



-Go Cardinals!-

SPRING 2022
NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

By Dr. P.J. Caposey

Meridian Community,

One of the best things leaders in a school district can do to support better experiences and better outcomes for students is remarkably simple - STAY. We have been extremely fortunate over the last nine years that we have stability in leadership positions within our district. Next year, however, will be the last for two key leaders that have dedicated much of their professional life to our district. This short newsletter article is meant to shine a small light on their incredible service to our district as they prepare for their 'victory lap' next year.

Jill Davis, Meridian Junior High Principal, will be retiring at the end of the 2022-2023 school-year. Jill is in her 9th year of service in Meridian and has spent over 20 years in school administration. Jill has helped to stabilize our district in many ways invisible to the public eye. In addition to leading the Junior High she also serves as our Assessment Coordinator and is continually working to make sure we are compliant with many state mandates. More importantly, Jill is an amazing support to the rest of our Leadership Team and has helped to balance my leadership of the district in many ways which are hard to articulate.

Perky Ruggenberg has served our district for over two decades, including over a decade as our Co-Transportation Director. Her tenure in the district will end next January. Perky stepped into a Leadership role on our team in the midst of crisis. When the past Director left the position shortly before the school-year was beginning Perky (and Jen) stepped into the position and simply got the job done. Under her leadership, the Transportation Department has become much more fiscally responsible, our fleet has been upgraded, and our

volume of Transportation related complaints heard at the District Office has decreased significantly. She has truly been a change-maker in our district and we have been so fortunate to have her on our team.

As we prepare to close out our year I wanted to take a minute to celebrate Perky and Jill. We have been so lucky for their leadership and I have been incredibly lucky for their friendship and support. Here is to an amazing final year for both of these outstanding leaders.





Buildings & Grounds

After what seemed to be a short but hectic winter, spring is finally here! Over Christmas break we had the entry doors at Monroe Center and Highland Elementary replaced. The old doors were a safety issue, so this was a much-needed safety and visual improvement. Along with chasing heat related issues, plumbing, lighting repairs, event setup and general maintenance on buildings and equipment, our department had about 200 hours of snow removal this winter.


Now that the weather is starting to cooperate with us, we have already fertilized all of the playing surfaces, painted and prepped fields for Soccer and Baseball, along with prepping for Track & Field. With Spring Break next week, we are hoping to utilize the time indoors doing floor maintenance and other cleaning tasks that generally are done during periods when the schools are unoccupied. As soon as we get a day or two of sun and a bit of warmth, we will be ready to start mowing. Once we start, we don't stop until late in the fall months.

A project that I'm excited about this spring is working on the bus garage fields. We will be redoing the soccer dugouts with tin to cut down on maintenance, add color and create some curb appeal. I'm taking bids right now to possibly redo the chain link fence along 72 and the section along Meridian Rd, as well as repairing some of the chain link on the fields by the dugouts. The softball and baseball dugouts in that area will also be repaired, repainted and we are installing tin on the roofs. We started adding material to the infields in the fall. We will continue to add material, cut edges and get the playing surfaces and turf in the best condition possible.

We're also currently working on our project list for late spring into the summer months. I'm excited to see our end results and what kind of positive impact we will have inside and outside of our buildings.

Kenny Lamer

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.
- We are gearing up to participate in the Kinder-Kick-off. This takes place each year at Highland Elementary School for the incoming Kindergarteners and families. Transportation has a bus at the school so that students and parents can look at the bus, walk on it and receive safety materials, coloring pages as well as bus rules in preparation for the following year.
- Students going home with another student after school is Highly discouraged as we have limited space on buses. 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.



A look at Next Year in School Food Services

Currently, no-charge school meals are available for all students in the Meridian School District. This includes breakfast and lunch. The Food Service is grateful for the opportunity to be able to provide these meals at no charge to our students for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year. We have recently received preliminary information that meals will NO longer be free for all students during the 2022-2023 school year. For students who were on the Free or Reduced Program in past years, an updated application will be needed for the 2022-2023 school year. Applications for the 2022-2023 school year will be available July 18, 2022 on the Meridian School District webpage under the Food Service Department.

2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR PRICES

Elementary	Paid	Lunch	Breakfast
	<i>Reduced</i>	<i>\$0.40</i>	<i>\$0.30</i>
<hr/>			
High School & Jr. High	Paid	Lunch	Breakfast
	<i>Reduced</i>	<i>\$0.40</i>	<i>\$0.30</i>

Now Hiring

Tired of working evening and weekends?
Want to work when your kids are at school and be off when your kids are off from school?
Consider working for the Food Service Department!

- Opportunities for growth and advancement are available.
- Employees have all weekends, school holidays and snow days off.
- Most staff members work close to home, in their own neighborhood schools.
- Apply on the Meridian School District webpage under the Employment tab.

Highland Elementary School

On March 2nd, in a faculty meeting, I told our staff that it had been 719 days since we had last had an environment like we have now in our school. It had been 719 days since we had seen smiles and been able to have a sense of normalcy again. At that point, we had 50 days of school left, and we are ready to take advantage of each and every one of them! Field trips, field day, career day, and so much more will be coming up throughout the remainder of the semester and I can't wait to see our students and staff enjoying each moment.

As we continue to focus on our vision of helping our students to Love to learn, learn to Lead, I am excited for our upcoming Leadership Day on April 22nd at 1:15 PM. Information will continue to come out as we move closer, but we will once again have our Leadership Day in person. Six years ago, we were visiting exemplar schools to see what they were doing with Leader in Me and this year we're proud to have had school districts come visit Highland as an exemplar. This February, administrators from Pontiac School District visited and were given a tour by four of our 2nd Grade leaders. I am so proud to see us move to a place of regional leadership in this program.

Kinder Kickoff is back this Spring at Highland. We invite all families with students turning 5 prior to September 1st, 2022 to join us on Wednesday, April 13th (if your child's last name is between A-L) or Thursday, April 14th (if your child's last name is between M-Z) from 5:30 - 7:00 PM. During this night, we will do a brief screening with each child and will provide families with important information regarding the upcoming school year. Please RSVP at 815-645-2230 by April 1st.

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.

Thank you and have a great end to the school year!

Joe Mullikin, Principal
Highland Elementary School



Monroe Center Grade School

Book Vending Machine a Hit at Monroe Center Grade School

Monroe Center Grade School has had a lot of great things happening in the building this year. While students have academically made advancements to their learning like never before, our teachers have been key in their learning and development of instruction, and the data is representative of just that. Our students have had a few surprises along the way to celebrate what they are doing with leadership and their learning.

Even though the school has been through much with the pandemic in mind, not unlike other district schools across the country, our library decided that during the pandemic while so many of our students were reading more than ever that we would try to do a Read-a-thon to get students excited about the progress they were making individually while navigating through it all. With that in mind, we had one of the most successful library fundraisers ever, thanks to our incredible community. Mrs. Brooks, our library director, was key in this entire process. Her vision of what we could do to impact student learning and love of reading was incredible.

When last year's Read-A-Thon was launched, we never could have imagined the incredible response of our students and families. At the time of year when students tend to "wind down," they were instead reading like crazy! Our hearts were touched by the generosity of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and local businesses willing to support and encourage our students to read. We truly have a very special community. Our students read and read.... raising a mind-blowing \$10,000 last year! This enabled our library and school to purchase needed items as well as "fun items" that all benefited our students. We were able to purchase additional new book titles, replace some of the well-loved titles that were falling apart, and acquire needed rolling carts to feature popular series books in the library. The student prizes for our reading programs such as the Bluestem program and Million Word Wall got "an upgrade" and we were able to give the library a little "facelift" in the décor department.

These opportunities were exciting, but probably the most exciting purchase was one that would never have been possible without the generosity of those supporting our Read-A-thon. Mrs. Simpson had always dreamed of having a book vending machine which would combine the fun of a prize dispenser with the excitement of new books. With our fundraiser, this dream became a reality and our Monroe Center students now have opportunities to acquire their own brand-new books in this fun and motivational way, not to mention building home libraries at the same time. When asked about what the hope is for the use of this vending machine, Mrs. Simpson replied, "Just helping students get excited or continue to be excited about reading while using it to celebrate leadership and incredible accomplishments in the building is key. We want all of our students to be able to celebrate their wins whether large or small and this is another way to do that." When asking students how they like the vending machine they said it's better than candy.

We encourage community members to check out our book vending machine when visiting Monroe Center Grade School. It is custom wrapped with our school district logo and a "magical" book theme to match our belief in the magic of reading. Thank you all for your tremendous support. We look forward to our next Read-A-thon coming to MC in April and look forward to showing all that we've learned on the upcoming testing this spring as well as ending the year on a strong note with both students and staff!

Thank you,

Mrs. Simpson

Principal Monroe Center Grade School



Meridian Jr High

The Student Council at Meridian Junior High hosted a fundraiser in March to raise money for one of their guidance counselors, Mrs. Zitzke and her family. This past December, Mrs. Zitzke was diagnosed with breast cancer on the heels of her husband's cancer journey for the past two years. The students organized a two-part "Yeetathon" event. Mrs. Zitzke's maiden name is Yee, and the students use the word yeet as a term for throwing something. So that is how the name of their event was created.

The two-part event was held in person on March 11th and online from March 4th to the 18th. The in-person event consisted of students "paying to play" by "yeeting" bean bags from the upper-level fitness center down into containers on the gym floor. Each container was a specific number of tickets that students could use to win fifteen different "teen" themed baskets. The student council members did a great job running this event. The second part of the "Yeetathon" consisted of an online Facebook raffle/fundraiser. The event page was live for two weeks.



The Junior High was open to the public on March 11th. It was a very busy day and night of community members viewing the 118 raffle items and purchasing their tickets to win! We are extremely proud of our Student Council, from soliciting some amazing donations to organizing and running the event. This group of students is truly amazing. We are also so grateful for everyone who contributed and participated.

The community really stepped up for this cause. We were able to raise over \$10,000 for the Zitzke Family and could not have done it without everyone's support.

As Veterans Day approached, Mrs. Gale and the student council had to revamp what our celebration would look like. The school held a Dress for Dark Horse Lodge fundraiser earlier in the school year that coincided with Homecoming week at the high school. Students from MJHS and staff had a week of dress-up days in which they would donate \$1 each day that they dressed up. That week MJHS students and staff raised \$454.26.

As we moved past the Thanksgiving holiday, the MJHS Student Council hosted the annual Holiday Craft/Vendor Fair on Sunday, December 5th, in conjunction with the community's Cardinal Christmas festivities downtown. Money raised from this event will allow the student council to host Student and Teacher Appreciation activities throughout the year.



This student-run organization is driven this year to show love and support to their peers and mentors. Putting last year behind us, the students are moving forward and making this year about compassion, love, and positivity!

Dear SVHS Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Spring is a busy time in the life of SVHS. We have numerous activities and special events on our calendar, and we are excited to be able to honor our traditions again. These last several weeks of the second semester will pass quickly, so it is critical that students and parents are aware of their students' current grades, assignments and assessments that need to be completed, and upcoming deadlines and due dates.

Ultimately, academics must be a priority for our students. Not only because a focus on academic growth and achievement promotes social and emotional wellbeing, aligns with our District's Mission/Vision/Core Values, and empowers our students to pursue their post-secondary goals, but also because academic eligibility is required in order to participate in the fun activities scheduled to occur over the next two months. Please review our school's eligibility guidelines in the SVHS 2021-2022 Activities/Athletics Handbook on the 8to18 website SVHS 2021-2022 Eligibility - See Pages 4 & 5. Also, remember to check your student's grades regularly through Skyward Family Access. If you need help accessing this information, please contact Ms. Bethani Larson in the high school office at (815) 645-2230 ext. 5000.

The students, faculty, staff, and administration are committed to a culture of servant leadership, which is why we continue to embed community service opportunities into our courses, clubs, and teams. If your student has completed community 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 our SVHS website at <https://hs.meridian223.org/> under the SVHS Special Activities tab. Seniors must turn in all service hours to our SVHS Counseling Department by Friday, May 6, 2022 in preparation for community service recognition at our graduation/commencement ceremony on May 15. 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, or check out the Daily Announcements on our high school website and emailed daily to all high school students.

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

- April 8 – Junior/Senior Banquet at 5:30 PM (Lino's)
- April 9 – FFA Banquet at 6:00 PM (SVHS Multi-Purpose Room)
- April 13 – SAT Testing Day (SVHS Aux Gym) (All Juniors)
- April 14 – PSAT Testing Day (All Freshmen & Sophomores)
- April 14 – Junior & Senior EXPLORE Day (Srs. & Jrs. Arrange Community Service / Job Shadow)
- April 15 & 18 – No School – Good Friday and Easter Monday
- April 23 – Prom Grand March at 4:00 PM (SVHS Aux. Gym) & 6:00 PM (Barnacopia)
- April 27 – Senior Scholarship Night at 6:00 PM (SVHS Multi-Purpose Room)
- April 29 – May Day Pageant at 7:00 PM (SVHS Main Gym)
- May 10 & 11 – Seniors' Final Exams
- May 13 – Graduation Practice for the Class of 2022 at 8:00 AM (Required) (SVHS Main Gym)
- May 13 – Senior Class Trip (Leaving SVHS at 10:00 AM)
- May 15 – SVHS Commencement/Graduation Ceremony at 2:00 PM (Northern Illinois University)
- May 18, 19, 20 – SVHS Final Exams (Freshmen, Sophomores & Juniors)
- May 20 – Last Day of School – Early Release (All Buildings) at 11:11 AM

Please visit our SVHS Activities & Athletics webpage at <https://il.8to18.com/StillmanValley/home> to check spring team schedules, activities registration, pictures, and more.

Mrs. Leslie Showers
SVHS Principal

Postal Customer

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MERIDIAN CUSD 223



@MCUSD223

2022 – 2023 Registration Important Dates

- 1) **All** fees must be paid in full for the current school year and previous years including Fee Management (school fees of all types, activity fees, course fees, tech fees etc...), and Food Service (lunch account balances) by **April 7th** to qualify for the early registration incentive fee rate.
- 2) Online registration for the 2022 – 2023 school year is scheduled to open **April 28th**. Early incentive rates will be applied to eligible accounts at this time and must be paid before **June 7th**.
- 3) Early incentive fee rates will end June 7th. All early incentive payments must be made on or before June 7th. After this date the original registration fee amounts as listed below will apply. The early incentive rate is no longer available after **June 7th**.
- 4) Registration must be complete by July 18th to ensure our ability to transport students at the beginning of the school-year.
- 5) Walk-in registrations are welcome June 1 – June 30, 8am to 12pm, MONDAY – THURSDAY.

Fees

- Kindergarten - \$140 registration fee, \$100 registration fee if eligible for early registration incentive
 - 1st & 2nd Grade - \$145 registration fee, \$105 registration fee if eligible for early registration incentive
 - 3rd Grade - \$158 registration fee, \$118 registration fee if eligible for early registration Incentive
 - 4th – 8th Grade - \$153 registration fee, \$113 registration fee if eligible for early registration Incentive
 - SVHS - \$168 registration fee, \$128 registration fee if eligible for early registration incentive
- o ONLY students with ZERO remaining fees are eligible for early registration incentive
 - o The above rates have not increased, but include required items that were priced separately in previous years.