



Meridian CUSD Newsletter

Spring 2016

OUR COMMUNITY, OUR SCHOOL, OUR STORY

A Word From Our Superintendent

By Dr. P.J. Caposey



The months of April and May are a unique and exciting time for schools. As we proceed and prepare for celebrations the end of the year brings forward, we are concluding our delivery of curriculum and preparing our students for their next level of education. As we do so, students will also be experiencing our state-level assessments that are used to measure student progress and ultimately the success of our district in the eyes of the state. As we embark upon these assessments, I want to remind our community that standardized assessments are important, but I firmly believe that no single assessment can measure the brilliance and uniqueness of our students, nor the overall effectiveness of our district. Additionally, while these events of April and May are important, so too are the memory making experiences of field days, prom, and graduation. Our goal at Meridian is to educate the whole child – not create a test-taking machine.

April and May also bring forward another challenge. As educators we concentrate on ending the year strong, but we are also focused on planning for continued growth in the coming years. This manifests itself in a few ways that you will observe. First and foremost, we will continue to update our school and district improvement plans. These plans are lifeblood of our organization as they are our written commitment that the status quo is not acceptable in our district.

As the year begins in August and September you will see these documents published as they were this year. These will not only outline the goals of the buildings and departments,

but also articulate our plans to add a level of community accountability. These goals will be based off analysis of many different current data points – which will also be published openly as part of the district data project. Last year the plan was over 300 pages of charts and graphs – I am not sure about you – but that is tremendously exciting to me.

Lastly, and most significantly for this year, you will see a major facility project. This project is detailed later in the newsletter, but I will do my best to summarize the project succinctly for you in terms I believe the community will care about. This summer over 200 line items of Health, Life, and Safety work will be completed to best create safer schools and to no longer defer needed maintenance and improvements. Improvements taking place will include needed roof and asphalt repairs, increasing wired technology infrastructure to improve building security, replacing and abating asbestos flooring currently covered by carpet, and bringing doors up to current code. It is exciting to be progressing forward in this process, but these improvements are not 'fun' or 'exciting' in many cases. Instead, they are necessary improvements to improve student safety and to prevent our buildings from falling into disrepair. Additionally, the Board made the decision to fund this process through a bonding scenario that will not raise the tax rate and will leave the district in a better position when the next 10 year Health, Life, Safety survey comes due than we were faced with during this decision-making process.

Thank you again for your continued support and we look forward to continuing to move forward toward becoming a world-class district while maintaining and acting upon our small-town values.

Meridian CUSD 223 Activities and Athletics

Winter is over and spring sports/activities at Meridian Junior High and Stillman Valley High School are in full swing. Contests in baseball, softball, track, and girls soccer are already going as SVHS looks for success in the Big Northern Conference. The MJH track team has started practice and is preparing for their upcoming season.

Congratulations to Mrs. Owen and the entire cast and crew on their outstanding performances in the spring musical, "Hello Dolly." It was Mrs. Owen's final performance as she retires at the end of the school year, and no one disappointed.

We had several accomplishments in the Activities/Athletics department over the past few months. The MJH 7th grade girls team took 1st place in the Route 72 Conference and in the conference tournament. Several students were selected to the Big Northern Conference All-Conference teams – First team members: Girls Basketball, Macy Weaver, Boys Basketball, Kane VanBriesen, Wrestling, Jared VanVleet, Blake Kittleson, Sam Durfey, Drake Jennings, Scholastic Bowl, Kenzie Flynn. Ethan Roberts and Dylan Devries earned

Honorable Mention in their respective sports. Jared VanVleet and Drake Jennings both qualified for the IHSA State Wrestling Tournament in February.

Three SVHS fall sports teams were recognized by the IHSA for their performance in the classroom. Football (3.05), Volleyball (3.44), and Girls Golf (3.43) all qualified for the IHSA Team Academic Achievement Award. It is great to see our athletes competing in games and in the classroom.

Online registration for Stillman Valley High School athletics continues to be a success. This is a valuable tool to eliminate as much redundant paperwork as we can. Online registration will be available to MJH participants starting in the summer of 2016. You can find schedules for 6-12 by visiting the Athletic and Activity website at <http://il.8to18.com/StillmanValley>. This is the best place to keep up with all the spring schedules and changes. Many of the SVHS 16-17 schedules can be found on the site as well.

Good luck to all our spring competitors and Go Cardinals!



Cardinal Café Fundraiser

Meridian CUSD is excited to partner with Cardinal Café for a 'tasty' fundraiser on the 3rd Thursday of every month! Ten percent of all proceeds from meals will be donated back to support the schools. Please help support a local business and our schools at the same time.

We hope to see you there.

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

Coaching Isn't Just for Sports



Within the 2015-2016 teaching year the Meridian 223 district was fortunate in that they were able to create movement within the teaching staff that allowed for the creation of an ELA Instructional Coach without additional cost to the district. Those districts that are able to have instructional coaching positions, at this point in time, are distinctive in that this position allows for continuous follow-up on professional development and continued support for teachers in our elementary buildings. Professional development is part of an on-going structure necessary for teachers to build their depth and knowledge in their content area.

Building a program from within our own teaching staff has been the beginning of what could be a fabulous way to build capacity and continuity within our literacy program. Instructional coaching is a way to not only provide professional development within our district at greater savings, but for the more significant purpose in that the professional development not only helps teachers, but we believe should directly affect our students and the growth they make each year.

According to Elena Aguilar (2013), "Essentially coaching is a process of moving a person from where he or she is to where they want to be," (Aguilar, 2013, p. 7). This is much like the traditional coaching we refer to when we relate to sporting events; we want to improve what and how we do things in order to create in the competitor the readiness needed for what is to come in years to follow. Meridian 223 wants to provide every opportunity for our students to thrive in all that they choose to do, and this requires supporting our teachers in every way we find possible.

It was with great excitement that Mrs. Deana Simpson was able to fill the requirements of this position for our district this year. She came from within our Meridian staff having taught in both of the buildings she is now supporting; Highland Elementary and Monroe Center Elementary.

"Moving into coaching was a difficult decision to make until I realized instead of reaching 30 lives each year I could reach over 600 lives by making this move. It's the best of both worlds considering I work with students, teachers and families; it doesn't get any better than that when it comes to education," remarks Simpson when asked. Simpson continues to grow as well, as much of her job requires research, assistance, and continued learning to support those that reach students each day. Much of her focus this year has been on learning and teaching how our new Journeys literacy platform through HMH (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt - a global leader in Pre K-12 educational content and services) functions, as well as working with many teachers this year on guided reading, fluency, and vocabulary areas to name a few.

Many of you, along with your children, have been fortunate to attend one of the several functions that the district was able to provide this year through the building of this position. Mrs. Simpson along with several other dedicated teachers in the district was able to provide a fall Family Reading Night. She also delivered what we hope to be the first of many, enjoyable and educating Parent Training Nights. This involved sharing and teaching how new technology, now available to our district families, can be accessed and used at home through www.meridian223.org by both students and families. She also chose to invest time in creating professional development for our paraprofessional staff at both buildings and hopes to continue that each year as well.

Meridian 223 continues to emphasize the importance of learning and growth at every level, and with this position we are striving to develop a remarkable foundation that supports both the youth and our teaching staff in our district. There is no better investment for our teaching staff than continued support in every manner available to them as they work with our students each day. Instructional coaching is a way to address both the needs of students and teachers while working together to create a phenomenal literacy program.

Aguilar, E. (2013). *Education Week. Spotlight on Instructional Coaching, June 5, 2013, 6-7.*

Highland School

Hello from all at Highland School. The staff and students continue to be totally engaged in learning at Highland. This time of year is so exciting as the students are truly showing how much they have learned since the beginning of the year. Great strides are made every year in pre k, kindergarten, first, and second grade. Students are growing and learning by leaps and bounds. Students that did not know their letters and numbers at the beginning of the year are now demonstrating their skill and expertise in identifying letters and numbers. First grade and second grade students' reading skills are developing very rapidly. The students are so proud of their abilities and are pleased to show their progress by earning points for taking Accelerated Reader tests. These tests give the students positive feedback on how well they are reading and comprehending. Each week more first grade students are able to read independently and take these tests. The teachers are doing a great job of motivating the children to read. Mrs. Weir and Mrs. Brooks, the library staff, work diligently to keep high interest books visible and in the hands of kids.

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

The new HMH (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) reading and language arts curriculum materials are totally integrated in the teaching now at Highland School. This new series utilizes more technology than any series we have ever used. Mrs. Deana Simpson, Elementary Instructional Coach, has learned much about utilizing the series and has shared this expertise with all of the teaching grade level teams. Mrs. Simpson researches any questions and concerns and helps the teachers to fully apply all aspects of the program to benefit our students. Mrs. Simpson has developed Livebinders for parents, teachers, and students to use. You will find those on our district website at www.meridiancUSD223.org under Highland and Monroe Center Schools. Additionally, you can download the free HMH Readers App from Apple or Google Play to have the leveled readers available to your child on your phone and tablet at home and on the go. The students are developing as readers and these materials can be used to provide stories and books that are at your child's reading level. This will be a great tool for away from school reading through the school year and this summer.

Thank you to all of the families that supported our most recent PTO fundraisers. The World's Best Chocolate was a great success. The PTO is very active with supporting students and teachers with materials, supplies, and programs. Be on the lookout for a PTO newsletter outlining all that we have earned and spent to support our academic programs this school year. Thank you to all of our Parents and Guardians as members of the Meridian Elementary PTO.

Our new music teacher, Ms. Rachel Mastalski, has done separate night programs for our kindergarten, first grade, and second grade classes. Each of these programs was spectacular and was well attended by our families. Thank you for your support of our music program.

Students continue to be positively reinforced for good behavior all through the school on a daily basis with our Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS). This helps us to develop and maintain an effective learning environment that promotes and supports student learning with a minimum of disruptions due to behavior. Dollar days and community donations help us to fund this program. Most recently we earned \$630 in partnership with the Byron McDonald's for MC Teachers' night. Thank you to all in the community for your support.

Please remember how important it is to read to our young learners. Read to the children every chance you get. Grandparents can be great help in this area. Ask questions about what is read to help children develop comprehension skills. It is a joy to watch the children grow continually all through the year and to see the great pride the teachers and staff take in working with our students. Home and school work together so that academic and behavior expectations of the teachers and staff are supported and reinforced at home. Our school and programs are what they are because of supportive parents and families, a staff of dedicated men and women who have a common goal - to do what is best for students. We are always looking for ways to achieve that goal. The commitment to students from all in our community is great. Thank you.

As we complete this school year, plans are underway for the 2016/2017 school year. If you have a child or know of a child that will be 5 by September 1, 2016, please call Highland (815)645-2230 X2100 to register for school. Call (815)234-2722) for pre-school screenings for children turning 3 or 4.

Monroe Center School

Parents and Guardians,

It's hard to believe that we are entering the last seven weeks of the school year! It's been a busy year here at Monroe Center, and as we barrel towards the end of the year, it doesn't appear to be slowing down at all. I'm very proud of our students and staff for the hard work they have put into this school year. I hope everyone keeps up the good work as we move toward May 19th.

Teachers and students are working on completing the necessary lessons to better prepare for the transition to the next grade. During the second semester, teachers have been selecting student work for display on the Principal's Pride bulletin board. Selection of student work is based off of growth, effort, etc. You can find this bulletin board right outside of the main office. Students are recognized through morning announcements.

As a reminder, teachers and staff continue to focus on the following School Improvement Goals:

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!!

By the end of 2015-2016 school year, 65% of Monroe Center students will meet their individual goals in Aimsweb RCBM and ELA Pre/Post assessments, as well as increase their STAR Grade Equivalent score by a full year (1.0).

By the end of 2015-2016 school year, 65% of Monroe Center students will meet their individual goals in Aimsweb, MCap and MComp.

Below you will find important dates to be aware of as we finish the school year.

- April 15th - Early Release at 11:10 am
 - April 28th - Board of Education Meeting at 7:00 pm
 - May 12th Junior High Band Information Night 5:00 pm
- May 18th - Field Day
 - May 19th - Last Day of School

Meridian Junior High

As we enter the home stretch of the 2015-2016 school year, we need to pause and celebrate! Let's start with our academic accomplishments from 3rd quarter. We congratulate 62 students for making the A Honor Roll, and 127 student for making the A/B Honor Roll! We also have some Winter Sports Celebrations. Over 100 students participated in wrestling, girls basketball, boys basketball and cheerleading this winter. Coach Zambrovitz had two big basketball seasons, winning championships in both 7th grade boys and 7th grade girls basketball! Congratulations to Coach Z and his teams!

As a staff, we continue to focus on Writing as a School Improvement Goal. Remember, we chose to focus on improving student writing when we analyzed some standardized test data. This test data showed us that only 19% of our students were considered to be proficient in the area of writing. During the 15-16 school year we have been designing a school wide writing rubric to be used in all of the classes. We are hoping with this writing rubric, the staff will be able to reinforce the skills we feel are important in creating proficient writers.



We know that academics are important here at MJHS, but we also know that we are responsible for supporting our students with their social emotional well-being. During the last quarter we focused on inspiring our students to become better leaders by providing some positive examples during assemblies. Ethan Menges was invited to inspire our students with his story. Ethan graduated from Genoa-Kingston and Northwestern University. He suffered a horrific illness which caused all four of his limbs to be amputated. You can see his story at: <http://wgntv.com/2015/12/17/mans-incredible-story-of-surviving-infection-that-left-him-quadruple-amputee/> Ethan is now at MJHS two days a week tutoring our students in math. And remember, there is morning tutoring with SVHS students on Wednesday and Friday mornings!

Important Upcoming Dates

- April 12.....Parcc Testing Begins
- April 15.....Early Dismissal
- April 27.....Choir Concert
- April 28.....Band Concert
- May 2.....Art History Fair
- May 19.....Last Day of School/8th Grade Promotion Ceremony
- May 21.....PTO Sponsored 8th Grade Banquet/Dance

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

The 2015-2016 school year has been challenging for our students, parents, faculty, staff, and community. SVHS is thankful for the tremendous support and encouragement provided by our Meridian District Counseling Team, our community, and the schools and organizations in our surrounding communities. The social and emotional well being of all stakeholders is important to us, so we will continue to provide outstanding support while seeking the very best resources and programs to serve our students well.

As we near the end of our first school year with a Community Service Hours expectation for all students, we are pleased to share that more than twenty percent of our high school students have met or exceeded the expectation for service; however, we would like to encourage all of our students to make community service a priority in their lives. If your student has completed any service hours beginning June 1, 2015, please remind them to stop by our Counseling Department to complete a one-page **Service Hours Form**, or they can complete the form on-line by visiting the "Quick Links" tab on our SVHS website at www.stillmanvalleyhigh.org. **Students must turn in a Service Hours Form to our SVHS Counseling Department by May 1, 2016 for all service hours completed between June 1, 2015 and April 30, 2016.** If you or your child would like to learn more about community service opportunities in our area, please contact Ms. Sarah Dyal, SVHS Counseling Department Administrative Assistant, to review a list of organizations and contact information.

Defining what it means for our students to be **College and Career Ready** is essential in our pursuit of excellence at SVHS. Our goal is to increase by ten percent or more the number of students determined to be College & Career Ready as defined by SVHS based on the attainment of Latin Honors criteria, successful Military enlistment, Illinois State Scholar recognition, National Merit recognition, earned certifications, successful Dual Credit completion, benchmark attainment on all applicable PARCC or SAT assessments, and/or benchmark attainment on all four ACT components. These areas of focus will enable all stakeholders to clearly articulate what it means to be College and Career Ready.

Important Dates – End of the School Year

- April 15 – FFA Banquet at 6:00 PM (SVHS Multi-Purpose Room)
- April 23 – Prom Grand March at 4:00 PM (Auxiliary Gym) & 6:00 PM (Prairie Street Banquet Facility)
- April 27 – National Honor Society Blood Drive from 1:00 – 7:00 PM (Auxiliary Hallway)
- April 27 – SVHS Spring Chorus Concert at 8:00 PM (Auxiliary Gym)
- April 28 – SVHS Spring Band Concert at 7:30 PM (Main Gym)
- April 29 – May Day Celebration at 7:00 PM (Main Gym)
- May 2 – Academic Awards Banquet at 6:00 PM (Multi-Purpose Room & Main Gym)
- May 10 & 11 – Seniors' Final Exams
- May 13 – Graduation Practice for the Class of 2016 at 7:20 AM (Multi-Purpose Room & Main Gym)
- May 13 – Senior Class Trip – Leave SVHS at 9:30 AM
- May 14 – SVHS Baccalaureate at 4:00 PM (Main Gym)
- May 15 – SVHS Graduation Ceremony at 2:00 PM (Main Gym)
- May 16 - 19 – SVHS Final Exams (Freshmen, Sophomores & Juniors)
- May 19 – Last Day of School – Early Release at SVHS at 11:12 AM (Buses at normal times)

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

Sincerely,

Mrs. Leslie Showers
Principal

News and Notes from Transportation

Our goal is to continue to have safe and 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.

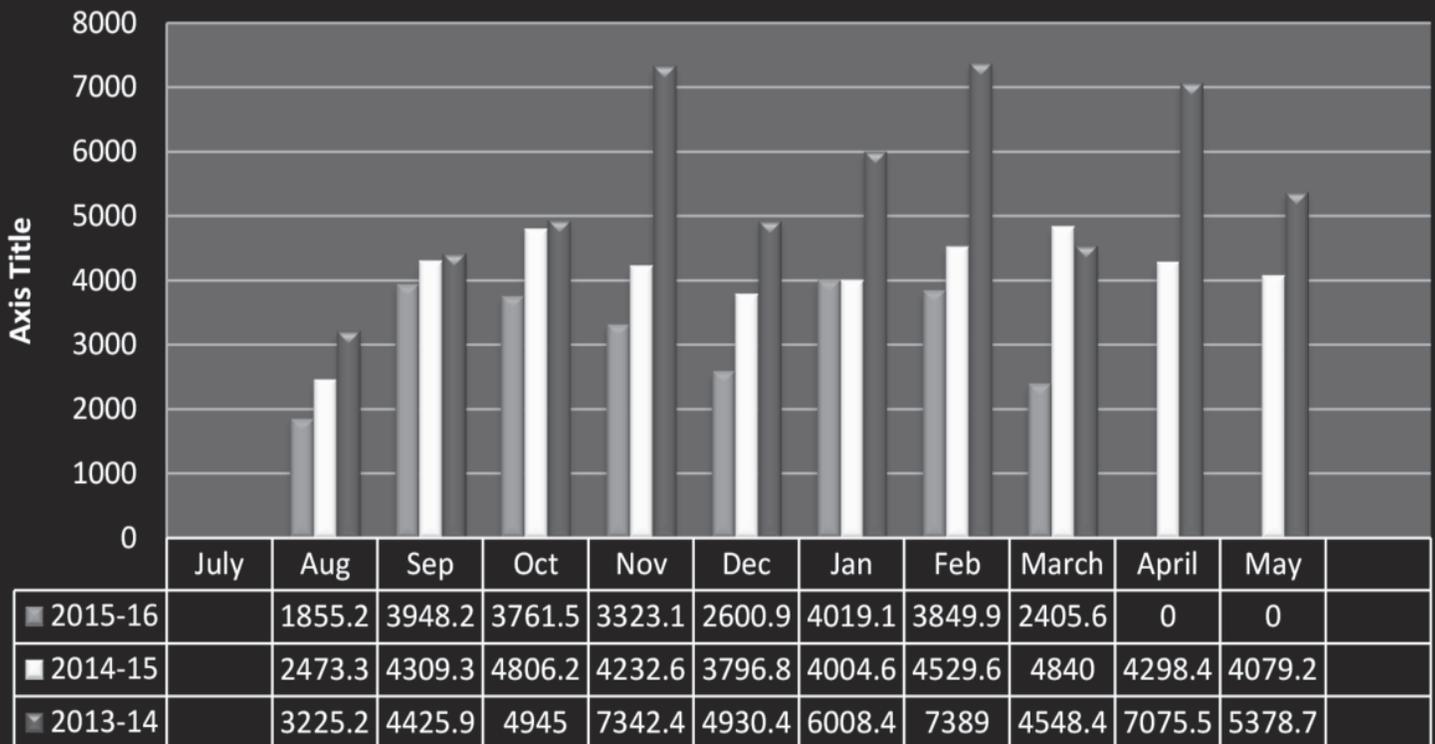
*Davis Junction students (particularly Ogle Crossings and Harvest Glenn students and parents) please keep in mind that it will be approximately 8 minutes for a bus to go around a different direction to get into your subdivisions to start the pick up or drop off process when stopped by a train. We thank you for your patience with this, as you know all too well how much of an inconvenience these trains can be.

*If your student will be going home with another student after school, please be sure to write a note to inform the bus driver. This will only be permitted as long as the space on the bus allows.

*MCUSD continues to welcome applicants who would like to join our team. The district provides all necessary training. Join us in this very rewarding part-time job.

- ❖ Below is our Monthly Fuel Comparison chart for the past three school years. We are excited to see the savings not only from the two tier busing to the single tier busing, but also from the old buses to the new buses. This savings has been very significant.

Monthly Fuel gallon Comparison



Local Postal Customer

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Meridian CUSD223

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

- **Vision**
 - *Small Town Values, World-Class Results*

- **Strategic Goals**
 - **Academic Achievement**
 - Our mission will be achieved through developing a comprehensive, integrated curriculum organized around instructional best practices and implemented by a highly trained staff.
 - **Financial Responsibility**
 - Our mission will be achieved by developing sound budget and accountability processes and procedures.
 - **Organizational Effectiveness**
 - Our mission will be achieved by developing processes and procedures to increase quality while decreasing costs.
 - **District Culture**
 - Our mission will be achieved by developing a district culture that encourages collaborative participation among all stakeholders while supporting individual differences and preparing students to be ready for life.

- **Core Values**
 - We demonstrate **Integrity** through:
 - Effective Communication
 - Organizational Trust
 - Rigorous Evaluation
 - Accountability
 - Consistency
 - We demonstrate **Innovation** through:
 - Commitment
 - Comprehensive Curriculum
 - 21st Century Schools
 - We demonstrate **Excellence** through:
 - High Expectations
 - Visionary Lead
 - Best Practices
 - Quality Personnel