

Meridian CUSD #223 Newsletter

"Our mission is to educate students to be self-directed learners, collaborative workers, complex thinkers, quality producers and community contributors."

Welcome to Meridian #223

District newsletter's goal is to inform entire community

One of the outcomes of last April's Community Focus Group Session was the realization that outside of families whose children are currently attending school, many community members are not aware School District news. This newsletter's goal is to provide a means to inform our community about the school district. The Meridian School Board views the community as being one of the District's biggest assets and wants to establish a strong communication link. It is anticipated that the newsletter will be distributed four times a year. We will also appreciate any feedback on how valuable our community finds the newsletter.

District Long Range Vision

In order to provide for the continuous improvement of the School District for students, the Meridian School Board engaged in the process to establish the District's Long Range Vision during the 2007-08 school year. The Long Range Vision enables the District to make decisions and provide resources aligned with the

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Board Conducts Community Focus Group Session

Over 40 community members participate

The Meridian CUSD #223 School Board hosted its second community focus group session on Monday, October 20th at Stillman Valley High School. The purpose of the of the focus group was for the School Board to gain a better understanding of the participating community members perspective on the School District.

Each School Board member and administrator invited five community members to participate in the session, which had the goal of representing a cross section of the community. The invited community members were asked to R.S.V.P.. After the RSVP deadline, the School Board opened up participation to any willing community member to fill out slots for those who could not attend.

During the first part of the program, District Superintendent Bob Prusator provided student achievement, demographic and financial information to the focus group. Next, the participating community members were randomly divided into seven small groups. Serving as facilitators in the groups were Meridian CUSD #223 administrators, directors and representatives from the Stillman Valley Education Association. A Meridian School Board member was assigned to each group. The groups were asked to respond to three main questions: 1) What do you look at to determine how well our School District is doing?; 2) In five years, what kind of issues do you think the School District will need to address or be challenged by?; and 3)What are the most critical areas of needed improvement? The groups were also asked to respond to the status of trust between the community and Focus

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Vision (continued from page 1)

vision. The process to determine the Long Range Vision began at a special board meeting on Saturday, January 26, 2008. The School Board, in collaboration with district administrators, district directors and teacher association representatives met to identify the key components that would move the district in the most meaningful direction for students. A draft of the vision was completed on January 26, 2008 and reviewed by the School Board at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 14. The final adoption of the Long Range Vision was passed on February 28. The following is the Meridian CUSD #223 Long Range Vision:

As an exemplary School District, we will commit to the following:

- Engage in highly effective communication to Community, School Board Administration, Faculty, Support Staff and Students.
- Achieve organizational trust through collaboration, reliability, accountability, transparency, fairness and loyalty.
- Utilize an aligned, well-rounded and comprehensive curriculum that focuses on life-long learning skills.
- Promote high- learning activities for all students.
- Practice visionary district leadership to create and implement goals.
- Value and maintain a safe environment for Students, Staff and Community.
- Provide educational facilities that support and enhance the students' educational experience.
- Make decisions using research and best practice that incorporates fiscal responsibility, collaboration and impact on the Community, School Board, Staff and Students. ■

District Purchases Property South of SVHS

148 acres provides options for future facility needs

The Meridian School District recently completed the purchase of 148 acres south of the Stillman Valley High School campus at a cost of just over \$2 million.

The Meridian CUSD #223 School Board spent the past several months completing the various steps to complete the sale including a geotechnical exploration study to make sure the site is appropriate for school facility construction. The School District is utilizing bond sales to finance the purchase which are scheduled to be paid out over five years. The impact of the bond sales on the tax rate will be determined through the levy process which will be finalized in December. The property has the potential of housing three school campuses and provides the benefit of being adjacent to Stillman Valley High School and in close proximity to Highland Elementary School. ■

September 30 Fall Housing Report Shows Increased Enrollment

Enrollment increases by 42 students from last year

The 2008 Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) September 30 Fall Housing Report shows the District's enrollment (1,993) increasing by forty-two students from the 2007 report, which represents a 2.15% increase. Last year, the District's enrollment decreased by four students from the previous year.

Most noteworthy is the current kindergarten class, which has 176 students enrolled. The previous high was 132 students in 2007.

Current building enrollments are as follows:

Highland Elementary: 434
Monroe Center Elementary: 512
Meridian Junior High School: 446
Stillman Valley High School : 601 ■

Meridian Earns Bright Star Award

One of 82 Districts recognized in Illinois

Once again, Meridian CUSD #223 earned the SchoolSearch™ Bright Star Award for educational excellence. The award was received by only 82 school districts in Illinois out of 871. The award recognizes school districts whose student achievement on state tests ranks in the upper one-third, while the expenditure per pupil ranks in the lower one-fourth.

SchoolSearch™ is an educational research and consulting firm that publishes rankings of school systems. SchoolSearch™ works with major companies to provide their relocating families school information. School quality is the top concern of most relocating families.

The District is proud of both its students and staff in earning the award. ■

School District Awarded \$379,000 ISBE Technology Grant

Only 16 out of 94 applicants receive award

Earlier this year Meridian CUSD #223 was notified that it was the recipient of a Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) technology grant. The focus of the grant is to integrate technology into curriculum, goals, school improvement plans, professional learning communities and the everyday activities of teachers and students. The grant activities are designed to improve student achievement in reading and mathematics in grades 1-8.

The project ensures that all students and teachers have increased access to technology by providing participating classrooms with 4 up-to-date computers/monitors (less than 5 yrs. old), a projector, printer/scanner, laptop, and digital camera. One Interactive White Board will be purchased per grade level (1-8), two wireless mobile labs (one for each elementary building), and educational software, along with training consultants, professional developer/coaches, and training materials. The District is very excited about the impact the grant will have on the learning experiences of Meridian CUSD #223 students. ■

Group (continued from page 1)

school district. The small group component of the session lasted approximately sixty minutes.

During the final part of the focus group session, each group reported to the full group the five highest priority items that were discussed in their small group. Each group also reported a composite trust score, which was ranked on a scale of one to ten.

The session provided the School Board with meaningful information and feedback on the perspectives of the community. The District's next task is to compile all of the feedback and utilize it in order to assist in establishing improvement goals for the next school year. ■

Dr. Larry Baskin Scheduled for November 17 Community Presentation

Board sponsored speaker to discuss "Creating Profit" in school district setting

On Monday, November 17th, the Meridian School Board is sponsoring a community presentation featuring Dr. Larry Baskin, a retired school district superintendent and former dean of a business college. Dr. Baskin's presentation focuses on the means by which school districts can provide the framework to create "profit" in a public school setting. The presentation will be held in the Stillman Valley High School multi-purpose room at 7:00.p.m. Dr. Baskin will present to the Meridian School District Leadership Team consisting of Board Members, administrators and directors in the afternoon. ■

2008 District Report Card

Annual ISBE report

At its regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, October 23, 2008, the Meridian School Board spent extensive time reviewing the 2008 state report card for the School District. The report card contains information on the District's student performance,

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Report Card, (continued from p.3)

demographics and finances. The report card is evaluated annually by the School Board to assess progress and monitor performance. Please go to www.meridian223.org and click on the District link for this year's and past report cards. ■

District Organizational Structure

Last year, the Meridian School Board established positions and job descriptions that would begin to more effectively meet the needs of a growing school district. A primary goal of the structure was to allow certified building administrators focus on the instructional program. Below is a listing of Board Members, Administrators and Directors:

School Board

Mr. Ron Steenken, Board President
Ms. Barb Reeverts, Board Vice-President
Ms. Deb Bonne, Board Member
Mr. Tim Jagielski, Board Member
Mr. Bruce Larson, Board Member
Mr. Kevin Glendenning, Board Member
Mr. Tim King, Board Member

Return Address
Street Number and Name
City, State 98765-4321

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Administrators

Mr. Bob Prusator, Superintendent
Mr. Michael Mandzen, SVHS Principal
Mr. Jeff Voltz, SVHS Assistant Principal
Mr. Bill Davidson, Meridian Junior High Principal
Ms. Leslie Showers, Meridian Jr. High Asst. Principal
Mr. Adam Zurko, Monroe Center Principal
Mr. Mike Coulahan, Highland Principal
Mr. Steve Stewart, 6-12 Activities Director

Directors

Ms. Jennifer Porter, Dir. of Business/Human Resource
Mr. Jon Mickle, Director of Buildings/Grounds
Mr. Jeff Sherman, Director of Transportation
Mr. Jayce Bolhous, Director of Technology
Ms. Kim Glendenning, Director of Health Services
Ms. Lisa Reber, Director of Food Service

District Information on Web Page

Updates at www.meridian223.org

BULK RATE
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO.
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Mailing Address
Street Number and Name
City, State 98765-4321