



Illinois State Scholars 2018-2019

Meridian CUSD Newsletter

Winter 2018

OUR COMMUNITY, OUR SCHOOL, OUR STORY

A Word From Our Superintendent

By Dr. P.J. Caposey



Meridian CUSD had a tremendous fall. The introduction of a massive amount of new technology was not seamless, but it was also without significant disruption. This addition was incredible and it warms my heart to travel through the buildings and see students from 5-18 years

of age engaging in the tools of their generation to enhance their learning experience in MCUSD. This is a testament to our support staff and teachers for embracing the new tools at their disposal to provide the best possible education for our kids.

Additionally, the district was part of a site visit from Illinois Performance Excellence. Illinois Performance Excellence is the regional chapter which serves as a subsidiary for the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence framework and award at the national level. Earning a site visit is an enormous honor, an honor that came with a TON of work. This work was meaningful and helped to show us exactly how far we have come, but how far we also need to go. Late this fall we were informed that we were to receive a Bronze recognition. This level of recognition is as high as any other organization (medical, manufacturing, non-

profit, or educational) in the state of Illinois. This is a tremendous honor. The real 'prize' however, was a 30 plus-page document informing us where we can continue to get better. This document was made public and is part of the Board of Education packet from this December.

Lastly, the Board of Education again was recognized for their excellence in governance. This is two consecutive award cycles (four years) that our Board has earned this recognition. Our Board of Education has set ambitious goals and provided the necessary oversight and support to allow my team and me to pursue our goals with maximum effort. They truly believe that we can be a world-class district and it is my goal to continue to work to get us to that elite level of performance.

As always, thank you for your continued support. It is not lost on my team or me how fortunate we are to work in a wonderful community with support and passion like that of Meridian CUSD 223.

Thank you,
Dr. PJ Caposey

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Meridian Board Honored as One of The Best in State

Meridian's Board of Education is one of 24 districts in the state of Illinois to receive the Illinois School Board Governance Recognition. As a point of reference, there are over 850 school districts in the state of Illinois. More impressive is the fact the Board has received the award in consecutive award cycles. As a result of the recognition, Illinois Association of School Board (IASB) members formally presented Meridian Board members with the award at the IASB fall Northwest Division meeting hosted by Meridian on October 29th. The Board will again receive recognition at the state conference in November.

The "School Board Governance Recognition" program acknowledges school boards that learn and practice effective governance behaviors as identified in IASB's Foundational Principles of Effective Governance, through participation in and support for board development programs and events. The primary focus of this program is on full board development and participation rather than individual board member efforts. Effective school boards understand that excellence in local school board governance requires full board commitment to obtaining the knowledge, skills and abilities critical to good governance.

Meridian CUSD 223 Board President, John Smith, who has also been awarded as the state-wide winner of an award recognizing the top school board president each year in the state of Illinois, believes the success of the Meridian board is built on two principles. First, the Board values each other and views their relationships with each other, the leadership team, all faculty and staff, and the community as vitally important to their success. Second, the Board views it as their responsibility to model the behavior they desire. Therefore, they focus on what they have committed to as important and continue their own professional learning in order to support their cause. Smith commented, "I am incredibly proud of my peers and their dedication to the district. We have come a long way

and will continue to grow so that we may better serve our district and community."

Meridian Superintendent, Dr. PJ Caposey, stated, "This recognition consistently goes to the top two or three percent of Boards in the entire state. To receive this recognition in back to back cycles is incredibly impressive, and hopefully validating, for the members of the Board. Their hard work at a volunteer position is nothing short of awe inspiring."

Meridian Board members are as follows:

John Smith – President
 Kristine Youman – Vice President
 Tim Devries – Secretary
 Dr. Tim Flynn
 Marsha Welden
 Jill Huber
 Matt Rhodes



Pictured from L to R: Dr. PJ Caposey, Dr. Tim Flynn, Matt Rhodes, Tim Devries, John Smith, Kristine Youman, Marsha Welden, Jill Huber, Tom Neely (IASB Vice President)

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Highland School

Hello from all at Highland Elementary School. It has been a great semester thus far. There have been many changes at Highland to continue to engage students and provide a warm, positive environment where students are able to grow and develop as students and young people. Every day students have been recording video announcements. It is so great to see our students sharing what is happening and hearing their voice become more prominent throughout the building!

We are also continuing to move through the 7 Habits this first semester with all students. It is so encouraging to see them begin to understand and live out the Habits. Our first 2 HERO of the Month breakfasts had students from each classroom who have been leaders in Habits 1 and Habit 2. I would encourage you to continue to engage in the conversations about the habits at home with your students.

It was so great to see so many parents and families out during parent teacher conferences. These relationships that are being built are incredibly powerful for your child's education. We had nearly 100% participation. Teachers are always pleased to meet with parents to discuss academic and behavioral progress. Please always feel free to leave a message or email the teacher to schedule an appointment to conference.

Thank you to all families that supported our fall fundraiser with the PTO and our annual Book Fair. The PTO is very active with supporting students and teachers with materials, supplies, and programs. Your support in our

programs is sincerely appreciated. We will have our Santa and Elves workshop in December.

Our Veteran's Day performance by 2nd grade students was absolutely fantastic again this year. We had a packed house at the High School. We were also honored to have the Stillman Valley American Legion present. Each year, this performance gives us not only an opportunity to celebrate our 2nd grade students, but also an opportunity to honor and celebrate our local Veterans. Thank you to Mrs. Rachel Zern for organizing this great concert. Kindergarten will have a musical performance in December and first graders will perform at the end of February.

Along with all of the other great things happening, this semester has been filled with great events and opportunities for our students. From our David Landau concerts, the Halloween parties, the visit from Sergeant Major Buchanan, and countless other experiences, our goal is to continue to engage our students and develop a strong love of learning. Our vision is also that students would learn to lead and that was evident through our student organized clothing drive. Charlotte Neeld, 1st Grade, organized a large clothing drive and was able to donate to those in need. I am proud of what has and is continuing to happen at Highland and look forward to a strong finish to this Semester and a beginning of the next.

Joe Mullikin, Principal
Highland Elementary School



WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Monroe Center School

Monroe Center Grade School has been flying through the school year so far. Students have celebrated successes with extra recesses, met new people in our community, decorated the front elevation of the school for fall, invited their parents to PE on several days, and are now reaching the last stages of completing the two Buddy Benches that will remain outside during recess.

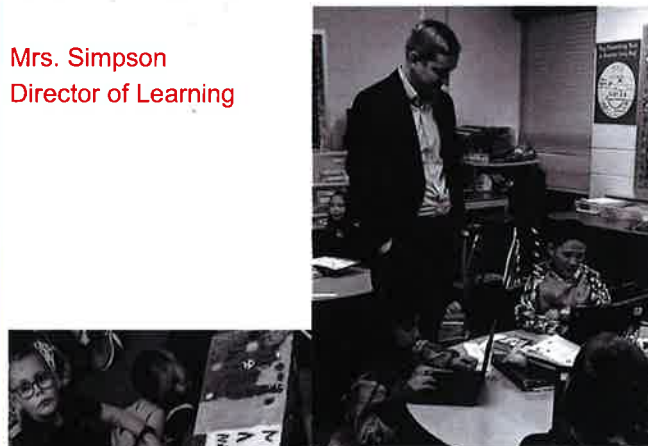
One of the community members visiting was Representative Tom Demmer. He paid a special visit to Monroe Center Grade School to be Principal for the Day with Mrs. Simpson. Mr. Demmer took a tour of the school, shared stories with the students and teachers alike about his love for history and how his journey brought him here. Students had a fabulous time asking him questions about his job, the support he gets from others, and other questions about Springfield. When asked why he does these visits he said, "It's great to see schools like Monroe Center that have such pride in what they do for their students and those in the building." Mr. Demmer was able to see the innovative things students and the Monroe Center educators are doing in the classrooms like using myON, sharing some of their genius project ideas, and he was even able to find a few students that love history just as much as he did at that age.

We had an incredible day celebrating all veterans and invited many to Monroe Center to be a part of our Veteran's Day assembly. There wasn't a dry eye in the house when Taps was played by Mr. Dean Loy as students and staff alike could feel the meaning of the music. The importance of teaching children what this day is about along with our taking the time to celebrate those that have served and are serving our country was a priceless moment. So thankful to everyone that participated and was able to share that day with us.

Innovative highlights shared by some of the students at MC have been the creation and the finishing touches being made on our Buddy Benches. Students in art class created a plan for and have designed the art for two

benches designed to allow places for students to sit at recess if they are in need of a little buddy, additional friendship, or just a little inspiration. This entire process was wrapped around Leader in Me in terms of how Mrs. Huhn helped students set up the design of the lesson and the impact that it has made on our hearts. On our quest for demonstrating kindness as a building each class, grades 3-5, has contributed to the beauty and design of the benches. Students will be clear coating the benches and we look forward to an upcoming dedication opportunity with students to celebrate their intentions and hard work on this project. Looking very forward to all that students and the staff family at MC will achieve throughout the upcoming winter months.

Mrs. Simpson
Director of Learning



WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Meridian Junior High

The staff and students at MJHS live our vision - **Success Of A Redbird**- in our daily, weekly and monthly happenings. Our vision focuses on developing all aspects of the school to actively involve our students in the classroom and our community.

The science classrooms at MJHS adopted a new online curriculum this year called Amplify. Amplify Science motivates students to apply scientific practices to solve real-world problems while mastering the Next Generation Science Standards. Students must make the leap from "learning about" to "figuring out" scientific concepts by exploring them in depth by viewing digital simulations, conducting investigations, creating and critiquing models, and gathering evidence to support their claim. Ask an 8th grade student how the rust formed in the water of the town of Westfield. The students learned how new substances form, and could support their claim with evidence.

The Student Council, with advisors Kelly Gale and Micki White, has been involved in several activities that benefit our community. In October they sponsored a "Go Gold for Childhood Cancer" day. Students were asked to wear yellow. They were also asked to participate in some fun activities before school such as cup stacking, hula hooping competitions, volleyball passing competitions, and lightning basketball. In one morning they raised \$230 for The Super Jake Foundation, which directly supported a local family during their difficult time! We are so proud of their efforts.

We continue to focus on the social emotional needs of our students. Mrs. Zitzke, our school counselor, has many groups to support our students. Groups include a girl's lunch bunch, study skills, game club for boys, etc. If you feel like your student might benefit from a group please contact kzitzke@mail.meridian223.org.

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 totality, 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

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WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Stillman Valley High School

Dear SVHS Parents and Guardians,

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**.

Each year, in partnership with the SVHS Faculty, SVHS Principal's Student Advisory Council (PSAC), and the SVHS Principal's Parent Advisory Council (PPAC), we establish School Improvement Plan (SIP) Goals. Our goals are focused on academic performance, school culture/climate, and effective systems. Our SVHS Academic Goal this year is to establish a practice of students tracking their progress tied to their goals and academic growth to develop their individual digital student portfolios. Our SVHS Culture Goal is to create new opportunities in the classroom for students to choose how to display their learning through the use of various demonstrations, assessments, activities, and projects. Ultimately, when students have options for showing us what they know and are able to do, their cognitive engagement is elevated. Finally, our SVHS Systems Goal is to create a system of professional development opportunities for our high school faculty to enhance differentiated instruction and student choice that supports our academic and cultural goals.

At SVHS we are committed to the pursuit of College and Career Readiness for every student. Ultimately, we want SVHS graduates to be successful in their college, career, or military pursuits. Our commitment is focused on our students' academic performance and growth through rigorous coursework and aligned assessments, strong community service, and our students' overall social and emotional wellness. As we finalize our 2019-2020 Course Guide this January and begin the course request process for the next school year, we encourage you to review our current 2018-2019 Course Guide on our high school website under the *Quick Links* tab with your children and work together to select potential courses for the following school year that will cognitively challenge them, align with their postsecondary aspirations, and pique their interests. Our dedicated faculty, school counselors, and staff will be partnering with you to have these same valuable conversations about course selection with students over the next two months.

Thank you for continuing to partner with us to positively impact the academic, social, and emotional growth of our students every day. Your involvement and support of your children at the high school level is essential. 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 consistent basis. SVHS requires that every student earn a minimum of 28 credits 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 weekly is one key way that you can support your child's academic progress and success. If you need your login information for Family Access, please contact Mrs. Sharon Pannarale in our SVHS Counseling Department at (815) 645-2230 extension 5009.

***"Don't tell me it isn't possible;
show me how we can achieve it."***

Important Upcoming Dates –

December 13 – SVHS Christmas Band & Choir Concert at 7:00 PM (SVHS Aux. Gym)

December 14 – Early Release/School Improvement Day (Student Dismissal at 11:10 AM)

December 19 – 21 – SVHS Final Exams (Early Release for SVHS Students at 11:10 AM on Dec. 21)

December 21 – End of 1st Semester

Stay connected with all-things SVHS by clicking on the *Quick Links* tab at www.stillmanvalleyhigh.org.

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

**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.

*We are very happy with the "Here Comes the Bus" app up and running now in 17 of our 17 regular route buses. This allows the parents and/or students to get notifications when their bus is within the geo-fence zone that can be personalized for each student. Our School Code for this app is 86342 and your student ID is the "Other ID" in your student's skyward account. If you have any trouble with using the app Here Comes the Bus has a great help support link.

*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. Late call ins for a student to ride home with another student may not be granted as it is not guaranteed that the school will receive the information in time to get a student to the correct bus. NO request will be granted 10 minutes to bell time on any day! Thank you for your help with this as it is in the best interest of student safety.

*As we enter into our winter driving season, please keep in mind that our driver's first 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 is a great place to be using your "Here Comes the Bus" app to track your bus to know for sure if your bus is on time.

*The staff at Meridian Transportation (drivers, bus aides, mechanic, secretary and directors) have taken it upon themselves, starting in the 2015-16 school year, to pay for the "Senior Lunches" that are served at the High School once a month, and provide them with a dessert as well. The Senior Lunch information can be found in the weekly publication of the Ogle County Life newspaper along with the MCUSD #223 lunch schedules. This is a small piece of "Giving back to Our Community" that the drivers initiated. It is very rewarding to be a part of this great team.

*MCUSD is always welcoming applicants who would like to join our team. We are very much in need for 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.

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MERIDIAN CUSD 223



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Crusader Community Health

Through our partnership with Crusader Community Health, students can receive medical care such as school physicals, immunizations, etc. during the school day. On pre-arranged appointment days, students are transported and chaperoned by district staff to Crusader's School-Based Health Center at Auburn High School in Rockford.

Consent forms are required for each student prior to being seen. If you are interested in utilizing this service, please request the consent packet from your student's school nurse.

Please direct any questions to your student's school nurse or Kayla McKinney, Director of Health Services, at extension 5008.

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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."

