to drive initiatives within the building to create more of a positive, student-driven culture.

In the classroom, students are learning through escape rooms, racing cars, building roller coasters out of paper, as well as labs and other curricular activities involving various educational platforms (IXL). Here are a few quotes from some of our teachers:

*“In 8th grade science, students kicked the year off with a great deal of measuring practice while exploring energy, forces, and motion in physics and the periodic table of elements in chemistry. From Rube*

*Goldberg projects, to the classic egg-drop experiment, and paper roller coaster engineering, to now with chemical reactions, everyone is truly enjoying things being back to normal in the science lab!” -*

*Mrs. Jen Hall, 8th grade science teacher*



*“I have been enjoying implementing IXL in my curriculum. I appreciate how IXL gives real time data about students’ strengths and areas for improvement. I also value IXL’s ability to create a plan of recommended skills for each student based on areas where they need support. Students enjoy engaging in friendly competitions using the IXL leaderboards.” -Mr. Todd Hall, 6th grade ELA teacher*

*“This year in the junior high math department, we have been extremely fortunate to implement the Edgemoor mathematics program as well as IXL. IXL specifically links to standards that our students are learning and*

*creates personalized learning plans for each student based on their specific needs. Through the use of these programs I am very excited to see the growth that our students can obtain.”*

*- Mrs. Kristina Lundine, 6th grade math teacher*

Extracurricular activities have been in full swing at MJHS. Our 7th and 8th grade girls volleyball teams finished first in the Route 72 Conference. Way to go, ladies! Boys basketball just ended, as did our academic team—both seeing success. We are looking forward to wrestling season, as well as girls basketball.

**Thank you for your continued support, and as always, it’s a great day to be a Cardinal!**

**Mrs. Jill Davis and Mrs. Jen Speakes**





## Dear SVHS Students, Parents, and Guardians,

**The winter season is the perfect time to encourage our students to dedicate some of their personal time to community service.** We include local and regional opportunities for students to volunteer in our SVHS Daily Announcements (SVHS Website & Emailed to SVHS Students Daily). All SVHS students are encouraged to complete 40 hours or more of community service prior to graduation.

Your involvement and support of your children at the high school level is essential to their success and well-being. Please utilize our Skyward Family Access tab found on the district and high school websites to track your student's academic progress, including homework completion and assessment scores, and discuss your student's academic performance with him or her on a weekly basis. SVHS requires that every student earn 28 credits or more for graduation, which means that our students ideally earn a minimum of 3.5 credits per semester in order to be on track to graduate in four years. Checking your student's grades regularly is one simple way that you can support your child's academic progress and success. If you need your login information for Skyward Family Access, please contact Mrs. Sharon Pannarale or Ms. Bethani Larson in our SVHS Office at (815) 645-2230 extension 5009 (Ms. Pannarale) or extension 5000 (Ms. Larson).

Our faculty and staff are committed to providing the very best academic opportunities for our students to ensure that all SVHS graduates are College & Career Ready. This focus on academic excellence, partnered with a positive mindset in order to meet new challenges with character and confidence, is essential for our students to excel in their post-secondary pursuits. Whether a student chooses to enlist in the military, attend a college or university, begin his or her career in a skilled trade, or enter the workforce, we want each student to be fully equipped for success. This overarching goal for all SVHS students requires a commitment to rigorous coursework and assessments, dedication to a life of service, and social and emotional wellness. All students meet at least once per year with their SVHS Counselors to review their academic profiles and set academic and personal goals. However, our counselors are also available to meet with students if they are in need of additional academic, social, or emotional support by making an appointment with Student Services Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Pannarale, in the Counseling Department. Juniors and seniors are also encouraged to make an appointment to meet with our D223 College & Career Coordinator, Mr. Edward Liegl, in the SVHS College & Career Center to discuss exciting opportunities related to job shadowing, internships, military and college representative meetings, college visits, local manufacturing visits, dual credit courses, and much more. As we work to finalize our **SVHS 2023-2024 Course Guide** and begin the course request process for the next school year, we encourage you to review our anticipated 2023-2024 Course Guide in early February on our high school website with your students to select potential courses that will challenge them academically, align with their postsecondary aspirations, and pique their interests. Our dedicated faculty, school counselors, and staff will continue to partner with you to have these same valuable conversations with students over the upcoming weeks.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Leslie Showers  
SVHS Principal

### **Important Upcoming Dates:**

- **December 20, 21, & 22 - SVHS Final Exam Days**
- **December 22 - End of 1st Semester (SVHS Early Release at 11:10 AM)**
- **January 11 - School Resumes for Students - Start of 2nd Semester**
- **January 16 - No School - Martin Luther King Jr. Day**
- **January 23 - Dual Credit Information Night at 6:00 PM**
- **January 27 - 8th Grade Tour at SVHS 8:30-11:00 AM**
- **January 30 - Freshmen Orientation for Current 8th Grade Students & Parents at 6:00 PM**
- **February 17 - Early Release/School Improvement Day at 11:10 AM**
- **February 20 - No School - Presidents Day**
- **February 24 - Mr. SVHS Competition at 7:00 PM**
- **March 2-4 - SVHS Musical - Oliver**
- **March 17 - 2nd Semester Midterm**
- **March 24 - Early Dismissal/School Improvement Day at 11:10 AM**
- **March 27-31 - Spring Break**

Please visit our SVHS Activities & Athletics webpage at [svcardinals.com](http://svcardinals.com) to find winter and spring team schedules, pictures, activities/athletic registration, and more.

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MERIDIAN CUSD 223



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Meridian CUSD 223 Board of Education has been awarded the IASB 2022 School Board Governance Recognition. This recognition is designed to acknowledge those school boards that have engaged in activities and modeled behaviors that lead to excellence in local school governance in support of quality public education.