



-Go Cardinals!-

FALL 2022
NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

By Dr. P.J. Caposey

Meridian Community,

The past two and a half years have challenged who we are as a society, a community, and as a district. I believe the relationship between Meridian CUSD 223 and our community is truly a great relationship. I am hopeful that we have emerged stronger than before, as great relationships can use trying times to forge even stronger bonds.

We are proud to note that we continue to have strong academic outcomes for our students and have been recognized for the 6th consecutive year by US News and World Report. That being said, we are far from satisfied and have much work to do. This year we will usher in new resources in many of our classrooms, and we will continue to revamp our curriculum to ensure our students are getting the best possible opportunity for success in our classrooms.

Annually, in this letter I share what our district focus for the year will be. This year our theme focuses on ownership and being our own light forward. The past two years have been difficult. To be honest, they have been the hardest years of my career personally. But, I came to the realization last fall that the only way things were going to get better was if I decided to find joy in the job, and only I could do that. I needed to take more ownership of my situation. I had to do internal work to experience external success.

Thus, this will be our internal focus for the year. We will continue to take ownership of our results, our behaviors, and our culture. We will continue to work on becoming the change we wish to see in schools, in general, and specifically, within our own community. As always, thank you for your never-ending support as we tirelessly strive to enact our vision of having small-town values and world-class results.

This year we are incredibly excited to welcome Jen Speakes to our Leadership Team to help us do exactly that. Jen is a Meridian alumnus and an incredibly accomplished leader at this stage of her career. Jen comes to us by way of Rockford

Public Schools where she served as an Assistant Principal and led the Freshman Academy at Jefferson High School. Jen will serve as an Assistant Principal to Jill Davis throughout this year, gradually taking on an increased level of responsibility and decision-making throughout the year until she assumes the principalship next summer. At this time, there is no plan to retain the Assistant Principal position once the transition is complete.

When you see Mrs. Speakes, please welcome her to our incredible school community, and I hope that you are as excited for her return to the district as I am.

I remain honored and privileged to serve this community and am incredibly excited about the things we will accomplish together this year. Let's make it a great year!!





Buildings & Grounds

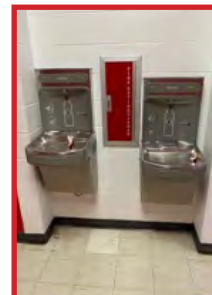
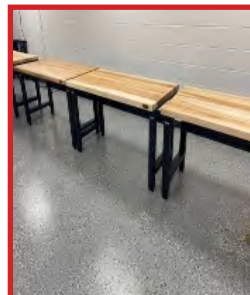
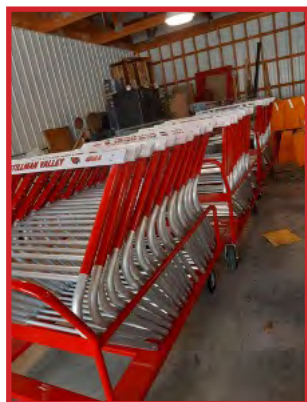
I'm a bit relieved to say fall is upon us! It's been a hectic but fun and rewarding summer for us, although we had some big projects that took quite some time to complete. Over the summer months, our custodians empty all of the classrooms and either scrub and wax tile or clean carpets and wipe down desks, tables and chairs from top to bottom. Our maintenance crew installed all new drinking fountains with bottle fill stations district-wide. The crew installed tin on the soccer dugouts and hundreds of other maintenance tasks from bulbs to flooring.

We were also able to top-dress all of the athletic fields, add material to the softball and baseball infields at the bus garage, paving work was done at Highland, and the fan area was paved at the varsity baseball field.

The first half of the main hallway and MP room at Highland was stripped and a stone protectant applied to the terrazzo. The High School vestibule and MP room were also stripped and coated with stone protectant. Some other interior upgrades also include carpet in four classrooms, removing tile and carpet from four rooms and using an epoxy coating on those floors. New entry carpet in Monroe Center, new lighting and work benches in room 134 at SVHS, and new ceiling tiles and lighting in the SVHS band room were also completed.

We look forward to school starting again, and we always hope any improvements we've made provide a better and safer environment for everyone.

Kenny Lamer



Food Service

Dear Parents,

In this newsletter we have tried to answer many of your questions concerning the hot lunch program and the student lunch accounts associated with the program. Our cafeterias will be serving school meals that meet tough federal nutrition standards, ensuring that meals are healthy, well-balanced, and provide students with the nutrition they need to succeed at school.

- 1) Cafeteria meals consists of five daily components which are meat/meat substitute, fruit, vegetables, bread and milk. The cost for student lunch is:

Highland & Monroe Center \$2.75	Breakfast 1.50
High School & Jr. High School \$2.85	Breakfast \$1.50
Additional milk is \$.40.	

- 2) If your student is on the free or reduced program, he/she will receive one free or reduced lunch and breakfast daily. If your student brings a sack lunch but would like a milk, your student will be charged accordingly for the milk cost of \$0.40
- 3) Payments to lunch accounts can be made in the following ways:
- a. Send in cash or check – made payable to “Meridian School District #223 in an envelope with the student’s name (first and last), grade and teacher’s name
 - b. Pay online with credit/debit card using the E-Pay System. Please login on to the Meridian School District web page click on Parent Resources, then click on Departments, and click Food Services. On this page you will find the icon for online payments. Payment are entered into your student’s account with in 24 hours of making the payment.
- 4) Low Balance Notification:
There are several ways parents can stay updated on their student’s account balance. Parents and students can log into their Skyward Family Access account and view purchases and balances. Families may also choose to receive low balance emails and/or text alerts when the account balance is below \$10.00 through their Skyward Family Access account.
- 5) **Reminder: Free & Reduced Applications need to be renewed YEARLY!**
Reminder to parents that Free & Reduced Applications NEED to be renewed YEARLY.
The prior years status will carry over until September 27, 2022. After this date, the status will expire if a new application has not been submitted and approved.

PRINCIPAL IN WAITING

By Jen Speakes

Meridian Community,

I'm honored to have the opportunity to co-lead MJHS, a school with students who have limitless potential, a dedicated staff and a supportive community. This will be my 11th year in education, where I am returning to my alma mater, and I couldn't be more excited.

Prior to becoming the "principal in-waiting" at MJHS, I was a high school English teacher at Belvidere High School and Jefferson High School. While at Jefferson, I transitioned to an instructional coach position for two years, which led me to pursue an administrative role and became an assistant principal for 3 years. I am thrilled to utilize my skills as an educational leader at MJHS and look forward to working with Mrs. Jill Davis throughout this school year.

On a personal note, my husband, Eric and I live in Mount Morris with our 3-year old daughter, Harper. We are lifelong Ogle County residents, and as of this year, first-year farmers. As a family, we are excited to immerse ourselves within the Meridian community and to experience our community's traditions together.

I firmly believe that every child can succeed and develop the necessary skills to be successful, productive citizens. The future of our society is extremely important, as it walks in our hallways daily. Therefore, we must develop our students to reach their highest potential and promote lifelong learning to shape their futures, and ultimately, the future of our community and our nation.

Thank you and I look forward to working with you in keeping our students and our community as the primary focus.

Jen Speakes



"I firmly believe that every child can succeed and develop the necessary skills to be successful, productive citizens."

Dear Meridian students, staff, administration, and Board of Education exert state-level influence

Part of Meridian's mission is to create community contributors and our vision is to achieve world-class results. Over the past handful of years, we have focused on ensuring this is not only the goal in the classroom but in everything that we do. As a result, there has been a concentrated effort to have Meridian students, staff, administration, and the Board of Education become involved in regional and state-wide activities. In doing so, we have had many members of our school community exert significant influence at the state level. They are as follows:

STUDENTS

Mackenzie Flynn - Illinois State Board of Education Student Advisory
Nate Youman - Illinois State Board of Education Student Advisory
Jacob Rhodes - Illinois High School Association Student Advisory
Payton Voltz - Illinois High School Association Student Advisory

FACULTY

Kim Hofmeister - Setting and Linking Study Conference for the Illinois Licensure Testing System Committee
Abby Risner - ILMEA District Representative for the Board of the Illinois Choral Directors
Bill Polasky - Executive Committee for the Illinois State Teachers of the Year, Advance Illinois Educator Advisory Committee, and Teach Plus Policy Fellow
Teresa Eden - Advance Illinois Educator Advisory Committee
Julie Foss - Treasurer of the Northern Illinois Reading Council
Beth Kleinschmidt - Illinois SAT Standard Setting (Math)
Diane Koenig - Scaling Developmental Education Reform in Illinois Advisory and Illinois Community College Board Return to Campus Guidance Committee
Shawn Byers - Illinois High School Association Softball Advisory Committee

ADMINISTRATION and BOARD of EDUCATION

Joe Mullikin - Illinois Principals Association Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Regional Chair and Illinois ASCD Communications Chair
Heather Alderks - Illinois High School Association Legislative Commission.
Leslie Showers - Illinois High School Association Legislative Commission, Do What's Right Committee, and the Cheer Advisory Committee
Jill Huber - Vice Chair of the Northwest Division of the Illinois Association of School Boards
PJ Caposey - Advisory to the State Superintendent

Meridian 223 Parent Guide to COVID Protocols

August 2022

This is a summary of the current M223 COVID protocols and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all possible scenarios. Return dates will be provided by Health Services staff within 48 hours of notification that your student has tested positive for COVID-19.

Current Masking Policy: Masks are optional

Masks are **required**:

- When experiencing COVID symptoms and seeing the nurse
- On days 6-10 when returning to school after a positive COVID test
- On school grounds after a positive COVID test

Current COVID Protocols

My Student Tested Positive for COVID

- May return to school a **full 5-10 days past symptom onset** (or positive test date if asymptomatic)
- 1st day of symptoms is counted as day 0. Student is required to stay home from days 0-5 and their return date is on day 6.
- **Criteria to return prior to 10 days:**
 - Fever-free (without fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours
 - Vomiting and diarrhea free for at least 24 hours
 - Asymptomatic or symptoms are improving and no cough is present
 - Can wear a mask correctly and consistently for the next 5 days at school and remain socially distanced when removing masks for eating
 - **Please Note:** Masking from days 6-10 is a condition of your student's return per IDPH guidance. **Families who wish to avoid masking/social distancing should keep their student home until 10 days have elapsed.**
- Health services staff will provide 5-day return dates. If your student does not meet the above criteria on that date, please notify the school to have their return date adjusted.

My Student Has a Household Member Who Tested Positive for COVID

- May continue coming to school if they have no symptoms and have not tested positive themselves.
- Testing is recommended on day 5 after exposure. Testing at school is available if requested.
- If symptoms develop, they must stay home.
 - Rapid tests may be administered, but a negative **PCR** test is needed to return to school if rapid test is negative.

My Student is a Close Contact to Someone Who Tested Positive for COVID (non-household member)

- May continue coming to school if they have no symptoms and have not tested positive themselves.
- Testing is recommended on day 5 after exposure. Testing at school is available if requested.
- If symptoms develop, they must stay home.
 - Rapid tests may be administered, but a negative **PCR** test is needed to return to school if rapid test is negative.

My Student Has Symptoms of COVID and is Not Tested

- May return to school a **full 5-10 days past symptom onset**
- Day of symptoms is counted as day "0" and their return date is day 6
- **Criteria to return prior to 10 days:**
 - Fever-free (without fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours
 - Vomiting and diarrhea free for at least 24 hours
 - Asymptomatic or symptoms are improving and no cough is present
 - Health services staff will provide 5-day return dates. If your student does not meet the above criteria on that date, please notify the school to have their return date adjusted.
 - In this scenario, we strongly recommend, but do not require masking on days 6-10

Highland is off to a great start. While we continue to identify areas that we can improve upon, I believe that we are continuing to get a little bit better every day. I want to make sure that I commend all of our staff for putting in the time leading into the school year to make this a successful start to the year. I am incredibly grateful for such an exceptional group of educators and to our great families for entrusting us with their children's learning.

It has been wonderful getting back to a place where we're able to do more and allow our kids to be kids once again. I am incredibly grateful for the work our students are doing to start the school year and the growth that they are already showing. The start of the school year is always a bit wild for us, but it is so much fun seeing the joy and excitement every day in our kid's faces.



Our staff and students will continue to utilize the 7 Habits of the Leader in Me framework to develop character, leadership skills, and social-emotional skills that will set them up for success. We will focus on creating leadership opportunities for our students. We believe that everyone can be a leader. Ask your kiddos how they are becoming a better leader at school.

If you are looking to become a leader in your children's education, I would encourage you to explore serving on the Principal-Parent Advisory Council or supporting our PTO. Our Principal-Parent Advisory Council will begin meeting on the 1st Thursday of each month at 5:00 PM, beginning in October. We have an excellent partnership and a very active PTO that raises funds for Highland and Monroe Center. The PTO provides lots of fun opportunities for students and families throughout the year.

I am excited to see the amazing growth in our students, our staff, and our families throughout this school year. Don't forget to follow us on Facebook, on Twitter and to share out your student's accomplishments, achievements, and their passions using #WeAreMCUSD. I am looking forward to having a great year.

Thank you and have a great end to the school year!

Joe Mullikin, Principal
Highland Elementary School

Welcome Back Monroe Center,

As I'm sitting here writing this, I cannot believe that we are welcoming everyone back into another school year. It seems very different and yet refreshing, something that seems to have felt a challenge in the past few years. I want to start off by saying that I sincerely appreciate what each of you has done to be here with your children this year and especially over the past years to show up for them and to do what you've done to support us through all that's been experienced.

All that to be said, I'm full of optimism and excitement anticipating a great year ahead for us and our students at MC. I've spent a considerable amount of time reflecting on the past few years, the challenges experienced, as well as my part in how I can come back in and focus on what lies ahead for us to do together for the children we serve. I've found some peace in recognizing that I know I can still lead with my heart (and I'm convinced that's the best way to lead), as well as my sincere conviction that we can and will get children where they need to be in the only way I know how; collectively together.

My commitment in this year is to lead by ownership and helping everyone kindly and respectfully, identify and model the greatness within each of us and use that to build up students every day, and lastly believe wholeheartedly that we can support each other through every step in order for students to also recognize that is how we become great learners, great leaders, and most importantly...great humans.

I will do my best to make this a wonderful year by coming back and choosing to set the tone for our building, always remembering we are here for children first, and making every decision with that in mind, and more than anything I am committed to knowing that collectively together we will move forward and lead at Monroe Center in a way that not only shows students how the world can be but model each and every day that it's truly possible to have a better place, a better future for us and our students, as well as making certain that every day that we are better than the day prior. Each and every one of us deserves that. Looking forward to working with each of you and to a wonderful year with our staff family and your children.

Welcome Back

Thank you,

Mrs. Simpson
Principal Monroe Center Grade School



A WORD FROM OUR PRINCIPAL

The 2023 school year begins with a lot of excitement! This summer has brought many upgrades to MJHS, including a projector, screen and sound system in the large gym. Our student celebrations will be taken up a notch! Students have received new Chromebooks and will have great educational resources at their fingertips. For example, the math department will be using a new curriculum this year called EdGems. EdGems will foster skill building and critical thinking for every student, no matter where they fall on the learning continuum.

A new year also brings new members to the MJHS Family:

Jen Speakes: Principal In Waiting
Jon Fowler - 7th Grade ELA
Alyssa Rueff - Reading Interventionist
Laura Davis - Math Interventionist

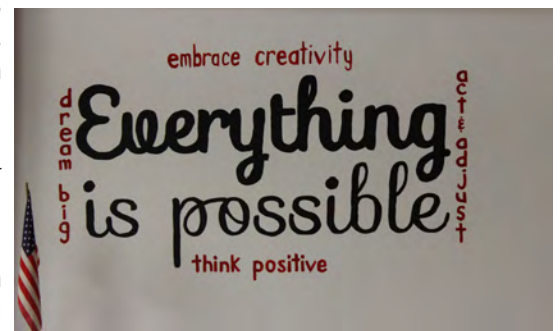


If you are interested in joining any leadership opportunities at MJHS, I encourage you to consider joining the MJHS PTO. The PTO has raised over \$60,000 over the last 8 years, all of which has come back to our students. Please like their Facebook page for more information! I also encourage you to explore serving on the Principal Parent Advisory Committee (PPAC). This committee meets before board meetings each month and you may attend virtually or in person! Watch your email for more details.

Students at MJHS are encouraged to become an active member of our school community. As a member of the Route 72 Conference,

our students can participate in volleyball, basketball, wrestling, academic team, cheerleading, solo ensemble and track and field. You can find up to date information by liking the Meridian Jr. High School Athletics/Activities page on Facebook.

Thank you for partnering with us to ensure the success of our students. Every Friday at 4:00 the "In Case Your Student Didn't Tell You" newsletter will be delivered to your inbox. This newsletter will keep you up to date with all of the happenings at MJHS. You can also stay connected by utilizing meridian223.org. We are looking forward to a great year!



Dear SVHS Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2022-2023 School Year; we are honored to begin another exciting year with all of you. Stillman Valley High School's vision is to create a learning environment that empowers our students to take on the most challenging courses offered in an effort to prepare them for success in their college, career, or military pursuits. This vision cannot be attained without valuing academic rigor and social and emotional wellness.

Thank you for continuing to partner with us to positively impact the academic, social, and emotional growth of our students every day. Please know that your involvement and support of your children at the high school level is essential. Students still need to see that you play an active role in their development and high school success. One way you can stay connected is by reading our **SVHS Daily Announcements**, which can be found on our high school website. These same announcements are emailed daily to each of our students.

Students at SVHS are encouraged to earn Community Service Hours throughout their high school careers. A mindset of service supports our District Mission to cultivate "...community contributors." Our seniors are recognized for their hours of service during their graduation ceremony. Service hours can be completed by students outside the school day in partnership with various local organizations. Our students can also earn service hours in conjunction with SVHS clubs, teams, and/or classes. Each time your child completes service hours, please encourage him or her to stop by our Counseling Department to complete a one-page **Service Hours Form**, or they can complete the online form on our SVHS website. Community Service opportunities are shared in our **SVHS Daily Announcements** and posted outside our **SVHS Student Services Office**.

The Latin Honors Program at SVHS was established several years ago to promote our District Mission and SVHS Vision. High school seniors can earn Latin Honors recognition upon graduation by meeting several criteria over their four years in high school related to: ACT, SAT, and/or ASVAB Benchmark Scores, Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA), Good Citizenship, and Capstone or College-Level Courses. Latin Honors is our SVHS definition of what it means to be College/Career/Military Ready. The specific requirements of Latin Honors can be found in your student's SVHS Handbook/Planner.

Important Dates - 1st Quarter:

- August 19 - SVHS Cardinal Night at 5:30 (All Fall Teams/Clubs - Begin on SVHS Football Field)
- August 24 - SVHS Back-to-School Night at 6:00 PM (Multi-Purpose Room)
- September 1 - SVHS Fall Pictures & Class Ring Orders
- September 2 - Early Release for Students at 11:10 AM
- September 5 - Labor Day - No School
- October 3-8 - Homecoming Week
- October 6 - Homecoming Pep Rally at 7:00 PM at the SVHS Football Field
- October 7 - Early Release for Students at 11:10 AM
- October 8 - Homecoming Dance 7:00 - 9:30 PM at SVHS Multi-Purpose Room
- October 10 - Columbus Day - No School
- October 12 & 19 - SVHS Parent-Teacher Conferences 4:00 - 7:00 PM
- October 21 - End of 1st Quarter

Sincerely,

Mrs. Leslie Showers
SVHS Principal

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Stillman Valley, IL 61084

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MERIDIAN CUSD 223



@MCUSD223

Meet Wendy Jackson!



Wendy is our new Registrar and SIS Coordinator as well as our College and Career Center Administrative Assistant.

Registration will now take place at Stillman Valley High School located at 425 S. Pine Street in Stillman Valley.

Wendy can be reached at 815-645-2230, ext. 5012 or by email at wjackson@mail.meridian223.org.