



Meridian CUSD Newsletter

Winter 2019

OUR COMMUNITY, OUR SCHOOL, OUR STORY

A Word From Our Superintendent

By Dr. P.J. Caposey



The fall (and early winter) months of the school-year have been incredibly successful for Meridian CUSD 223. In the past several years there has been a tremendous amount of change in the district and while there were many 'new' approaches unveiled this year it has

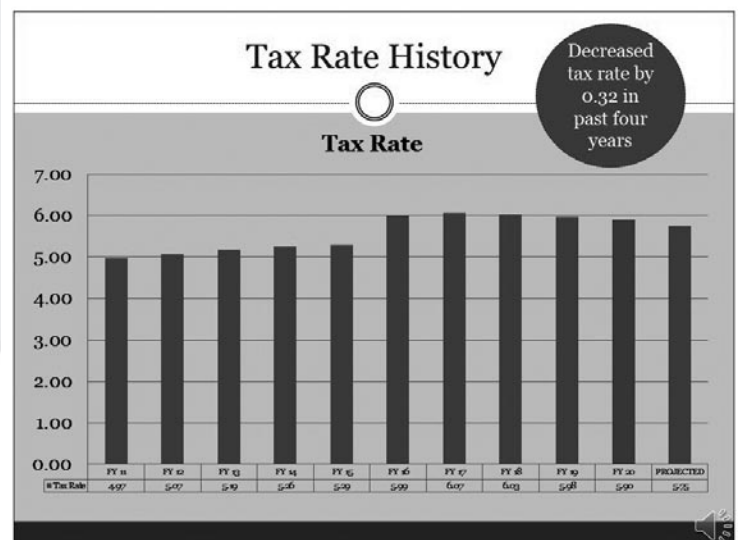
also been refreshing to watch many initiatives take hold as they have become our new normal. The continued growth and sustained momentum of the Leader in Me process, the commitment to embedding technology in our classrooms, enhanced safety protocols, and a renewed focus on how we work as a team and what data to focus on are all key indicators that the district is continuing to grow and change. All the while we continue to experience sustained success in the classroom and on the athletic fields. Meridian CUSD 223 continues to be an amazing place for our students.

In late November and early December, the primary focus of my work is on how to execute the school district levy. The levy is not complex from a mathematics standpoint, but it is from a strategy and impact standpoint. The Board of Education is acutely focused on being fiscally responsible while also committed to expending money when and where necessary for the

district to achieve its lofty vision.

This year's levy process was a bit more complicated simply because of the projected EAV growth in the district. As such, the district had some interesting choices to make. While the official levy will be approved on December 5th, the tentative levy demonstrated that the district would capture all possible revenue in our education and buildings and maintenance funds. Meanwhile, the district will intentionally not capture all possible revenue in some auxiliary funds in order to provide some relief to taxpayers.

The graphic below shows the tax rate over time.



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When the community was asked to support a referendum five plus years ago it was with the commitment from the district to make financially wise decisions. As you can see from the graphic, the district has chosen to provide relief in the tax rate when possible to continue to be mindful of the burden on taxpayers while focusing on securing as much money in the education and buildings and grounds funds as possible.

As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns.

**Thank you,
Dr. PJ Caposey**



Meridian invests in new cleaning equipment

Stillman Valley — Meridian has recently enhanced the cleaning and disinfecting protocols already in place with our investment in the Clorox® Total 360® System, an electrostatic sprayer paired with trusted Clorox® disinfecting and sanitizing solutions for more comprehensive surface disinfection, which will help prevent illnesses from occurring and stop the spread of harmful germs if spikes in illness do occur.

Illness-causing viruses like rhinovirus, which causes the common cold, influenza and norovirus can survive on surfaces for up to a week, while bacteria like Staph and MRSA can survive on surfaces for up to seven months, making cleaning and disinfecting an important first line of defense. The Clorox® Total 360® System uses a patented electrostatic delivery system to provide superior surface coverage by helping disinfectants and sanitizers target germ-prone surfaces like desks, restrooms, door handles, upholstered furniture and drapes. The system works by charging and atomizing the Clorox® disinfecting or sanitizing solution, delivering a powerful flow of charged particles that are attracted to surfaces with a force stronger than gravity. This allows the disinfecting or sanitizing product to reach and consistently coat surfaces, including the sides, underside and backside of surfaces – areas that can be missed by conventional cleaning methods. In addition to manual cleaning and disinfecting protocols, our staff uses the system daily during evening cleaning to achieve comprehensive surface coverage and a more complete clean.

Meridian Superintendent Dr. PJ Caposey noted, “This solution is really impressive. Anything that we can do that improves our level of sanitation and cleanliness and increases efficiency is something that we cannot afford to not look into. I am appreciative of the partnership Meridian has established with Clorox and I am hopeful this will have a positive impact on our overall community wellness.”

Meridian has purchased one Clorox® Total 360® System for each of the four buildings within the district.

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Highland School

It is hard to believe that we have already gotten this far into the school year, but winter is finally upon us. We've had some really great things happening at Highland to start this year, from our student announcements to our representation on WREX and myStateline, we're truly proud of the environment and the learning that is happening here at Highland.

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, as well, 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.

It has been so much fun to see our students setting individual goals this year. Classrooms have created Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) and individual students have set their own growth goals as well. When they meet those goals, they get to bring down a ping pong ball and drop it into our display case. It is a great way to celebrate our learning and keep it at the front of our minds!

Thank you again for all of your support and involvement in making our school an exceptional place for your children to learn. 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.

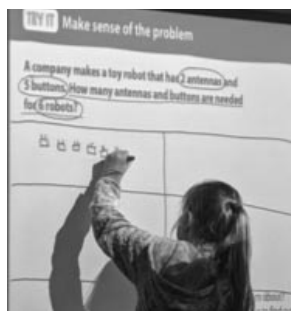
Joe Mullikin, Principal
Highland Elementary School



WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Monroe Center School

It's absolutely unbelievable that we're even discussing the happenings of late fall right alongside the upcoming winter here at Monroe Center. Students and staff family alike have certainly continued to put their best foot forward in terms of the accomplishments of all at Monroe Center and the planning for continued progress over the winter months is going strong.



The highlight of what's been happening at Monroe Center starts in the classrooms. Our 3rd grade teachers have been so infectious in terms of what they are doing with the new Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading program. So much so that our 4th grade team is now looking into that same

program to improve and develop their own guided reading practice. Fountas and Pinnell is an abundant guided reading program that includes engaging and powerful texts that challenge each student's ability to process increasingly challenging books while improving their fluency and comprehension. The possibilities of what that will do to instruction and student learning are endless. We are excited as we learn and grow ourselves.

The learning and developing doesn't stop there. Our 4th and 5th grade teams are working towards developing student writing and the process in which we approach writing in the district. We've been working side by side with our trainers at ThinkCERCA to help us teach students the way to stake claims, provide evidence, support with their reasoning, and wrapping up with the counterargument. Our teachers have also been learning this process alongside not only their colleagues here at Monroe Center, but for one of the first times alongside their counterparts at Meridian Junior High. We're doing this in partnership with the Junior High with the belief that the alignment in our writing will not only improve the student outcomes, but also support the writing development from one building to another as students transition and grow as learners. Aligning what we do from one building to the next allows for deeper student development along with less interruption to learning from one grade level to the next. As we're diving into this process we've been learning about the importance of feedback first before we get deeper into discussions about grading.

Lastly, our Parent Advisory Committee requested a Ready Math Lesson during our next meeting in order to better understand how our new math program helps teachers develop an environment where students at all levels become active participants in their learning and become problem solvers. With this program students actively engage in developing their mathematical reasoning, discourse, and building an even stronger mathematical habit than in the past. It's extremely exciting to be in the classrooms and seeing what this is doing to the conversations and math activities as compared to past years. After experiencing a lesson themselves we're looking forward to sharing this with parents together so they can experience the same type of event.



All in all, none of this would be possible without the phenomenal support from both our ELA and Math Coaches in the district. Mrs. Hilliard (ELA Coach) and Mrs. Kleinschmidt (Math Coach) have been instrumental in providing support for and bringing these resources to us at Monroe Center. It's truly a gift for us to be able to have the advantage of two coaches supporting teachers and staff family. Without the support, coaching, and development that they bring to us the changes and direction would not yet have reached where we are. Their



support has been not just a partnership developed with teachers but a partnership in my endeavors as well. Working together with teams supporting one another through the development of our PLC's this year has turned the instructional conversations in our building to powerful instruments of transformation. The teaching staff has been incredibly invested in this process and have worked harder than I've ever seen. I'd like to say thank you to everyone that's been involved in this entire process!

The transformation has also taken form with our students. They feel the excitement in the building and are now challenging themselves and each grade level by

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measuring their growth from one month of testing to the next. We have a healthy competition going on between grade levels and the next time you are in the building take a look at how are students are growing by the measure of the interactive bar graph we have at our entrance. The students, teachers, staff family are all excited and perhaps even I went a little overboard when introducing the process, but I will tell you this, it has never been more fun and exciting to see an entire building working together towards a goal of improvement.

As the holidays approach, we wish you all a very safe and enjoyable holiday season while we keep the focus on student learning and support here at Monroe Center Grade School. Have a wonderful winter season and as always, thank you for your partnership in supporting our students every single day,

Mrs. Deana Simpson
Principal, Monroe Center Grade School

Meridian Junior High

Meridian Junior High School's Vision is to empower every student to be successful.

- Success Of A Redbird #SOAR.

As each student travels through middle school his or her path to success might look different. Here at Meridian Junior High we have tried to put various opportunities in place to help every student reach their full potential academically, while fostering their social emotional growth.

Each year the School Improvement Planning Committee examines academic data to establish a School Improvement Planning (SIP) Goal. After reflecting on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) data the committee decided to focus on the area of writing. This goal involves several different action steps, including the introduction of ThinkCerca to staff and students. ThinkCerca is a technology platform that helps us differentiate reading and writing for our students at their level, but still be working on the same standards of learning. We strongly feel that if we make our students better readers and writers, they can all reach their full potential. For more information on ThinkCerca, ask an MJHS student or go to ThinkCerca.com.

We are also addressing the social emotional growth of

each of our students. Several new initiatives have begun at MJHS. The Leader In Me framework is slowly being rolled out to staff and students. This framework focuses on the paradigm that everyone can be a leader. Everyone has genius. That change starts with each of us. That educators empower students to lead their own learning. And that we need to develop the whole person. A great book for you to read with your student would be The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. Mrs. Zitzke, our school counselor, has several groups open to students including Anxiety Warriors and Anger Management. If you feel like your student could use some extra guidance, please contact Mrs. Zitzke at kzitzke@mail.meridian223.org.

Thank you for continuing to partner with us to positively impact the academic and social emotional growth of our students every day. We saw 79% of you at conferences. More than 15 of you have joined the Principal Parent Advisory Council. And many of you made the PTO Haunted Hallway event in early November a huge success. Please continue to support your student in the classroom by tracking their academic progress through Skyward Family Access. You can find a quick link on the front page of the district website Meridian223.org. If you need help with Family Access don't hesitate to call the Meridian Junior High office.

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."
-Helen Keller

Mrs. Davis
Principal



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 and extracurricular activities offered in an effort to prepare them for success at the college, career, and/or military level. We truly want our students to be Empowered to Excel.

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 28 or more 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.

Please take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with our SVHS website at www.stillmanvalleyhigh.org. To stay connected and informed, please click on the Quick Links tab on the front page of our high school website. The Quick Links tab provides numerous resources to inform parents of upcoming events, community service forms, the SVHS Parent-Student Handbook, the 2019-2020 Course Guide, and much more. The Daily Announcements, a resource provided on the Quick Links tab, is possibly one of the most useful sources of information for parents. As our students continue to grow and mature, we want to help them become more independent; however, we also recognize that it is important for parents to be well informed about the many opportunities and resources available for our students.

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, and/or military pursuits. Our commitment is focused on our students' academic performance and growth through rigorous coursework and aligned assessments, strong com-

munity service, and our students' overall social and emotional wellness. We also encourage our students to make an appointment to meet with our College & Career Coordinator, Mr. Edward Liegl, in the SVHS College & Career Center to discuss exciting new opportunities related to job shadowing, internships, military and college representative meetings, dual credit courses, and much more. As we work to finalize our SVHS 2020-2021 Course Guide this January and begin the course request process for the next school year, we encourage you to review our current 19-20 Course Guide on our high school website (stillmanvalley-high.org under the Quick Links tab) with your children 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 with students over the upcoming weeks

Important Upcoming Dates:

- December 6 – Early Release/School Improvement Day (Early Release at 11:00 AM)
- December 13 – SVHS Christmas Band & Choir Concert at 7:00 PM
- December 18 - 20 – SVHS Final Exams (Early Release at 11:10 AM on Dec. 20)
- December 20 – End of 1st Semester
- January 7 – School Resumes - Start of 2nd Semester

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

Sincerely,

Mrs. Leslie Showers
SVHS Principal

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News and Notes from Transportation

MCUSD 223 Safety Tips

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

PLEASE USE CAUTION!

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

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

We understand that stopping for a school bus may be an inconvenience, but we ask you to please observe the law and do so. Our primary concern is the safety and security of our students and we want to partner with you to ensure that all kids arrive to school and then back home safe and sound.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9igTmhyFIj8>

- * 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.
- * We have had several calls of late asking about the HERE COMES THE BUS school Code number: 86342
- * Students going home with another student after school need to have a note to inform the bus driver signed by a parent. This is permitted only if space allows. NO request will be

granted 10 minutes prior to bell time on any day! This is in the best interest of student safety.



Local Postal Customer



MERIDIAN CUSD 223



@MCUSD223

MCUSD Fitness Junction Wellness Initiative 2020

Davis Junction, IL – (November 13th, 2019)- MCUSD and Fitness Junction will be working together on a wellness initiative for all employees who work at School District 223. Fitness Junction's goal for this initiative is to bring the community together and give the MCUSD staff an opportunity to begin or continue their health journey at Fitness Junction.

Dr. Caposey, Superintendent of Schools for Meridian CUSD 223, commented, "Meridian CUSD is committed to the overall wellness of our faculty and staff and to supporting the local businesses that so passionately support our school district. So, finding a way to partner with Fitness Junction met multiple priorities for us. We are excited to work together to ideally improve the overall wellness of our community."

The partnership offers discounted organizational membership for faculty and staff of Meridian CUSD 223 with the district agreeing to off-set a portion of the costs incurred by Fitness Junction. Both organizations noted that this partnership is indicative of their attitude toward working collaboratively to improve the overall community.

For more information on Fitness Junction, please visit fitnessjunction247.com or like us on Facebook

to \$105. This increase is on the heels of a previous increase two years ago which compensated substitute teachers who frequently substituted in the district to earn up to \$100 per day for their service.

Despite the previous effort to honor and compensate frequent substitute teachers at a higher rate of pay, Meridian still faced frequent substitute shortages. When a district cannot find a substitute, teachers give up their plan time, principals cover classes, and occasionally classes are forced to be combined so that all students are supervised.

Meridian CUSD's Superintendent of Schools Dr. PJ Caposey added, "Substitute shortages are common across our county and in our region. The Board took a strategic step forward to attempt to attract substitute teachers to select Meridian schools when they may have multiple options on a given day." Caposey continued to say that he believes the best 'promotion' of the district for substitute teachers are the great kids in Meridian and committed teachers that provide detailed plans for substitutes.

The district noted that this change, like all initiatives, will be tracked and evaluated for its effectiveness over time. The change will begin effective immediately. To become a substitute teacher please contact the Regional Office of Education at (815) 625-1495 for additional information.

Stillman Valley — The Meridian CUSD 223 Board of Education voted unanimously at the November Board meeting to increase the daily rate of substitute teachers