



Meridian CUSD Newsletter

Spring 2019

OUR COMMUNITY, OUR SCHOOL, OUR STORY

A Word From Our Superintendent

By Dr. P.J. Caposey



Each year I like to set aside some time to think about what has taken place during the course of the previous calendar year. This forces me to reflect and also appreciate the tremendous amount of work that our faculty and staff put into continuously improving on behalf of

our students. We did this activity as part of our last Leadership Team meeting and within five minutes we came up with over 40 new processes, programs, or initiatives that have launched since this time last year. WOW!!

Some have been successes and some failures – but we have learned from experience. While the full list of 40 would not mean much without context, I thought it appropriate to draw attention to three ‘new’ things that would most likely interest our constituents.

- Safety additions

We have worked with the Ogle County Sheriff's department to add a School Resource Officer. Rochelle Township High School and Meridian 223 became the first schools in the county to move in this

direction and we could not be happier with the outcomes so far. From a very qualitative standpoint I have had several students tell me they feel safer as a result of that decision. That feeling is worth the investment.

Additionally, we have added the NightLock and LobbyGuard systems. These systems are approaching full deployment and provide additional layers of security to our buildings. Currently we are looking at extending our camera infrastructure throughout the district and creating secure vestibules at the entrance of each building – although both remain part of future planning at this point.

- Full Implementation of Leader in Me at Highland and Monroe Center

Leader in Me is a character education program and curriculum inspired by the work of Stephen Covey and the international best seller *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. This has been a game changer for our district in many ways. To

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WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

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hear 6 year olds talking about being proactive and putting first things first when they are making decisions is something I was skeptical about until I experienced it. Our goal as a district is to grow leaders – and we believe this is a great step forward in that regard.

- Ubiquitous access to technology

Over the past five years we have spent over one million dollars improving our technology infrastructure in order to get the tools of today into the hands of our students. This year that vision became a reality as we now have reliable and strong Wi-Fi in each room in every building. Additionally, (almost) every room has their own Chromebook cart. This means that every teacher at every grade level can leverage technology to help support a lesson any time they choose. This has allowed us to pilot and leverage several different software providers to better meet our kids where they are at and personalize academic support for our kids.

**Thank you,
Dr. PJ Caposey**

Bryan Vandiver named Meridian Director of Buildings and Grounds



At the Thursday, March 7th, Meridian Board meeting Bryan Vandiver is expected to be approved to serve as the next Director of Buildings and Grounds for Meridian CUSD 223. MCUSD expected this to be a highly coveted position and used a hiring committee consisting of Board of Education members, admin-

istration, staff, and community members to help select the next leader of this department. The district did have a number of qualified candidates apply for the position, but the interview team agreed that Mr. Vandiver brought a unique level of experience and know-how to the position.

Superintendent PJ Caposey noted the difficulty and importance of the job by noting that many days the Director of Buildings and Grounds puts in the most hours and is the first-person on call when something goes awry in our buildings on a random Tuesday night at 2 AM. Caposey added, "We needed to find someone reliable, someone who could lead, and someone who was going to take total ownership of our facilities. We are extremely confident that we have found that person in Bryan. Moreover, this job is not going to be too big for him – his experiences will have more than adequately prepared him for this challenge."

Bryan and his wife Linda are alumni, as are his two children, Jacob and Katelyn. Bryan noted, "I feel like I am coming full circle. To be able to do this work in the district where I went to school in the town I was raised is a very special opportunity that I will not take for granted." Bryan previously managed the facilities at the Rockford airport for over 25 years and currently works in a similar capacity for Rockford YMCAs.

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Highland School

It's hard to believe that we've already made it into the spring here at Highland! The year continues to fly by. We had our annual Kinder Kickoff the last couple weeks of March leading into Spring Break. This was a great opportunity for us to begin to build relationships with our future students and families. Thank you to our Kindergarten team at Highland for organizing this event and to all the other staff and departments who make it a success year in and year out. Thank you as well to Mrs. Zern, again, for a wonderful 1st Grade Barnyard Moosical. It was another packed house at the High School and a great reminder of the wonderful support our students have!

It has been so much fun to see students continue to take ownership throughout the school of the culture and their learning. Students are continuing to record announcements each day and we share those out on our Twitter page (@HESMCUSD). Students have also begun reading the PBIS winners each week and create new leadership roles for the building. Our HEROs are brainstorming each month new leadership roles that will help our building meet our vision of "learn to lead". Roles like lunch and attendance leaders, PBIS Store setup and tear down, and lunch crew are great examples of how our students are continuing to develop a larger voice within Highland.

We had our very first Muffins with Mom breakfast on March 19th. We were overwhelmed with the outpouring of support and the attendance for this first breakfast. I am most proud of our group of young girls who used their knowledge of the 7 Habits to Begin with The End in Mind and Think Win-Win in proposing and then organizing this event. 2nd Graders Makayla Williams, Bailey Prodzinski, Aubrey Huber, Tori Aughenbaugh, and Izzy Andersen came to me late 1st Semester with the idea and we were able to meet and make it a reality. Kudos to a great group of girls who found their voice in helping to create a great event for all!

We're excited to be hosting our inaugural Leadership Day here at Highland on April 26th. The Leadership Day will begin at 1:45 PM and will be hosted and run by students. Students will share out their learning around the 7 Habits, how they have impacted our building and culture, and there will be a tour for all to see how the 7 Habits impact classrooms. In each classroom, students will share out their class WIG (Wildly Important Goals), their leadership roles in the classroom, classroom motto, and classroom mission statement. We are so proud of the work our stu-

dents have put into making this an amazing day! For more details and to RSVP, please contact the Highland Office at (815) 645 2230.

Joe Mullikin, Principal
Highland Elementary School



L-R: Tori Aughenbaugh, Bailey Prodzinski, Izabella Andersen, Makayla Williams, Aubrey Huber



Back Row: Mitchell Robinson, Liam MacDonald, Justin Cheeseman, Tori Aughenbaugh, Ashton Thomas, Allison Tompkins, Hunter Meyer, Jase Wehrman Middle Row: Emily Pollock, Audrey Vorravong, Aubrey Huber, Izabella Anderson, Makayla Williams, Madalyn Cavenagh, Joseph Thurow, Eli Champlain Front Row: Levi Winn, Emma Indovina, Chloe Lewis, Ashlyn Farris, Bailey Prodzinski

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Monroe Center School

We've seen sunshine at Monroe Center Grade School both literally and figuratively over the past few weeks and are very thankful for that. We can all agree that it seemed like quite a long winter. With that comes a great number of indoor recesses, but students and staff alike turned what seemed to be an eternity inside into an opportunity to plan and prepare for upcoming events with Highland Elementary like Career Day and Family Literacy Night as well as still having some student lead community service projects during genius hour. Students also took time to complete their leadership applications just in time to get ready for Spring to hit.

Career Day was a huge hit. This year our two elementary school counselors, Ms. Haugh, and Mrs. Appino partnered up to mentor 5th-grade student volunteers at Monroe Center to create an entire Career Day curriculum for the students at Highland Elementary. Students designed Google slide presentations, created props and commentary, dressed for success, and taught students K-2 all about the careers they may choose to pursue.

We had students sharing how to choose a career path, the way to dress for particular careers, the education necessary to do so, right along with the great things about each career path. The program was well received by the students and staff at Highland. It was incredible to see how these students have grown over the years. They walked into the classrooms at Highland with such confidence and character to share and model for the younger students. We have no doubt, from the presentations and efforts put into this grand day, that our future will be in good hands whether our students choose to become veterinarians, teachers, construction workers, astronauts, nurses, food service experts, or even hockey players. All of the effort taken to build this event was time that the students volunteered and with the exceptional reception at Highland, we can only look forward to what next year's program will bring.

Several students in Mrs. Papke's genius hour chose to create a community service project by building a school fundraising campaign including dollar days to raise money for Noah's Ark Animal Sanctuary. Cambria, Shelby, and former student Analisa had the opportunity to submit a check for almost \$400 to the Animal Sanctuary from the money raised by the entire building due to their efforts. It was shared with their class that the money would be used to help feed and protect animals from the extreme weather during the cold season we are wrapping up.

All in all, Monroe Center is looking forward to an exceptional spring with more opportunities for students to shine as they learn and challenge their own status quo. The leadership we've seen in events and the opportunities like these above are just a few glimpses into what our students are capable of doing when given the opportunity to lead, and we can't wait to see what they develop next. We're definitely looking forward to seeing the sunshine in the weather but even more so from within our students each day.

Mrs. Simpson
Director of Learning



WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Meridian Junior High

With spring, comes thoughts of celebrations. MJHS has had a lot to celebrate this school year!

Our winter sports teams had very successful seasons! Congratulations to our 7th grade girls basketball team on their 3rd place conference finish. The spotlight shined on our wrestling team, which joined the Illinois Elementary School Association for the first time this year. The team placed second in the conference, 1st in regionals, and 2nd in sectionals. Our team sent six wrestlers to the state meet at NIU. Congratulations to Andrew F. who finished 3rd in the state and Randy M. who finished 4th!

In addition, MJHS is privileged to have a wonderful partnership with our PTO and the Lions Club. These two organizations combined forces to purchase MJHS a brand new scoreboard. Everyone was excited to enter the gym for the big unveiling!



Each spring, students in grades 3-8 are required by the Illinois State Board of Education to participate in a statewide performance assessment. This year, that assessment is called the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). While it has a new name, the actual test questions will be taken from the same PARCC bank of questions. This helps to ensure that student growth measurements are valid. The IAR is slightly shorter than last year's assessment, which is good news for our students. IAR testing will take place in April.

Remember, every Sunday at 4:00 p.m., the "In Case Your Student Didn't Tell You" newsletter is emailed to you. In it you will find important information regarding topics like IAR, upcoming events, and news from your PTO.

If you are looking for academic information regarding your student, you can find the Student and Family Access quicklink on the right side of the district webpage: www.meridian223.org. Please support your student by checking his/her grades, homework, and attendance each week. If you need your login information for Family Access, please contact the MJHS office.

#SOAR

Success of a Redbird

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 4.02 PBIS Store Open
- 4.03 Pop Tab Dodgeball @ 7:30 a.m.
- 4.04 Math Contest
- 4.05 Report Cards sent home
- 4.05 Hawaiian Luau @ 7:00 p.m.
- 4.08 IAR Testing Begins
- 4.19 & 4.22 No School-Easter Holiday

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Stillman Valley High School

Dear SVHS Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Stillman Valley High School's Vision is to create a learning environment that empowers all students to take on the most challenging courses offered in an effort to prepare them for college and career success. We truly want our students to be **Empowered to Excel**.

The students, faculty, staff, and administration are committed to a culture of servant leadership. Our goal is to make community service part of the culture at SVHS. If your student has completed any service hours during this school year, please remind him or her to stop by our SVHS Counseling Department to complete a one-page **Service Hours Form**, or students can complete the form online by visiting the *Quick Links* tab on our SVHS website at www.stillmanvalleyhigh.org. **Seniors must turn in all service hours to our SVHS Counseling Department by Friday, May 3, 2019 in preparation for community service recognition at our graduation/commencement ceremony on May 19.** If you or your child would like to learn more about community service opportunities in our area, please contact Mrs. Sharon Pannarale, SVHS Counseling Department Secretary, to review a list of organizations with contact information, or check out the *Daily Announcements* under the *Quick Links* tab on our high school website for service opportunities.

Defining what it means for our students to be **College and Career Ready** is essential in our pursuit of excellence at SVHS. Our goal is for every SVHS Graduate to be deemed College & Career Ready based upon multiple criteria: the attainment of SVHS Latin Honors criteria, successful Military Enlistment, 40 or more community service hours upon graduation, Illinois State Scholar recognition, National Merit recognition, earned certifications, successful Dual Credit course completion, earning a 3 or better on an Advanced Placement (AP) Exam, and/or benchmark attainment on applicable state assessments (ACT and/or SAT). These areas of focus enable all stakeholders to clearly articulate

what it means for an SVHS student to be College and Career Ready.

Important Dates – 2nd Semester/End of the School Year

- April 5 – Junior/Senior Banquet at 5:30 PM (Lino's)
- April 6 – FFA Banquet at 6:00 PM (SVHS Multi-Purpose Room)
- April 10 – National Honor Society Induction Ceremony at 7:00 PM (Aux. Gym)
- April 27 – Prom Grand March at 4:00 PM (Auxiliary Gym) & 6:00 PM (Barnacopia)
- May 3 – May Day Pageant at 7:00 PM (Main Gym)
- May 7 – Senior Scholarship Night at 7:00 PM (SVHS Multi-Purpose Room)
- May 14 & 15 – Seniors' Final Exams
- May 17 – Graduation Practice for the Class of 2019 at 8:00 AM (Multi-Purpose Room & Main Gym)
- May 19 – SVHS Commencement/Graduation Ceremony at 2:00 PM (Main Gym)
- May 29, 30, & 31 – SVHS Final Exams (Freshmen, Sophomores & Juniors)
- May 31 – Last Day of School – Early Release (All Buildings) at 11:10 AM
- Please visit our SVHS Activities & Athletics webpage at www.svcardinals.com to check spring team schedules, activities registration, pictures, and more.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Leslie Showers
SVHS Principal

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

News and Notes from Transportation

*As always our goal is to have safe and timely pick-ups and drop-offs of all students. We ask for a window of five-minutes early and five-minutes late bordering the shared pick-up and drop-off time. Please contact the Transportation Department if pick-ups or drop-offs do not occur within that window.

*Davis Junction students (particularly Ogle Crossings and Harvest Glenn students and parents) please keep in mind that it will be approximately 8 minutes for a bus to go around a different direction to get into your subdivisions to start the pick up or drop off process when stopped by a train. We thank you for your patience with this, as you know all too well how much of an inconvenience these trains can be.

*If your student will be going home with another student after school, please be sure to write a note to inform the bus driver. This will be permitted as long as the space on the bus allows.

*On early release day's we are always flooded with calls inquiring on arrival times home for students. It is approximately 3 hours 20 minutes earlier than on a normal release day. We hope this is helpful.

*MCUSD is always welcoming applicants who would like to join our team. We are very much in need for the extra help as bus aides and drivers. This is a perfect position for a parent who is looking for a little extra income while staying on their student's schedule. The district provides all necessary training. Join us in this very rewarding part-time job.very rewarding part-time job.

MCUSD 223 Family:

Change in Start Times on Wednesdays Starting Next Year

At the March Board of Education meeting action was taken to approve minor amendments to this year's calendar and to next year's calendar (in addition to

approving the 20-21 school calendar). A few details on the calendar may have a significant impact on our district families, so I thought it necessary to communicate the changes out via an all-email.

The first change impacts this year. The dismissal time on the last day of school will be 11:00 as opposed to the last day being a full-day as it has been the past few years.

The second change will begin in the 19-20 school year. We believe this change will have a greater impact on families. MCUSD 223 will be moving to late-starts on Wednesdays of each week. This means that buses will arrive to each stop 30 minutes later on Wednesdays than they do the rest of the week. The current plan is to have staff available and buildings open at 7:00 AM as we do all other days to ease any burden on families with this change.

The rationale for the change is to re-commit to the Professional Learning Community model within our teaching teams. We believe that giving dedicated district-wide time to our teachers to work in teams will allow us to more comprehensively answer these four key questions:

- What do we want students to know and be able to do?
- How will we know if they have?
- What will we do when they do?
- What will we do when they do not?

More specifically, this time allows us to share data within our teams and to learn from our own internal best practices happening in the classroom. We believe given this time we will be able to better serve students, better achieve our stated goals, and move closer to enacting our vision of becoming a world-class school system.

Local Postal Customer



MERIDIAN CUSD 223



@MCUSD223

Luke Robert and Connor Flynn from Stillman Valley High School achieve a perfect 36 on the ACT Test.

Two Stillman Valley High School seniors have achieved a perfect 36 on their ACT scores. This is something that only 1% of students nationwide accomplish. Luke Robert and Connor Flynn have both done it. Leslie Showers, Stillman Valley HS Principal, said, "Mister Connor Flynn and Mister Luke Robert represent the very best that Stillman Valley High School has to offer. These young men are articulate, driven, and exemplary in all of their endeavors. We are very proud of their accomplishments." Both Connor and Luke are still evaluating which college they will be attending next year. Connor would like to

study either engineering or in the medical field and Luke is interested in Aerospace Engineering.

Dr. P.J. Caposey, Meridian 223 Superintendent, stated, "These students are truly elite. Their accomplishments are a reflection of their incredible gifts, hard work and the support of their families. We are lucky in the Meridian School District to have the chance to serve them."

