


**COVID-19 vaccinations were offered to all district staff members** through the Ogle County Health Department. The district hosted 2 clinics in February and March for staff members to receive their 1st and 2nd doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Over 150 staff members are now considered to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Per Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals will not have to quarantine if exposed to COVID within 90 days following their vaccination



News and Notes from Transportation!!

- We continue to maintain our goal of safe, 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.
- Students going home with another student after school is Highly discouraged as we are limited to numbers on buses due to Covid protocols. Thank you all for your understanding.
- MCUSD is always welcoming applicants who would like to join our team. If you are interested in joining our team and have any questions, please feel free to contact us in the transportation department. We do provide all necessary training.
- If you see this  in your Facebook newsfeed or the district website, click it and check out our Community Bus Safety Tips



Meridian CUSD #223  
207 W Main Street  
Stillman Valley, IL 61084

Local Postal Customer

 MERIDIAN CUSD 223  
 @MCUSD223

BALLOT LANGUAGE

Shall the maximum annual tax rate for educational purposes for Meridian Community Unit School District Number 223, Ogle and Winnebago Counties, Illinois, be established at 3.48 percent upon all the taxable property of said School District at the value, as equalized or assessed by the Department of Revenue, for levy year 2021 and the years thereafter, instead of 2.78 percent, the maximum rate otherwise applicable to the taxes to be extended in said years for said purposes?

- (a) The approximate amount of taxes extendable for educational purposes under the maximum rate now in force in said School District is \$6,686,863.
- (b) The approximate amount of taxes extendable for educational purposes under the proposed increased rate is \$6,686,863.
- (c) The total dollar amount of the most recently approved annual budget of said School District is \$21,230,109; the total dollar amount of said annual budget, if increased by the amount of additional tax which may be levied if the proposition is approved, is \$21,230,109; the percentage of increase in the total dollar amount of the most recently approved annual budget of said School District, if such total dollar amount were increased by the amount of additional tax which may be levied if the proposition is approved, is 0 percent.
- (d) The percentage of increase between the maximum rate at which such taxes for educational purposes may be levied if the proposition is approved and the annual rate at which such taxes for educational purposes is currently levied is 0 percent.

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-Go Cardinals!-  
SPRING 2021  
NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT  
By Dr. P.J. Caposey

Meridian Community,



On the April 6th ballot the Meridian CUSD 223 Board of Education seeks to maintain the current Education Fund rate and are asking you, the voters, to consider this question. The extension of the tax rate would be permanent, but would NOT increase the education fund tax rate from its current state.

We did ask this question of the voters in November of 2020 and were defeated. Even with that result, I recommended putting the question back on the ballot. The reasoning was simple. If the referendum fails, we will be forced to make reductions that significantly impact the student experience. Whenever I can protect or enhance the student experience I feel compelled to at least ask that question.

As a reminder, the role of the district, and by proxy the superintendent, during the referendum is to provide information. Thus, anyone with a question can always reach out directly to me at [pcaposey@mail.meridian223.org](mailto:pcaposey@mail.meridian223.org) for additional information. Also, the district website has a significant amount of information on the referendum available at: <http://bit.ly/M223referendum> (link is case sensitive).

In addition, the district will also host a Facebook Live Town Hall meeting from 4 to 5pm every Wednesday in March (with the exception of

March 31) on the MCUSD Facebook page. Also, earlier in the month we held three face-to-face townhalls and may consider hosting more closer to election day.

The district also recognizes that the ballot language is confusing. In order to ease some of the confusion we are sharing the ballot language in this newsletter as well. A YES vote is for the tax rate to stay at its current level and a NO vote is for the tax rate to return to its 2013 level. Thank you in advance for being informed and making the choice that is best for you and your family.





Buildings & Grounds

I hope everyone is ready for spring to arrive, I know we are. This winter started off rather mild, but then it ramped up in January and February with us seeing nearly four feet of snow over those two months. This led to quite a few long nights, and weeks for the Buildings and Grounds crew. Big shout out to all of them for their hard work and dedication! Beyond the snow removal we have been busy in all the buildings keeping up with work requests and making improvements. Here are some of the things that we have accomplished.

SVHS

- Installed new toilets in the office restrooms.
- Resolved all emergency light and sign issues
- Cleaned the ice machine and returned it to proper working order.
- Finished remodeling room 129
- Assisted food services with freezer issues

MJHS

- Resolved 32 HVAC related issues. This accounted for 33.6% of the total work requests in the building since October.
- Began resolving emergency light and sign issues. We are waiting on parts to resolve the remainder.

MC GS

- Rekeyed the entire building so only 4 total keys are needed instead of 10
- Removed the old dishwasher and assisting as needed with the new installation
- Assisted food services with freezer issues

HES

- Converted the lights in the gym to LED
- Resolved all emergency light and sign issues
- Installed a new TV in the library

District

- As light fixtures have gone out we have been either replacing them with LED fixtures or retrofitting the current fixtures to LED bulbs
- Cleaned and reorganized our shop and warehouse.
- Purchased and installed 44 ft of pallet racks in our shop and warehouse to improve storage
- Installed a new heater in the breakroom in the Transportation office building

Snow Removal

- Approximately 250-man hours spent removing snow and salting
- We have spread 115,000 lbs. of salt to help prevent ice

We are looking forward to more fall sports starting up soon, as well as our normal spring sports. This has presented some challenges with snow removal on the fields, but luckily mother nature has been cooperating by giving us some warmer days as of late. In preparation for having more sports running simultaneously than usual, we have acquired a second paint sprayer. Here's to a great spring sports season for our coaches and athletes.

**First and foremost,** I want to extend a massive THANK YOU to all of our students, staff, and families. The successes and growth that we're seeing this year are most certainly the result of the "village" of people synergizing together to see better in each and every child. While there will certainly be continued work for us to strive to push our students to higher levels, I am incredibly proud of the academic and social-emotional growth that I have seen from our students this school year.

We've continued to keep a strong focus at Highland on Leader in Me and living the 7 Habits. Hearing our students in announcements each day during our adaptive pause share how they were using habits like "put first things first", "be proactive", and "think win-win" was truly heartwarming. I continue to be incredibly hopeful about the confidence, the perseverance, and the grit that the skills of the 7 Habits help to provide our students with.

This year has provided us with multiple opportunities to learn how to do things better. From providing the option of virtual conferences, to virtual Parent Advisory Meetings, we've found ways to ensure that we are extending the opportunities for engagement beyond just the four walls of our building. We're excited to announce that this year we will be hosting a Virtual Leadership Day. This Virtual Leadership Day will be a collection of student work that provides a portfolio of what we do here at Highland with Leader in Me every day. This will also allow families the opportunity to share the link with other friends and family who may not be able to attend. I am incredibly excited for you to see about the amazing things that students are doing each and every day here at Highland!

As we move through the Spring, please also remember to come in and get your child enrolled for Kindergarten if they will be 5 years old prior to September 1st. We have informational packets, along with registration packets at Highland available to be picked up. We are also planning on offering preschool once again at Highland this coming Fall. If you have a child who will be 3 or 4 years old prior to September 1st and are interested in preschool for this upcoming year, please contact the Highland Office at (815) 645-2230 ext. 2100 to get more information.

**Joe Mullikin, Principal**  
**Highland Elementary School**

Meridian Jr High

**The beginning of 2021 began with a whirlwind of activity.** We came back to a few short weeks of remote learning, and prepared for 5 days a week learning mid-January. We currently have over 78% of our students back to in person learning!

Once the students were settled back into our new normal, the flurry of activities began. We have been able to offer the following sports and activities: Cheerleading, Boys Basketball, Academic Team, 8th Grade Book Club, Wrestling, and are about to kick off Girls Basketball, Volleyball, and Track seasons. More than 40% of our students have already participated in something! It is so nice to hear voices coming from the gym, again!

As we move into the 4th quarter, here are a few important reminders:

- Make sure your student brings his/her chromebook and charger daily. The office has a limited supply and often runs out of chargers.
- With warmer weather upon us, water bottles are even more important. The drinking fountains are unavailable, but the bottle fillers are accessible.
- Students can only access remote learning if they are a full time remote learner or are quarantined.
- Please continue to monitor Skyward and the To Do List in google classroom for attendance and assignments.
- We continue to serve free breakfast and lunch daily.

- Continue to read the In Case Your Student Didn't Tell You newsletter that arrives in your inbox every Friday at 4:00. It will contain details regarding end of the year events, 21-22 scheduling and possible summer school.

**Jill Davis**  
**Principal**



**As I write this newsletter** to share what is happening at Monroe Center Grade School I find myself surrounded by sunshine both metaphorically and in the most real sense of the word. While it seems a portion of the year earlier was used for discovering our footing for remote and hybrid learning, we've found ourselves currently in a place of having what seems to be as normal of a year as it could be.

Our students, both virtual and face to face, are the strongest reminder of our why, and it's in recognizing the accomplishments of what this year has brought with all of them together that pushes us forward. We know that in the most difficult of times of change, that it's with persistence and hard work that we will all grow and develop more than ever imagined. There hasn't been a time in this year that hasn't proven that fact over and over again in both the students and adults I've had the great pleasure of working alongside.

Last month some of the teachers and I had the great thrill of talking to several of our classrooms this year about the data we saw from our winter benchmarking process. It's incredible to speak with young people about their progress and what it sparks in conversations and the realization of what can still be done is nothing short of inspiring. You see, I shared the following things with our students:

- MC Students made history this year - no one has ever done this: remote learning, hybrid learning, notice of where learning is going to be on a moment's notice, and benchmark testing amidst a pandemic.
- So many of our students proved the entire country wrong - They've heard all year that they will be so far behind, they've been told there will be tremendous gaps in their learning, and that no way could we do this and be successful. The growth we've seen by having over 59% of our students at or above the 50th percentile in reading and over 55% of our students at or above the 50th percentile in math from our winter benchmarking not only represents that growth from our fall scores, but it also drives our students and teachers to our next steps because we are not finished.
- Our students are far more resilient than any of us gave them credit for and in some cases more resilient than we were at times.
- Meridian students helped us as educators get through what has certainly been the toughest time ever in education as we know it simply by being children and being themselves through it all. They were the example in which to lead.
- On a side note and a great representation of the humor and kindness our kiddos possess, one of my favorite conversations came about like this. I explained that never in my life have I witnessed this much change and growth ever and I shared with them that as a 51 year old mom, wife, friend, and principal that I've seen a lot in my lifetime. The takeaway for this particular class was not in what they achieved, because they are far more humble than at times, was this, "Wow Mrs. Simpson we thought you were like only in your 30's and maybe at the worst 40!" So again, from the mouths of babes, I instantly realized that no matter what is going on outside these 4 walls in our world they are still the most funny, inspiring, and uniquely amazing children that I have ever had the privilege of being with every day.

As the year continues with the many difficult and challenging decisions still to be made, I'm optimistic due to the number of things we have in place at Monroe Center that our students will still grow and learn volumes beyond what we may have thought them capable of. There will still be tradition in field day with planning of it differently, there will still be ways to celebrate children and staff through all of their accomplishments, and we will find what has served us well through this past year and pull it all into what we create in the upcoming year as there has been incredible successes through it all.

I will leave you with this. By the time you read this article, we'll be approaching the year anniversary of our entering remote learning with our students. When I realized this the other day, it brought me to tears as I recognized when we entered this period we initially thought it would have only been for a month or so. A lot has changed since then; I have changed, we have all changed and it's with that change I have recognized the following. It's through what this last year has presented to us that we have become stronger, a better team, even better educators, and I'd say even more so better human beings all the while making certain that our why remains constant; our magnificent students and their learning and developing. May spring bring you new beginnings, the noticing of every accomplishment no matter how small, and great optimism for what is to come with the youthful minds of our future leaders at Monroe Center in our midst. As always, thank you for all of your support this past semester and year. Without it and our unstoppable educators, the above would not be possible.

**Deana L. Simpson**  
**Principal**

*Ability is what you're capable of doing.  
Motivation determines what you do.  
Attitude determines how well you do it.*  
-Lou Holtz

