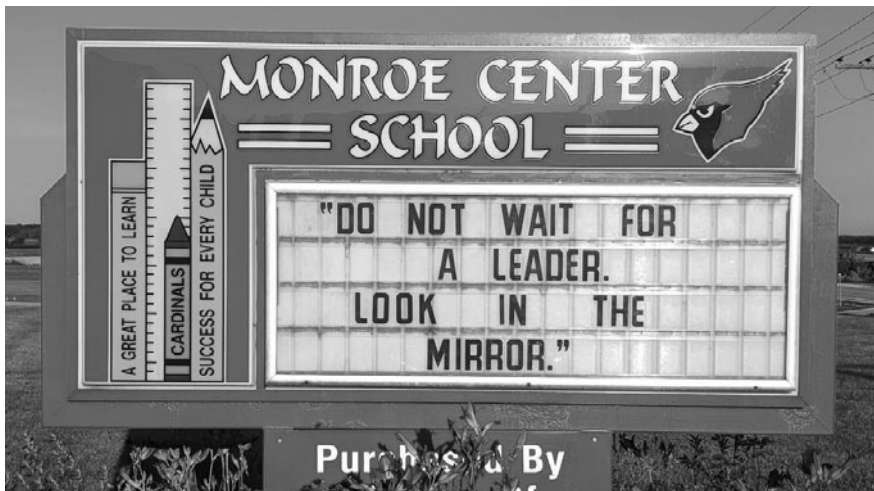


Meridian CUSD Newsletter

Fall 2018



OUR COMMUNITY, OUR SCHOOL, OUR STORY

A Word From Our Superintendent

By Dr. P.J. Caposey



Meridian Community and Families,

The 2018-2019 school year is off to an amazing start. We are in the midst of a very good stretch for our district in terms of continuous improvement of our facilities, financial stability, and academic progress. Over the past few years we have been able to improve

our facilities in several ways and the major change students will feel this year is ubiquitous technology throughout our buildings. This year we made a major investment in technology and every child should have access to a computer in every classroom every day if the teacher so chooses. This has been met with incredible excitement from our students as they are able to leverage the tools of their generation to reach the desired outcomes.

Reaching this level of technology integration in our classrooms is the culmination of several years of planning and preparation and we are ecstatic to see what our faculty, staff, and students will do with this new resource. Additionally, our high school was named one of the top in the nation for the second consecutive year. When compared to our Illinois counterparts on the list, only one school who spends similarly to us made the list – again demonstrating our outstanding education while demonstrating fiscal responsibility.

Each year I try to inform the public of what our district

focus for the year will be. This year our theme focuses on continuous improvement and the difference between pride and satisfaction. The hope is that we take some time to 'smell the roses' and realize we have had a great deal of success and should be proud of where we are considering where we came from. However, we must let our pride in our past work lead to contentment. If we want to be great and realize our vision of being a district with small town values AND world class results. We must continue to push forward.

As always thank you for your continued support. We are amazingly fortunate as a district to serve this community. Our success is your success – but your success also leads to our success. We are a reflection of you in many ways.

Also, please continue to connect with us on our social media platforms. We work very hard to attempt to meet our parents and students where they already are – so we hope to see you on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Please label school related posts with #WeAreMCUSD so we can collaboratively celebrate the great things happening in our community.

Welcome to the 2018-2019 school-year!

Thank you, and let's make it a great year.

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Meridian's Polasky finalist for Teacher of the Year

Bill Polasky is an institution at Stillman Valley High School. His courses are viewed in many ways as academic rites of passage for Meridian students as he prides himself on challenging them to think and write beyond what many believe they are personally capable of academically. His efforts have been rewarded by being named a finalist for Illinois Teacher of the Year. Meridian superintendent, Dr. PJ Caposey, stated, "We are all ecstatic that Bill has advanced to this level of the competition. I truly believe that he is worthy of this tremendous honor. Not only is he an outstanding teacher, but also an influential leader among his peers – both within Meridian and in the national landscape for US History teachers. He truly is exemplary in many ways."

Mr. Polasky commented on the honor as well, "I find it to be a humbling and exciting honor all at once, as it never occurred to me starting out that recognition like this would come my way. I've just tried to pursue my craft with passion, to do the best I could do and be the best I could be for my students, the community I serve, and the profession at-large, and it's been a rich, deeply fulfilling adventure for me these past 25 years."

"The Those Who Excel program honors and celebrates some of Illinois' most exemplary teachers at every level," said State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith,

Ph.D. "Every student deserves to feel like they belong. Our 10 Teacher of the Year finalists are outstanding representatives of educators who continuously go above and beyond to make students feel well known and well cared for. Their level of commitment, their passion, and their dedication is evident in their strong relationships with students, colleagues, and families within their communities."

A selection committee composed of administrators, teachers, educational service personnel, student support personnel, and past Illinois Teacher of the Year winners reviewed hundreds of Teacher of the Year nominations this year.

ISBE will announce the Illinois Teacher of the Year during the Those Who Excel banquet in October at the Bloomington-Normal Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Normal. The Teacher of the Year will represent Illinois in various capacities at events and on committees throughout the country.

Meridian teacher, Teresa Eden, was a state finalist for this award last year. Bill and Teresa are the first finalists for this recognition in Meridian history.



WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Highland School

I am excited to welcome our students, staff and families back to Highland Elementary for another great school year. So many projects and facelifts were completed at Highland over the summer. While you may have noticed many of these changes at the Open House, we are excited to see how our continued implementation of the Leader in Me curriculum changes the culture and character of our school.

With the new school year come new faces, both in our students and in our staff. First, we want to welcome all of the new students and families who are coming to Highland Elementary School for the first time. We also want to welcome Mrs. Jill Gramer (1st Grade), Mrs. Brittany Frisbie (1st Grade), Mrs. Jacque Buchanan (2nd Grade), Mrs. Amy Hannebaum (2nd Grade), and Ms. Alicia Kopplin (2nd Grade). We are excited for the great things that will transpire within each of their classes throughout this school year.

This year's theme is "Leadership Starts Here". Our staff and students will be utilizing 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 students how they are becoming a better leader at school. If you are looking to become a

leader in your student's education, I would encourage you to explore serving on the Principal-Parent Advisory Council or supporting our PTO. 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. There are many opportunities to volunteer all throughout the school year. You will be receiving a PTO newsletter outlining their events, fundraising, and purchases early in the school year.

I am excited to see the amazing growth in our students, our staff, and our families throughout this school year. Please watch for information about events throughout the school year and partner with us in your student's educational experience. 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.

Sincerely,

Joe Mullikin, Principal
Highland Elementary School



WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Monroe Center School

The kick off to the 2028-2019 school year has been full of incredible surprises at Monroe Center Elementary. MC family members have been busy all summer long helping find ways to pull the history of our building and great district together with new ideas and spaces throughout our building. The transformation has been so exciting and fun to see both the students and staff reactions.

We started with our emphasis of the “First Eight Days” on the great habits we practice as a very proud Leader in Me school. Students and Monroe Center family all refreshed their learning and practice of the 7 habits while gaining insight to each other and building relationships with one another as the foundation for our year. There were celebrations with a number of things in mind. The Meridian Education Foundation provided a grant to fund flexible seating options for students and teachers throughout the building. All of our classrooms have a modern touch of the seating and students love the flexibility provided by the seating. This seating will allow for the necessary movement and functionality that the unique pieces provide. We awarded our top myON digital reader, Miss Ivy Punsalan with her very own Chromebook as congratulations for her efforts in reading over the summer. As you enter the building you’ll also notice a reception area created to allow families to feel welcome as they enter the building. Lastly, we transformed our aged teacher workroom into a refreshing new Monroe Center family room. It’s a place where the staff at Monroe Center can gather, collaborate, and when necessary take a moment to laugh and simply enjoy each other and celebrate all we do together for those we serve.

The best part of what we’re doing at Monroe Center Elementary is that everything we’ve been doing and the special touches along the way like the special quotes in the reception area have a tremendous amount of student voice within them. Our students held an election last year to determine what elements were to go into those quotes and they are helping steer this process by telling us what quotes are most important to them.

I’m confident that great things are going to happen in an

environment like this with a group of individuals working together like a family to do everything possible to support students and their needs. It’s going to be an incredible year!

Mrs. Simpson
Director of Learning

Save the Date(s)

- **September 7th 4th grade class trip to the Ogle County Fairgrounds (Agriculture Education)**
- **September 27th Family Literacy Night held at Highland 6pm prek-5th grade**
- **October 2nd 3rd grade class trip to Lowell Park (Stewardship Day)**
- **Parent Teacher Conference Dates:**
~ October 3rd 4-7pm
~ October 10th 3-6pm
- **October 5th teacher institute-no student attendance**
- **October 8th Columbus Day no school**
- **October 12th end of 1st quarter**
- **November 9th early dismissal**
- **November 12th Veteran’s Day no school**
- **November 21-23 Thanksgiving break**
- **November 29th Family Literacy Night held at Highland 6pm prek-5th grade**



WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Meridian Junior High

Welcome to the 2018-2019 School Year; we are excited to have all of you at MJHS! Meridian Junior High's Vision is to create a student led environment that provides the challenge and support our students need to be successful. We truly want our students to **SOAR**; **S**uccess **O**f **A** Redbird. Over the course of this year we will be focusing on incorporating into various activities the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens which include: Being Proactive; Begin with the End in Mind; Put First Things First; Think Win-Win; Seek First to Understand, then to Be Understood; Synergize; and to Sharpen the Saw. A big thank you to Kylie for painting our 7 Habits Tree. It is beautiful! And a great reminder of our focus this year!

Thank you for continuing to partner with us to support your student. You can stay connected and informed through Skyward and the In Case Your Student Didn't Tell You newsletter that is delivered to your email every Sunday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. Please make sure to read the Student/Parent Handbook located at the front of your student's agenda. Please have your student return the signature page stating that you both have read the handbook.

We have an excellent partnership with our MJHS PTO. The PTO was formed 4 years ago by Micki White, and continues to grow in parent participation! So far the PTO has raised over \$52,000 that has all come back to support our students! All of this has been done without our students selling anything! You can find out more information about the PTO on their Facebook page.

Important Dates

August 31	Early Release 11:10
September 3	No School - Labor Day
September 26	PSAT Test 8th Grade
October 3 & 10	Parent Teacher Conferences 4:00-7:00
October 5	No School - Teacher Institute
October 8	No School - Columbus Day
October 12	End of First Quarter

Meridian Welcomes New Leaders

At Thursday's Board meeting Meridian 223's Board of Education is expected to approve a multi-year contract for the position of Director of Learning/Principal at Monroe Center Elementary School. Mrs. Deana Simpson will be welcomed into the position left vacant by Sarah Hogan's transition to a neighboring district. Superintendent, Dr. PJ Caposey noted the district was looking for a candidate with the following qualities and Mrs. Simpson is a perfect fit:

- Loves the district and has the potential to stay for many years
- Deeply understands elementary instruction and pedagogy
- Has the ability and willingness to form meaningful relationships
- Believes in Leader in Me and the other initiatives taking place in Meridian 223 (STAR and MyON)
- Cares deeply enough to engage in difficult conversations about both culture and instruction
- Has integrity, vision, and is a self-starter
- Has the talent and capacity to help the Leadership Team achieve its vision

Mrs. Simpson is still completing her principal certification, so her title for the 2018-2019 school-year will be that of Director of Learning and Superintendent Caposey will serve as the principal of the building, however, Mrs. Simpson will be running day-to-day operations. Once the certification is complete, Mrs. Simpson's title will change to Principal.

Caposey stated, "I have the upmost confidence in Deana. I do not think she has the potential to be good, I believe she has the potential to be truly great. Her commitment to our district and Monroe Center in particular, is incredible. I cannot wait to see where we go under her leadership."

Other New Positions

Meridian has also been able to use the additional revenue generated through the Evidence-Based Funding formula to create two new positions and decrease class sizes for Kindergarten through 5th grade. The two new positions are that of a College and Career Coordinator and a K-8

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WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Stillman Valley High School

Dear SVHS Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2018-2019 school year; we are excited to begin a new 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 at the college, career, or military level. We truly want our students to be **Empowered to Excel**. However, this vision cannot be attained without valuing and promoting social and emotional wellness. We are dedicated to a learning environment that promotes a positive culture and strong student engagement.

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 high school endeavors. You can stay connected by making consistent use of our SVHS website at www.stillmanvalleyhigh.org. The **SVHS Daily Announcements**, **SVHS Parent-Student Handbook**, **SAT/ACT Test Prep**, **Family Access/Gradebook**, **SVHS Course Guide**, and much more are available under the **Quick Links** tab on the high school website.

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 four years of service during their graduation ceremony. Service hours should be completed by students outside the school day through various local organizations. Our students can also earn service hours in conjunction with SVHS clubs, teams, 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 form online by visiting the **Quick Links** tab on our SVHS website at www.stillmanvalleyhigh.org. Our SVHS Counseling Department provides students with

community service options and contact information through our daily announcements and service bulletin board.

The Latin Honors Program at SVHS was established several years ago, and it serves to promote our District Mission and SVHS Vision. High school seniors can earn Latin Honors recognition upon graduation by meeting several criteria related to: ACT or SAT Benchmark Scores, Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA), Good Citizenship, and multiple Capstone or College-Level Courses. With our state's ever-changing high-stakes testing, it is necessary that we define what it means to be College/Career/Military ready at our local level. The specific requirements of Latin Honors can be found on page 5 of your child's SVHS Agenda/Planner and under the **Quick Links** tab in the **2018-2019 Student-Parent Handbook** on our SVHS webpage.

Important Dates – 1st Quarter:

August 31 – Early Release for Students at 11:10 AM

August 31 – ASVAB Testing – All Seniors (Morning - SVHS)

September 3 – Labor Day – No School

September 20 – Homecoming Pep Rally at 7:00 PM (SVHS Football Field)

September 22 – Homecoming Dance at 7:00 – 9:30 PM (SVHS M.P. Room)

September 25 – Senior Pictures (Morning – SVHS)

September 26 – College & Career Night & C&C Center Grand Opening from 6:00-7:15 PM (SVHS)

October 5 – Teachers' Institute – No School

October 8 – Columbus Day – No School

October 10 – PSAT/NMSQT Testing for Interested Juniors (Must sign up in the Counseling Dept.)

October 10 & 17 – SVHS Parent-Teacher Conferences 4:00 – 7:00 PM

October 11 – FASFA Night from 6:00-8:00 PM (SVHS)

October 12 – End of 1st Quarter

Mrs. Leslie Showers
SVHS Principal

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

College and Career Center

Our CCC (College and Career Center) is being developed to help students learn about their interests and possible occupations. The SVHS College and Career Center will strive to guide students towards their educational and career goals. It will be a place where students can come to obtain information on community colleges and four-year colleges and universities, military training and careers, trade and technical schools, and apprenticeship programs, testing and test preparation, financial aid and scholarships, career possibilities and college majors descriptions. In other words, the mission of the SVHS College and Career Center (CCC) is to provide our high school community with a wide variety of information and resources for college and career planning. The goal is to meet the information and planning needs for our students as they move toward graduation and beyond.

Students are welcome to stop by the CCC before school or after school to utilize the resources or may schedule an appointment should they have more than just a quick question or require additional assistance. Additionally, students may access the College and Career Center during their study halls or their lunch period. They must come with a pass from the C & C Coordinator (Mr. Liegl) or from a study hall based upon posted available times.

College and Career Night @ SVHS AND College and Career Center Grand Opening Wednesday, September 26th, 2018 Time: 6:00-7:15 pm Students and parents will have the opportunity learn about College, Careers, the Military, and Financial Aid from educators and guest speakers. The night will end with a question/answer session.

**Rock Valley College Fair @ RVC
Monday, October 3rd, 2018 Time: 6:00-8:00 pm**

What is a college fair? A college fair is an event in which college admissions representatives come together at a school, community-gathering place or large convention center to meet one-on-one with high school students (and parents) to talk about their respective colleges and

answer questions. Over 101 college representatives will be present to meet with our students and parents at the RVC College Fair. The fair is open to all area high school students and parents.

PSAT/NMSQ @ SVHS

Wednesday, October 10th, 2018 Time: During the school day

The PSAT/NMSQT is the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The PSAT is a great primer for the SAT, and even the ACT, but it's more than just a trial run. PSAT scores are used to identify National Merit Scholars and award merit scholarships. (Juniors)

FAFSA Night @ SVHS

Thursday, October 11th, Time: 6:00-8:00 pm

Stillman Valley High School will host a FAFSA completion night at our school this month to help graduating high school seniors and their families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

College and Career Center Grand Opening (Stand Alone Items/Ad)

College and Career Night

**Wednesday, September 26th, 2018
6:00-7:15 pm**



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Stillman Valley High School students earn \$450,000 worth of college credit

Stillman Valley — Stillman Valley High School students earned over 1,000 hours of college credit last year without once having to leave campus. Students earned credits in courses ranging from Calculus to Agricultural Mechanics and Technology. Over 85 students successfully completed 313 Dual or Articulated Credit courses and students successfully passed 82 Advanced Placement exams. In total, 1,185 hours of college credit were earned. Using Illinois State's tuition rate (randomly selected state school) SVHS students earned roughly \$455,000 of college credit last year.

Stillman Valley High School partners with the College Board, Rock Valley College, and Highland Community College to bring these opportunities to students. Superintendent of School, Dr. PJ Caposey, noted he was appreciative of SVHS' principal Leslie Showers and her vision for the success. "Mrs. Showers is committed to working with staff and community partners to provide as many opportunities for success in college and career as possible. These impressive data points are a result of her commitment to pushing forward and to serving our kids. "

Stillman Valley High School's success is also not dependent on one person or department. College credit hours are available through the English, Science, Social Science, Math, Art, Agriculture, and Foreign Language departments. Stillman Valley High School's Vision – Empowered to Excel – is embraced throughout the disciplines, which has created a positive, engaging learning environment. Stillman Valley High School Principal, Mrs. Leslie Showers, shared, "We are dedicated to ensure that every student at SVHS is connected to college and career opportunities that will enhance their post-secondary pursuits, and our faculty and

staff are honored to partner with each student to make this happen." The high school's programs, courses, and teachers draw students to both the dual credit and the Advanced Placement academic arenas. Senior student, Miss Olivia Kerr, stated, "Both dual credit and A.P. courses at SVHS are challenging and provide excellent opportunities to bypass general education courses and enroll in core courses earlier in my college career. Stillman Valley High School does an excellent job of encouraging students to enroll in these courses beginning their freshman year."

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Math Coach. Both positions fit directly into Meridian's strategic plan and will provide direct support to students and teachers.

A brief profile of each leader is provided below.

Mrs. Beth Kleinschmidt – K-8 Math Coach

Mrs. Kleinschmidt has long-served as the SVHS Math Department Division Leader and will now take on the task of aligning our K-8 Math curriculum and providing support to teachers. Mrs. Kleinschmidt is a well-respected leader in the field of mathematics throughout the state and was even selected to work with ISBE to help set the cut scores for the newly adopted SAT.

Ed Liegl – College and Career Coordinator

Mr. Liegl has served as the English Department Division Leader for many years and is one of the most respected teachers in the district. Mr. Liegl has also led our efforts to support students as they prepare for the ASVAB and other exams. Mr. Liegl will be working to create pathways for college and career with Rock Valley College, other industry partners, and four year colleges and universities. His goal is to provide comprehensive support to our students so that no student leaves SVHS without a plan for their future success.