



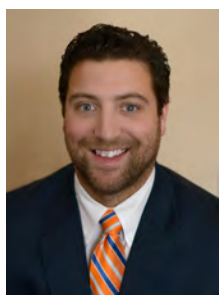
-Go Cardinals!-

WINTER 2020
NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

By Dr. P.J. Caposey

Meridian Community,



2020 has been an incredibly interesting and difficult year for most everybody. As I reflect on the year that was for our school district, I am both proud and hopeful. There are also many other things I can feel, and honestly have felt, throughout

the course of the year. But, when I look back on this year, the two things that stick with me are our pride and hope for our future. Let me explain.

If someone would have told me that in one year we would be able to move from 'doing school' to remote learning to hybrid learning to in-person learning to remote learning in the coming months, I would have never believed them. But, we did. And when I say we - I mean we. This has been an effort that has involved every staff member, student, caregiver, and community member. We have been able to do something most would have thought impossible 12 months ago.

For that, I have abundant pride.

My pride is not misguided, and I am not blind to reality. I do not think we have been perfect. In fact, there have been times in which we have flat out struggled. I am acutely aware of that. But we have never stopped listening, adapting, and modifying to attempt to do the very best we can on behalf of kids. And for that, I am proud.

I am also filled with immense hope for the future. We will get back to normal as a community, a society, and a country. When we do, I am filled with joy to think about what the future could hold for our district. Our vision is to maintain our small town values but create world-class results.

I think we have proved to ourselves truly how much we are capable of in a calendar year, and this fills me with hope as we continue to chase down our dreams and goals as a district. While I do not want to go through another '2020' anytime soon, I am very thankful for the lessons it has taught me and has provided for our district.

At the end of the day, I simply want our district to continue to get better each and every year so that we can serve our kids and community at the best possible level. This year has been difficult, but we are better now than we were 12 months ago. That is all I can ask for, and that makes me incredibly proud to be your superintendent and undeniably hopeful for what the future can bring.



Meridian Board Honored as One of the Best in State

Meridian's Board of Education is one of 15 districts in the state of Illinois to receive the Illinois School Board Governance Recognition and the only board in the Northwest region to be recognized. As a point of reference, there are over 850 school districts in the state of Illinois. The Illinois Association of School Board (IASB) members will formally recognize the Meridian Board with the award at the IASB fall Northwest Division meeting.

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, discussed the effort and energy put into the district by Board members at the September Board of Education meeting where this recognition was first publicly announced. Smith stated, "I am proud of the Board members sitting around this table. Being a Board member is a volunteer position that comes with stress and angst. On top of fulfilling their duties as a board member I am continually impressed with this board's commitment to their personal development and the growth of those within the district."

The Meridian Board has seen little turnover in the past eight years after a significant turnover in the years prior. The stability and effort of the Board has helped lift Meridian from a time of stress and uncertainty to one of stability and hope. Meridian Superintendent, Dr. PJ Caposey, stated, "For this Board to be named among the top 2 percent of Boards in the state of Illinois is entirely appropriate and deserved. The fact that they have done so for the 6th consecutive years is an absolutely stunning accomplishment."



Meridian Board members are as follows:

John Smith - President
Kristine Youman - Vice President
Jill Huber - Secretary
Dr. Tim Flynn
Tim Devries
Marsha Welden
Matt Rhodes
Elaine Nicholson - Coordinator to the Board of Education

*From L to R: Dr. Flynn, Matt Rhodes, Mr. Devries,
Mr. Smith, Mrs. Youman, Mrs. Welden, Mrs. Huber*

This year we've continued to navigate the challenges and changes associated with COVID. I am incredibly proud of our kids and our staff here at Highland and the work they've done to make this a successful school year. I am also incredibly grateful for the work that families continue to do in partnering with us to make this a successful year.

While this year continues to be an exceptionally abnormal year, we've been able to engage in a multitude of new platforms and learning. We've also been able to see our kiddos work in exciting ways. Mrs. Huhn has been using Artsonia this year to highlight our friends' art work. If you haven't had a chance to get online and look at the work, please do so by following this link - <https://www.artsonia.com/schools/school.asp?id=46846>

We've been able to celebrate our Cardinals of the Month in November. Each month we recognize friends who have been great examples of one of the 7 Habits. Each class votes for their winner and they are recognized with a certificate and coupon for Casey's! We are incredibly proud of the continued work and effort that our kiddos exhibit. As we work through the remote learning period, we will have kids who are sharing how they are using the 7 Habits at home during this time!

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. Though this is a unique year, I wouldn't want to be a part of any other district or community.

Sincerely,

Joe Mullikin, Principal
Highland Elementary School





We need to celebrate. There has been so much focus on things that are outside of our control this fall, that I find the overwhelming need to recognize all that we have to celebrate here at Monroe Center Grade School.

Over the past months our students have demonstrated their critical thinking and problem solving skills more than ever. They've taken events and opportunities that we've had in the past and turned them into reality in what seems to be a virtual setting over most recent months. We've definitely enjoyed and celebrated our chance at face to face instruction since mid-October and our students have risen to the occasion while learning.

Annually, we've had a Veteran's Day Assembly at MC, and this year with COVID-19 and the restrictions in place, our students in 5th grade had a huge challenge to overcome. They didn't let that slow them down, they invited guests like Ms. Tiffany Ingram and Mr. Dean Loy to video record their presence and message as a tribute to all of our veterans. The video tribute was a huge success and our students taught us a lesson in resilience, problem solving, as well as a positive way to shift our mindset to attitude and opportunity over obstacles.



There was no stopping our Caring Cardinals either. They attacked supporting our local food pantry, The Bread of Life, by collecting personal care items and they figured out a way to make certain that our full remote classrooms could participate in the process while respecting the need to remain fully remote. I believe they've taught all of us a lesson in that there is a solution to every problem if you have a team willing to work through it together.

Lastly, I had the gift of being in a third grade classroom today and the students shared with me a creation of something I've never seen before nor did I have any idea how they did it or quite frankly imagined it. They created their own Thanksgiving Day parade after reading and discussing the story *Balloons Over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade* by Melissa Sweet. Then, through learning how to use Google Slides they created a Stop Animation Slide Show and from what I understand some students had to create over 60 slides to create the motion I witnessed on this YouTube video. It was fascinating to say the least! This, all because a teacher took on the challenge of somethings she did not know to benefit her students because she knew they would learn a great deal more being invested in a project like this as well as impacting their comprehension of the story more than just simply reading the book.

In a nutshell, as we enter into our final weeks of 2nd quarter, the holiday season, and the end of 2020 I want to leave you with this. I have found that as the reality of what we have experienced in 2020 is far different from anything we've planned, our students or rather our children are still the reason that we do what we do every day at Monroe Center. They have wonderful hearts, determination to do what is important to them, they want to learn more every day, and they show us there are no limits to what we can do together.

Thank you for all of your support this semester and this year. Without our unstoppable educators and your support from home, the above would not be possible.

Here's to an incredible 2nd semester and 2021.

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***

As MJHS transitioned into the hybrid schedule this fall, we really focused on what we could do to make this the best experience for kids. First, let's talk about how PBIS has changed this year. PBIS stands for Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support. Our system was designed to reward students with Cardinal Cash for participation, helping a classmate or getting "caught" being kind to someone else, for example. Now instead of handing out "cash" we are using stickers on the back of our new order form. We can safely collect the orders and pass them out with minimal contact. Even the remote kids can participate.

The Junior High Library has really recognized the one thing you can always do during a Pandemic...that would be reading! Here are some of their new and improved features:

- A new and improved website: <https://sites.google.com/mail.meridian223.org/meridianlibrariesk-8/home>
- Students have always been able to request books not owned by our library, but nothing has driven this opportunity home like their ability to put holds on books themselves. Turning over the power to students for requesting any book they want by giving them their library card numbers has empowered them to see that they can have ANY book, not just what we have purchased ourselves.
- EBooks and audiobooks have gained popularity. Students are discovering more and more the digital options for reading from home.
- 8th grade book club: Starting this month, our new adventure will begin with the first ever MJHS virtual book club. We are reading *The Giver* as our first story.
- We continue to encourage students to read the Illinois State Award nominee titles (Rebecca Caudills). We have promised students that if the limo ride does not happen, we will try to think of an exciting alternative.....
- The Drive Up Library will be open during remote learning. Students can request a book by emailing ehong@mail.meridian223.org.

The MJHS Library wants to recognize our newest members of the Million Word Read Club:

- Robert H.
- Kelcie M.
- Macieann M.
- Gavin S.
- Cole M.
- Makayla D.



**The Junior High Library is still open during remote!
Check your parents' email!**



DEAR SVHS PARENTS AND GUARDIANS,

Thank you for your continued support and flexibility during this very challenging season in education. We are dedicated to each student's success academically, physically, socially, and emotionally, and we're acutely aware that Remote Learning/e-Learning can be challenging in all aspects of student wellbeing. Now more than ever, we encourage our students to make consistent use of the many resources available to them. Here is a rather exhaustive list of our resources for students:

- SVHS Faculty Email Addresses - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ABun6GA9CTr1eWoHbIMPpFJ15SyV1DQjxQVtDVYst7Q/edit?usp=sharing>
- Julia Hull District Library e-Resources - <https://www.juliahull.org/resources-for-students-teachers>
- SVHS Online Peer Tutoring - <https://sites.google.com/mail.meridian223.org/svhs-peer-tutoring/home>
- SVHS Academic Resources Google Classroom - <https://classroom.google.com/c/MTczNzI4NTI4NTE1?cjc=lp5p6ge>
- SVHS Online Math Help - <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeLVDwRvoHOizLp3VfZJQfOQcHITJN2Yi4OLBKCnqrJhhD7g/viewform?gxids=7757>
- Class of 2021 Counseling Office - <https://classroom.google.com/c/MTI3NjU3Nzk4MzY1>
- Class of 2022 School Counseling Support - <https://classroom.google.com/c/MTI2OTAwNjQxMjUw>
- Class of 2023 School Counseling Support - <https://classroom.google.com/c/MTI2OTA3NDkzMTQy>
- Class of 2024 Counseling Office - <https://classroom.google.com/c/MTg4OTE2MjA4NTA3>

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 must 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 ext. 5009 or Ms. Bethani Larson at (815) 645-2230 ext. 5000.

When possible, take a moment 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 2020-2021 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 opportunities and resources available for our students.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Leslie Showers
SVHS Principal

Important Upcoming Dates:

- December 18 – End of 1st Semester (No Final Exams) – Early Release/Office Closed - 1:00 PM
- January 6 – School Resumes (Still Full Remote) – Start of 2nd Semester
- January 18 – No School – Martin Luther King Day

BUILDING & GROUND MAINTENANCE

Busy is an understatement for what we've been experiencing this fall!

We were blessed with some late warm and dry weather which allowed us to put some extra work and finishing touches on ground work that normally would be tough getting done in house. Mix that with additional tasks in buildings and random staff shortages and we've had a challenging season.

Some things we were able to complete outside include:

- Mowing all surfaces at a better length for winter
- Aerating all playing surfaces
- Fertilize all playing surfaces and high visibility areas in front of schools
- Finish culvert work in front of SVHS and along School Street
- Better traffic signage near bus pickup/dropoff at MJHS
- New HVAC filters in roof units
- A few extra misc roof repairs

With students and faculty back in the facilities both our Custodial and B&G employees have been pressed to make sure we have buildings as clean as possible. The daily workload has increased on all district employees but together I believe we started the year with good direction and we've stayed on course.

Steps we've taken to help our students and staff stay safe:

- Large purchases of PPE prior to school starting
- Bulk purchases of disinfectants and other cleaning supplies
- Implemented 21 electrostatic sprayers district wide for quick and effective spraying of buildings and busses
- Additional spray bottles in each room so desks can be sprayed and wiped between classes or as needed
- Quarantine tents to divert symptomatic people to isolated areas for our Nurses to evaluate
- In process of implementing new cleaning checklists in each room detailing what tasks have been done both for peace of mind and accountability

With winter around the corner we're now busy prepping snow removal equipment and servicing both summer equipment for storage and snow equipment to make sure everything is in the best possible working order for the coming snow season.

We'd like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season and we look forward to 2021!

Kenny Lamer



Local Postal Customer



MERIDIAN CUSD 223



@MCUSD223

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 CAN NOT 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=9igTmhyFlj8>

- 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 is being highly discouraged this year.