

The John Wood Parent Newsletter



Principal Petralia's Page

by Mrs. Petralia

Dear John Wood Families,

Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year! We have some exciting new people at John Wood this year! Mrs. Fairbairn took a position in another district, opening up our Dean and Art positions. I stole Mrs. Rassbach for our Dean of Students position from Salk Elementary. Mrs. Matthews, one of our first grade teachers, took Mrs. Rassbach's Instructional Coach position at Salk.

Mrs. Lattimer is our new Art teacher. She previously taught Art in Cicero, IL and then was a home engineer. Mr. Battista, our PE teacher, resigned in the middle of the summer. Our new PE teacher, Mr. Butler, comes with experience in charter schools in Gary. Mrs. Timmerman retired this summer and Mr. Colakovic has taken her place, with over 12 years of experience teaching music in Chicago Public Schools. Miss Rodriguez will be our new Interventionist. She has taught ballroom and latin dance for years and is leaving a position at a Crisis center in Gary.

Please make sure to touch base with your child's teacher whenever you have questions or concerns. Our teachers create meaningful relationships with our students and it is important for you to have a relationship with the teacher, too. Please communicate with your child's teacher if you have questions, something has changed at home, or you need clarification on something.

Have a great month!

Dean of Students

by Mrs. Rassbach

Hello John Wood Parents,

My name is Mrs. Tamara Rassbach and I am the Dean of Students this year at John Wood Elementary. I am super excited to get to know the students at John Wood. I am trying to learn a lot of new names and faces and am eager to have those down by the end of the year.

Prior to becoming the Dean, I was one of the instructional coaches for the Merrillville School district for the last two years, and before that taught 2nd grade at Iddings Elementary for 3 years. Prior to joining the staff at Merrillville I taught in another district for 12 years.

I am looking forward to the excitement and great students and staff here at John Wood!

Early Dismissal

Every Thursday throughout the school year students will be dismissed one hour early at 1:15 p.m. so that the teachers can meet for Professional Development.

September 2021

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John Wood Elementary School
6100 E. 73rd Ave.
Merrillville, Indiana 46410
(219) 650-5305
<https://www.mvsc.k12.in.us/>

New Staff Members

We have several new staff members in our building this year. Welcome to the John Wood Family!

Dean of Students

Mrs. Rassbach
(replacing Mrs. J Fairbairn)

1st Grade

Ms. Wiley (replacing Mrs. Matthews)

Art

Mrs. Lattimer
(replacing Mrs. J Fairbairn)

Music

Mr. Colakovic
(replacing Mrs. Timmerman-retired)

PE

Mr. Butler (replacing Mr. Battista)

Kitchen Manager

Mrs. Barandela
(replacing Mrs. Valant-retired)

ED para

Ms. Pozniak
(replacing Miss Fleming)

ECD Speech

Ms. O'Brien (replacing
Mrs. Cartee and Mrs. Belko)

Interventionist

Ms. Rodriguez (new position)

Social Worker Intern

Miss Leary

Coming soon:

Building Sub

Mrs. Carpenter (new position)
ECD Teacher (Mornings only)
Ms. Mathews-"Miss Trish" (replacing
Mrs. Straley-"Miss Kim")

A Plea to Parents from All Teachers

More and more children are coming to school with their shoes untied or carelessly tied and we are continually surprised at how many students don't know how to tie their shoes. Tying shoes is a skill that is no longer taught in kindergarten and needs to be taught at home.

Practice, practice, practice tying shoes. Please assist your child in making sure they tie their shoes every day! A double knot helps assure the shoe stays tied throughout the day. Look on YouTube for fun videos that teach how to tie your shoes.

Skyward Family Access

Skyward is a student information system that Merrillville uses to store and share information. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this beneficial tool of communication. By logging onto your child's account, you will have access to a wealth of information. Grades, attendance, discipline, and test scores are among some of the information available. You can also use this system to add money to your child's lunch account and pay book rental.

Important Information

Sometimes things happen unexpectedly and it may be necessary to have an unscheduled school closing. When we do, it is vital that we have your current phone number on file in our office. We have an automated system that is used when we need to notify you quickly with important information. If we have an incorrect or disconnected number, you may not get the notice. Please note, you will only receive one call from the automated system, and that call will only go to the number you designated as your "home" number. **Please do not change your "home" number in the Skyward system to "unlisted" or "confidential" or block our school phone number or you will not receive important notifications.**

Thank You, Home Depot!

A huge "Thank You" goes out to the Home Depot store on Rt. 30. They generously donated a wealth of PPE supplies including kid-sized masks, gallon jugs of hand sanitizer, sanitizer wipes, and latex gloves.

Remember that all toys as well as personal tablets, iWatches, cell phones, and electronic gaming devices are prohibited at school. In addition to being a distraction from learning, many of these items are expensive and we do not want them lost, broken, or stolen.

We are not responsible for lost or stolen items. If a child MUST bring a cell phone, it MUST remain in the backpack and turned off during the school day.

Occasionally teachers may allow a stuffed toy or will allow students to bring a toy from home as a special reward. They will notify you if this is the case.

Upcoming Events

Every Thursday

Buddy Blue Day

Wear blue on this day to remind you to be a buddy! Everyone needs a buddy!

Every Thursday

Early Dismissal

1:15 p.m.

Please plan for your child to be home approximately one hour earlier on this day.

Every Friday

Pirate Pride Day

Wear John Wood spirit wear, Merrillville spirit wear, or even just purple to show support for our school community! Everyone who wears purple will have their name in a weekly drawing. One winner will be pulled from each grade level to win a small prize.

September 15

PTO Meeting

6:00 p.m.

This meeting will be virtual. Watch your email for the link to join the meeting. We will be discussing plans for the upcoming year.

September 20-30

Fall Fundraiser

A packet with information will come home with all students.

September 24

End of the 1st grading period

Please check your child's grades online at any time through our Skyward system.

September 28

Picture Day

SMILE! All students will have their picture taken on this day. Information was sent home with your child about how to order packages.

October 9

MEF Walk-a-Thon

Merrillville High School, 8:00 a.m.

See the article on page 8 for more information about this Merrillville Education Foundation fundraiser.

October 22-25

No School – Fall Break

No school for all students.

October 28

Trunk or Treat

MHS, 5:30-7:00 p.m.

More information will come home as we near this date.

Medications at School Reminder

Mrs. Brack, RN
John Wood School Nurse

Just a reminder regarding medication at school:

Only those medications that are necessary to maintain the child in school and those ordered by a physician during school hours will be administered.

1. A physician's written order and signed parent note are required for any medication (prescription or over-the-counter) that is kept at school or carried by the student. Medication forms are available in the nurse's office and on the MCSC website. Notes written by the physician on a script pad are also accepted.
2. All medications must be brought to the nurse's office by the parent. No student should have medication (including cough drops) in his/her possession, unless the physician has ordered the medication to be carried by the student.
3. Prescription medication must be in the original prescription bottle, labeled with:
 - Student's Name
 - Name of Medication
 - Correct Dosage
 - Time to be given
4. Over-the-counter medication must be:
 - In the original bottle
 - Labeled with the student's name
5. A parent note must be sent to the nurse in the event a medication is discontinued at school before its expected time.
- 6. Medication orders must be renewed every school year.**
7. According to state law, medication received at school in grades K-8 cannot be sent home with the student.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Kindergarten and 1st Grade Request

Occasionally our young students have "accidents". We try to provide clean, dry clothing for the child so that he/she can get back to class quickly. Unfortunately, our supply of "spare" clothing is limited.

Please consider sending a complete change of clothing (including underwear) for your child in a labeled gallon-sized Ziploc bag. The nurse will store it in her office in case your child needs a change. Anything that does not get used will be sent home at the end of the school year.

When selecting clothing for young children to wear to school, please be mindful of buttons or buckles that are sometimes difficult for little fingers to undo. Many "accidents" result from the child not being able to undo their clothing quickly enough.

Coats for Kids (and families)

Each year the Merrillville schools participate in a community-wide effort to provide coats for people facing economic hardship.

As you begin to put away summer clothing and bring out cool-weather clothing, keep this project in mind. If you find out-grown winter coats that are still in good condition, consider saving them for our collection in October. You don't even need to wash them. They have a team of volunteers who are willing to clean all the coats before the give-away in November.

Information will be sent home soon with more information about this community service project.

Nurse Julie's Office

Mrs. Brack, RN
John Wood School Nurse

Welcome to a new school year at John Wood Elementary.

I know this school year is going to be another year of challenges, but I want you to reassure you that my role as your school nurse is to keep your children healthy and safe. There is a Merrillville School Nurse webpage on the MCSC website where you will find helpful information on COVID-19, policies, immunization requirements, and links to our health forms. It can be found on the District website under Administration.

According to Indiana State law (I.C. 20-34-4-2) all students need to be current on their immunizations or they will be excluded from school. If your child still needs immunizations, now is the time to call your physician, North Shore Health Center (219-763-8112) or the Lake County Health Department (219-755-3658) to get these required immunizations. The exclusion deadline is **Saturday, September 18th**.

It is also very important to call me if your child has any ongoing health concerns or needs so that we can keep the communication open for the benefit of your child's health and educational needs.

It is essential to keep your child home if he/she has a fever of 100° or above or has symptoms of illness. Your child should not return to school until his/her temperature has been below 100° for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. If your child has symptoms of influenza or COVID, please contact your health care provider.

Remember, I am here for you and to support your child's health and educational needs. Let's work together as a community to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and continue safe health practices by wearing masks correctly, hand washing, social distancing and staying home when ill.

If you have any questions or concerns please call me at: 219-756-5745 or email me at:

jbrack@mvschool.k12.in.us

Emails and Robocalls

In an effort to reduce paper and touch points, we will send home some notifications by email rather than a paper copy. These may include reminders, virtual PTO meeting links, and this monthly newsletter. Please make sure that a current and correct email address is listed in Skyward so you will receive these notifications.

Occasionally we will send robocalls to the parents. We try to use the robocall only for vital information that we feel you need to know. Please don't block the school's number or you may miss out on important information.

Reminder

Students received a purple folder filled with information either at the "Meet the Teacher" event or on the first day of school. There were a few items in the folder that need to be filled out and returned ASAP. If you have misplaced these, extras are available from your child's teacher or the school office.

Please send in the following ASAP:

- Enrollment Card
- Yellow Emergency School Closing – This info will be used in the event that there is an emergency closing of the building **after** school has already started (deteriorating weather, power failure, loss of water, etc)
- Attendance Policy/Letter from Merrillville Town Court

Other items that you may want to send:

- Background Check – This is required if you plan to chaperone a field trip or help in a classroom.
- Free/Reduced Lunch/Textbook Assistance form – Even though lunch is currently free for students, this will still help with book rental and may qualify you for other programs.

Request from Playground Aides/ Lost and Found

We feel that it is important for students to have time to be able to go outside and get fresh air and have some fun each day. However, when students are not dressed appropriately for the weather, many times they end up sitting inside while their friends are outside playing.

Before you know it, we will begin having colder weather conditions. Remember that students go outside for recess whenever the actual temperature and the Real Feel is at least 15°F or higher and the playground is in suitable condition.

Students will need to have a warm coat, gloves/mittens, scarf, and hat/hood. If you have difficulty obtaining any of these items, feel free to contact our social worker and she can assist you.

Sometimes it is chilly in the morning as the children come to school, but warms up during the day. On these days it is common for the children to take off items and forget about them while they are on the playground.

We have a lost and found in the cafeteria, however we are asking you to PLEASE write your child's name inside any article of clothing that might be taken off during the day. Even if you only have a first name or initials written on the label or tag inside the item, our aides can many times do "detective work" and find the owner.

We know that jackets and other outerwear can be expensive to replace and with a little assistance from you, we would like to make sure that these items go home with their original owner.

Student Council

Miss Jongsma, Miss Vlassopoulos

A new student council has been selected for the 2021-2022 school year. The student council has many responsibilities throughout the school year. Normally, students are involved in a variety of service activities such as serving as greeters at some events, organizing collections for Riley Hospital and other causes, sponsoring Food Drives, assisting with Red Ribbon Week and Spirit Days, and helping decorate the school for festivities and events.

This year's student council members are:

Miss Jongsma

Yuleimi Barajas
D'Adansi Bush
Makayla Denson
Aylin Gomez
Kaleb Jefferies
Jaylon King
Tori Muiser
Xander Theodorakos

Miss Vlassopoulos

Jimmy Abiona
Amy Avila
Savannah Cabrera
Mannix Gannaban
Anastasia Gonzalez
Tamera Green
Saiyah Scott
Kaylee Shooltz
Atlas Theodorakos
Christian Varner-Kerney

Masks

Masks are currently required in the building. Please make sure your child has a clean, well-fitting mask every day.

Consider putting an extra mask (or two) in your child's backpack. Sometimes the elastic breaks or gets stretched out, milk gets spilled on the mask during lunch, or it gets lost on the playground. Having a spare mask will allow your child to be able quickly rejoin their classmates.

Important Reminder Regarding Parent Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

Our arrival and dismissal procedures have changed. Please use the following procedures for arrival and dismissal at school if your child is a car rider. We want to make sure that everyone is safe and things go smoothly and efficiently.

ECD ONLY

Both A.M. and PM Arrival – Please pull into the square parking lot on the southeast corner of the building. **DO NOT PULL INTO THE CIRCLE DRIVE!** Please park in the first row next to Entrance B. Stay in your car until a staff member arrives to take your child.

Both A.M. and P.M. Dismissal – Park in the first row of spaces in the southeast parking lot next to Entrance B. A staff member will bring your child out to you. You will need to put your child in the vehicle.

All K-4

- All car riders are to be dropped off and/or picked up at Entrance F on the east side of the building.
- To avoid blocking traffic, please do not make a left into the school lot when approaching from the west. Instead, go past the school, pull into the church parking lot, and approach the school from the east.
- **Driver must remain in the vehicle at all times.**
- Please pull all the way up to the yellow painted line. Children must get out and in the car on the passenger side only.
- Do not double-up the row. Children should not cut through any cars.
- If for any reason you need to come into the building, you must park in the southeast parking lot and come in to the office through Entrance A. Parents will not be allowed to enter the building through the student entrance for any reason.
- Be aware of the staff member directing traffic.
- **The circle drive in front of the building is for bus use only during drop-off and pick-up times. No vehicles are allowed in this area from 7:30-7:55 a.m. and from 1:45-2:30 p.m.**

Arrival

- Doors are locked until 7:35 a.m. **Please do NOT drop off any student before that time.**
- Students not in the building before the 7:55 a.m. bell will be marked tardy. After 7:55, parents need to pull around to Entrance A, walk the student(s) into the building, and sign them in at the office.

Dismissal

- Your assigned pick-up number should be displayed where the staff can easily see it from the building/sidewalk. A staff member will dismiss each child once they check off his/her name from the list. Each car rider goes through two checkpoints before leaving the building.
- Gold Notes are necessary if there is a change from the regular dismissal procedure.
- All dismissal changes should be made before 1:00 p.m. (noon on Thursdays).
- If you do not have your pick-up number, you will need to park in the southeast parking lot, come into the school, and show your ID. Be aware, the office may not assist you until after the buses have been loaded and dismissed.
- Once the car rider line has ended and the buses have left the front of the building, remaining students will be brought to the office and you will need to pick them up there. You will need to come inside and show your ID.

School bus transportation is available for students. If you need more information about this service, please call the office at 219-650-5305 or the Transportation Department at 219-650-5311.

Car Rider Number Suggestions

Here are just a few helpful suggestions:

- Put your number in a plastic page protector to keep it from getting mangled. You can sometimes find small packages of page protectors at the dollar store!
- We've seen some who clip the number to the passenger visor using binder clips, then just flip it down to show it.
- We've also seen some who use a plastic pant/skirt hanger (the kind with clips) to hang the number from the rear view mirror.
- We have put reminders on the back of the number so if you share the extra number with grandma, babysitter, etc., they have all the info they need.

Transportation

Please remember that school dismisses at 2:15 (1:15 Thursdays). Please make sure you make arrangements to pick your child up **on time** and/or be home to receive your child. Additionally, please note that we cannot make any changes to transportation after 1:00 (noon on Thursdays). Thank you!

Attendance Policy

The Town of Merrillville has an ordinance affirming parental responsibility for school attendance of minor children. Parents may be held criminally responsible for their child not attending school. The Merrillville Town Court will attempt to provide an opportunity to address problems before criminal charges are filed. The school corporation has outlined a process for addressing students that have excessive absences and will now include interactions with Merrillville Town Court. The parent **MUST** make an appearance in court. The judge will advise of the process for answering the charge and correcting the problem. This may include a fine, court cost, community service, parenting classes or some other provision. If a second referral is made, criminal charges will be filed.

Attendance is essential to the success of our students. When a student misses class time, they miss important instruction time that cannot be made up.

Attendance "Beary" Award

Each month we have a fun monthly reward for the class with the best attendance. The class with the highest percentage of attendance for the month receives the "Beary" Attendance Trophy at our monthly Pirate Power meeting.

Remember, attendance is critical to learning. Make sure your child is well rested and arrives at school on time every day!

Emergency Communications

In cases of inclement weather or other emergency situations, there may be times when school may be cancelled or delayed. In an effort to make sure that parents are notified, there are many ways we try to make sure you are informed.

- Information may be broadcast over various Northwest Indiana and Chicago television and radio stations.
- Delays and closings will be posted on the Merrillville Community School Corporation website at www.mvsc.k12.in.us.
- You should receive an automated call to your primary phone number. **Please do not go into Skyward and change your number to "unlisted" or you will not receive these important calls.**
- You may also choose to receive an email notification by registering with an outside service. Links for this service are available at the MCSC website listed above.

To read an explanation about how 2-hour delays and school closings are decided, go to the MCSC website listed above. Click on the "Parents" tab on the right, then "Emergency School Closing Information".

Informative Notes

When writing notes to either the teacher or the office, please make sure you include the following information:

- ✓ Date note is written
- ✓ Teacher's name
- ✓ Student's name (first and last)
- ✓ Date/day you are writing about
- ✓ Reason
- ✓ Signature

Remember that Gold Notes must be sent in to change the way a child is going home or for an early pickup.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Attendance

It is important to your child's education that he/she attends school every day. If your child will be absent, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the school. If your child will be absent, you must call 650-5305 then press 2 by 9 a.m.

Gold Note Dismissal Reminder

A **signed and dated "Gold Note"** is needed from the parent if:

- your child is going anywhere other than their regular after-school destination.
- your child is going home with another student. (We will also need a note from that parent).
- your child will be picked up instead of riding the bus.

Remember that transportation changes cannot be made after 1:00. Things get hectic at the end of the day and verbal messages are not always received on short notice.

If there is no note, students will go home as usual.

Birthday Treats

The safety of our children is of the utmost importance. We have many students with a wide range of food allergies. In order to keep all of our students safe, the Merrillville Elementary Schools now enforces a more restrictive birthday treat policy. First of all, we would prefer non-food items be sent to celebrate your child's birthday. These items could include pencils, stickers, erasers, or even donate a favorite book to our school library in honor of your child's birthday!

However, if you choose to send a food treat for your child's birthday, the treats must be pre-packaged, store bought, individually wrapped and include a list of ingredients on the package. Suggestions of acceptable items would include Little Debbie treats, individual small bags of chips or fruit snacks, or small candy bars.

Store bought cupcakes, cakes, cookies, and homemade food items are NOT ALLOWED. These are not individually wrapped and labeled. **Treats that do not follow our guidelines will not be passed out and will be sent back home.**

We appreciate your support and understanding as we continue to reflect on how to provide all students with a safe learning environment.

Did you know that birthday treats are now available through our Food Service Department? Ordering birthday treats for your child's class is easier than ever!

While you can still call the Food Service Department to order your treats (219-650-5300, ext. 6008), you can also now visit the school corporation website at www.mvsc.k12.in.us and order treats at any time of day, seven days a week!

Simply go to the "PARENTS" tab on the right-hand side and select "FOOD SERVICE & MENUS". The "PIRATES BIRTHDAY TREATS" link is on the left side.

The order must be placed at least two weeks in advance, and treats must be paid in advance prior to delivery to the classroom. Please make sure to have funds in your child's Skyward account at least two days prior to the delivery date.

All treats are compliant with USDA smart snack guidelines.

Please do **NOT** have balloons or flowers delivered for students. These will remain in the office and an adult will need to come pick them up.

Book Rental

All book rental was due on the first day of school. Credit/Debit card payments can be made online through Skyward. Check/Money order payments can be made in our school office. **Checks/ Money orders must be made out to "John Wood School" and must include your driver's license number on the check.** We do not have a formal payment plan, but partial payments are acceptable until the obligation is met.

Any balance remaining after the end of the first trimester (November 12th) will be turned over for collection.

ECD Fees - \$75
Kindergarten - \$66.13
1st Grade - \$57.81
2nd Grade - \$57.51
3rd Grade - \$59.11
4th Grade - \$64.75

Thank you to all who have already paid their child's book rental.

Free and Reduced Program

If you were on the free and reduced program in 2020-2021, please be aware that you need to reapply every year. The 2020-2021 applications will expire on **Wednesday, September 29th.**

Even though meals are still free for all students this year, this program also assists with textbook rental fees and other benefits that may be offered through state or federal programs, like P-EBT and the broadband benefit.

If you are still in need of this service, make sure to:

- Apply online using Skyward **or**
- Download the application from the MCSC website or pick one up from our school office to complete and drop off or mail to Central Office.

The Latest Scoop from the Kitchen

Due to a government grant, all meals for students will continue to be free of charge during the 2021-2022 school year. However, students who bring their own lunch will now be charged if they choose to purchase a milk. Please make sure funds are available on your child's account, as we are continuing to run a cashless operation due to the pandemic. You can place money on your child's account by using a credit or debit card in Skyward or by bringing a personal check to your school's office.

To deposit funds online:

- * Log into Skyward Family Access
- * On the left side, click on Food Service
- * Click on Make a Payment
- * You will be directed to the web store to make a deposit.

There is a fee of \$1.50 for depositing funds no matter how big or small or for one child or as many as you have.

Monthly Lunch Menus and the rotating Breakfast Menu can be viewed on the Food Service website at: <https://www.mvsc.k12.in.us/Administration2/foodservices>

If you have any questions, please call the Food Service Department at 219-650-5300.

USDA Regulations

Due to USDA and Wellness regulations, NO restaurant foods may be brought into the school for breakfast or lunch.

Pirate Pride Days

In an effort to promote pride in our school community, we encourage students to wear purple on Fridays.

Students are encouraged to wear ANYTHING "John Wood" (old Spirit Wear, Math Fact Shirts, etc) or "Merrillville" (Athletic Department Spirit Wear, Pop Warner shirts, etc) or even just purple.

Especially now, at the beginning of the school year, you may be able to find "Merrillville" t-shirts and sweatshirts at some of our local big box stores. Unfortunately, usually they are adult size, but it doesn't hurt to look!

John Wood School **BEST** Pledge

John Wood is the **BEST** of schools, Spell out **BEST** you'll know the rules,

First is **B**, that's the way.

Be responsible every day.

Next is **E**, that's correct.

Everyone deserves respect.

Third is **S**. This is cool.

Safety counts when you're at school.

Finally, it's letter **T**.

We will **T**alk appropriately.

PBIS

John Wood uses a curriculum program called **P**ositive **B**ehavior **I**nterventions and **S**upport Program or PBIS for short. PBIS is a school-wide systems approach to discipline that emphasizes prevention, instruction on social skills, and data-based decision making to both reduce problem behavior and improve academic performance.

We believe that schools are successful when they help children grow academically, emotionally, and socially. Therefore, we must create a safe and orderly environment so that all children can grow and learn. We want to create an atmosphere for learning by setting clear expectations and teaching the students about these expectations. We look at behavior data often and adjust the program to best fit our needs. There are positive reinforcements for appropriate behavior for individual students. Classroom and school-wide acknowledgements of accomplishments are also recognized.

There are several tools we use to help reinforce good behavior. The students may have heard the John Wood Pledge during the announcements each Friday. A copy of that pledge can be found on this page. On the last page of this newsletter is the MCSC Elementary Behavior Matrix. This shows you the actual expectations for various locations.

Students can earn Class Dojo Points. Students receive points from teachers and staff when they demonstrate good behavior. Different prizes are given for a certain number of points. Prizes may include small items, extra recess, first in line for lunch, homework passes, etc.

We urge you to discuss this program with your child. Please encourage them to follow the school rules, not only to earn points, but because it will make school more enjoyable and safe for them and all students. Help us motivate and reinforce the positive behavior your child is demonstrating at school. You may even want to use the same approach at home! Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Merrillville Education Foundation "Better Health, Better Minds" Walk-a-Thon

The Merrillville Education Foundation is a not-for-profit organization whose primary goal is supporting Merrillville schools in areas where public funds are not available. This is accomplished by providing grants. Twice a year, teachers can apply for grants. The MEF encourages teachers to look for educationally innovative ideas and creative opportunities for students. Since 2002, the MEF has awarded almost 450 grants totaling nearly \$400,000 impacting just under 125,000 Merrillville students in grades K-12. This cannot be accomplished without support from the public.

The Merrillville Education Foundation invites you to participate in their Annual MEF Walk-a-Thon fundraiser on Saturday, October 9, 2021! Participants in the "Better Health, Better Minds" event will be walking at Merrillville High School to raise funds for MEF teacher grants.

MEF Walk-a-Thon details:

- Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. and walking will begin at 9:00 a.m.
- Location of the walk will be at the MHS Soccer/Track & Field Area (east of the football stadium). In case of rain, the walk will relocate to the MHS Field House.
- Minimum participation donation is \$10 per walker for ages 5 and up.
- Every participant must submit a signed event disclaimer in order to walk in the event.
- Participants are asked to walk one mile, but can choose to walk more if they wish.
- T-shirts for ages 5 and older will be given to each participant who raises at least \$20 in sponsorship donations and submits the registration form and donations to our school's office by Thursday, September 23, 2021.
- Participants will receive one raffle ticket for a chance to win a door prize on the event day. The raffle ticket will be given during registration on Oct. 9th.
- If you raise \$100 or more, you are guaranteed a prize!
- The student who raises the most money will get first choice of the available prizes!
- This is a family-friendly event open to EVERYONE in the community. Please join us! However, if you are unable to participate, please consider making a donation to MEF.

More details are available on the MEF website at <https://merrillvilleeducationfoundation.org>.

PTO Update

The role of our PTO is to enhance the educational experiences of our children through the commitment of teachers and parents like you! With your continued help and support, we can continue to provide programs and activities for our children, as well as the materials and equipment to enhance our educational settings. All of the money we collect during the school year benefits our school and our children!

In the past, our PTO has used money from fundraisers to sponsor activities such as assemblies, field trips, 4th Grade Symphony, and classroom parties. The PTO also purchases books for the library and classrooms.

Did you know that the PTO also paid for all the purple folders that students brought home on the first day of school? They have also purchased a set of this year's Young Hoosier books for our school library.

The PTO also usually sponsors several family events throughout the school year. Some of the activities we've done in the past include BINGO night, Movie Night, VIP Event (Grandparents' Day), Valentine Dance, and Fun Fair. All these activities and events enrich our children's school experience, provide family entertainment, and promote friendship and a sense of community! However, these events were temporarily suspended for the last 18 months. We are hoping that we will be able to soon begin reintroducing some of these social activities.

Watch your emails for invitations to our PTO meetings where decisions are made, and check our PTO Facebook page for reminders and updates.

Fall Fundraiser

We are bringing back our annual Fall Fundraiser! Watch for packets to come home in the next few days with information. Remember to exercise safe selling practices. Sell only to family, friends, and neighbors you know. We DO NOT encourage students to sell door-to-door to strangers.

Box Tops/Coke Rewards

Box Tops for Education has changed the way we "clip" box tops. Almost all

products now have a "No More Clipping" logo. Those products need to have the receipt scanned using the Box Tops for Education app (free at Google Play or the Apple App Store). Receipts need to be scanned within 14 days of the date of purchase.

We earn 10¢ for each Box Top. But did you know that sometimes products offer MORE than 10¢? Did you know that there are frequent sweepstakes you can enter to earn Box Tops for our school? Did you know that if you purchase Box Top items online through Amazon or using a store online pickup service you can still submit those receipts? You can find all this information at

www.boxtops4education.com.

We are also still collecting Coke codes this year. These codes can be found inside Coke product caps and inside the tear-off flap on cardboard cases. We receive 5¢ for every cap, and more for 12-, 24-, and 36-count cases. You can also find codes on the plastic wrapper of Dasani Water cases. Look on the bottom of the shrink wrap for the black box next to the UPC. The code can be found on the reverse side of the black box. Participating Coke products can be found online at <https://us.coca-cola.com/participating-brands/>.

Participation in these two programs has drastically dropped during the last two years. Part of this is due to the students not being in the building and part of this is resistance to the change in the BTFE program. Participation in the Box Top program has gone from almost \$1000 per year to almost non-existent in our building. Because of this, we will not have any contests this year.

Apples for the Students/ Strack & Van Til's Receipts

We are once again participating in the Strack & Van Til fundraiser. This fundraiser will enable us to earn a variety of items for our school, from Apple computers and iPads to playground equipment! Last year we were able to get a substantial amount of new equipment for our PE department!

All you need to do is save ALL your receipts from ANY Strack & Van Til store. A drop box is available in the front lobby. You can also send the

receipts in with your child and the teacher will send them to the office.

Receipts must be dated September 1, 2021 or later. We will not get credit for any purchases of money orders, gift cards, lottery tickets, or alcohol and tobacco products.

This fundraiser will continue all year until March 1, 2022, so tell family, friends and neighbors to save their receipts for us too!

Pop Tab Collection

To many, a pop tab is just a piece of aluminum with one purpose – to open a can. But to the Ronald McDonald House of Indiana, the pop tab is a valuable resource. Why? Collected pop tabs are recycled, generating much-needed funds to support the Ronald McDonald House and the nearly 1,500 families they serve each year.

In the years since the program began over one billion pop tabs have been donated generating about \$500,000 in pop tab revenue for the House.

Funds received from the recycling of tabs usually adds up to between \$30,000 and \$50,000 annually. All this money goes to the operating expenses of the Ronald McDonald House of Indiana and can cover the cost of operating three rooms in the House for an entire year.

How can you help? John Wood School is now collecting pop tabs for Ronald McDonald House. Simply remove the pop tab from the aluminum can and put them in your favorite collection container. When you are ready to send them to school, just put them in a Ziploc-type bag and drop them off at the school office. There's no competition, no goal, no prizes...just the reward of doing a good deed. Each year we are able to donate about 8-10 pounds of pop tabs to Ronald McDonald House of Indiana!

Our PTO has a Facebook page!
Friend us at:

www.facebook.com/johnwood.pto

We try to use this page to pass along important reminders from the school and also to inform you of upcoming PTO activities.

Updates from the Staff

You already get regular updates in the form of notes and newsletters from your child's classroom teacher, but what about other staff members your child may see? In this section, you will get updates each trimester from various staff members in an effort to keep you informed about what is happening throughout the school.

The Art Loft

Mrs. Lattimer

Hello to the John Wood Elementary families! I'm Mrs. Daina Lattimer, the new art teacher at John Wood School. I have seen many of your children already and I can only say how wonderful they are! I'm impressed by their artwork skills already!

As for what the semester and year brings to the art class, well, it's very exciting! Each project, we will learn about an artist and an art technique. Some of the artwork will be showcased in the school halls. Soon after, your child will be able to help showcase their work in your home!

I am grateful for the chance to teach and learn with your child. We are going to make this year a great one!

The Fitness Forecast

Coach Butler

During PE this first trimester, 1st through 4th grades will be focusing on various movements and activities around soccer including learning the basics of dribbling across the gym and kicking through goals. Students will learn basic conditioning and strength activities centered around push-ups, squats, jumping jacks, and stretches. We will also continue to develop our social emotional skills in order to better handle conflict resolution.

Kindergarten students will focus on classroom procedures and continue to develop our ability to follow directions. We will also begin to play various team building games and continue to build our love for physical education.

Notes from the Music Room

Mr. Colakovic (Mr. C)

It has been a pleasure to serve the students of John Wood Elementary thus far. Yes, we have been getting a little silly in the first couple weeks with circle games and name games in kindergarten through second grade, and even to an extent in third and fourth grades. Part of that, since I am new, is so I can get to know our students in a relaxed setting where we all feel very little pressure, and simply to build trust.

In kindergarten and first grade, the singing games will certainly continue in hopes to create a foundation for understanding music literacy as we grow together. We'll also practice playing auxiliary percussion instruments with proper technique following along to the beat of a song.

In third and fourth grade, we will play less games, and focus more on reading and performing music. We tend to use songs as vehicles for understanding music literacy by exploring the rhythm, tonality, or expression of particular phrases.

In second, third, and fourth grades, students are getting the opportunity to groove together in various textures of percussion ensembles. One of the goals, or takeaways of this activity is to prepare students for reading some more advanced rhythms. Once they know how certain rhythms feel in context with a groove, then we can talk about reading those rhythms, what they look like on paper.

A word about TECHNOLOGY. When students get the email to ENROLL in the music Google Classroom, it should be as simple as the click of a button. Once they are enrolled, they will find the virtual music room. This will serve as an ever changing hub with links to materials, songs, assignments, and assessments. Most of the assignments and assessments will be Nearpods or Seesaw assignments, and most of the songs/materials will be in the form of Peardecks, or Google Slides.

The Book Nook

Mrs. Echols

Welcome Back to the Library Nook!

It's another great school year and we are off to learning and experiencing new adventures. We hope you were able to visit the Merrillville Library Book Mobile this summer. If you did, we hope you enjoyed the books you checked out to read and maybe even won some prizes.

The first week the students were in the library, the focus was on reviewing library rules and expectations and safety procedures such as fire drills, tornado drills, and lockdown drills. We also discussed the importance of taking care of the books checked out of the library and designating a home base as a reminder to return the book back to school. For example, returning the book to their book bag could be a reminder or placing the book on a shelf by the door could be a reminder too.

Week three, the students were happy to start checking out books. Reading builds imagination and some day may inspire a child to become an author of a famous book. Start a conversation by asking your child questions about the book they checked out from the John Wood Library and you'll discover that reading enhances their vocabulary and expands creativity.

Lastly, a QR Code has been provided for you to view this school year's 2021-2022 Young Hoosier books.



The Coaches' Corner

Ms. Copeland, Ms. Lavelle,
Mrs. Matthews, Miss Zorich

READING:

Hello and welcome back to school! Beginning next week your child will be learning about the MAIN IDEA of a reading. Please work on this at home by asking questions about the story and asking what the MAIN IDEA of the story is. REMEMBER: have your child read, read, and read again.

MATH:

Please practice with your child the math concept that is being taught and practiced on their device and other work. Also, practice math facts with your child. In doing so, this will aide them tremendously as math lessons continue.

Let's have a terrific start to school!

A Word from the Social Worker

Mrs. Robbins LCWS, LSSW

Hello John Wood Families.

We are off to another exciting year of learning and growing. We are currently learning about routines, structure, relationship building and school norms.

It is imperative that you help your child by making sure that they eat healthy meals, maintain a regular bedtime and reinforce school rules. This will ensure that what they are doing at home will help them to maintain emotional well being and a healthy attitude toward their peers, the adults and school in general.

Children will do well when they are able and need a good cheering section both at home and school. This reinforcement will help to lessen the stress of school work, peer pressure and acceptance.

As always, I am available to the students and families if there are physical, emotional or social needs. I may not always have the immediate answer, but I will do my best to find the resources and help any students or families in need.

219-650-5305 x 5435

drobbins@mvs.k12.in.us

Be Smart, Do Your Part

As students return to school, you may have heard about some school corporations where quarantine numbers are on the rise. There are several little things that YOU can do to help us keep our numbers low in Merrillville!

- **Wear your mask in public when you cannot socially distance.** Your mask should completely hide your nose, mouth, and chin.
- **Wash your hands frequently.** Use soap and water and wash thoroughly for at least 20 seconds.
- If you can't wash your hands, **use hand sanitizer.** You should use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
- When in public, try to **stay at least 6 feet away** from people who don't live with you. That's about two arm lengths.
- **When you cough or sneeze, make sure you cover your mouth** with a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Immediately follow with washing your hands or using sanitizer.
- **Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.** Avoid touching your mask once it is on.
- **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched areas in your home.
- **Wash your non-disposable mask frequently.**
- **If you are not feeling well, STAY HOME.**

Follow our MCSC superintendent and our John Wood principal on Twitter!

Both Mr. Brown, our MCSC superintendent, and Mrs. Petralia, our John Wood principal are on Twitter!

Follow Mr. Brown at @MerrillvilleSu3.

Follow Mrs. Petralia at @PrinPetralia.



Elementary Behavior Matrix

| | BE RESPECTFUL | BE RESPONSIBLE | BE SAFE |
|--|--|---|---|
| All settings (in and out of school) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use inside voices • Be courteous to all people in the building • Avoid any unnecessary contact with other people and their belongings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to practice social distancing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid physical contact • Walk to the right side of the halls • Take all emergency situations seriously • Wear face mask/shield is strongly recommended • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Wash/sanitize hand • Wash cloth face mask two to three times per week |
| Bus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the building turn off and store all electronic devices and phones in your backpack • Keep your hands, feet and objects to self • If it does not belong to you, do not touch it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to designated areas on time • Remain seated in assigned area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing a face mask/shield at all times is strongly recommended • Stay in assigned seat on bus • Wash/sanitize hands |
| Hallways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not share your cubbie/locker spaces with others • Handshakes and hugs may spread the bugs. Use non-contact greetings instead | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain recommended distance between you and other students in front and behind you | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk on right side of hall • Wear face mask/shield at all times • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Wash/sanitize hands |
| Classrooms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait to be acknowledged • Follow directions given by the adult in charge • If it does not belong to you, do not touch it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay on task and participate • Be prepared to learn • Remain in your assigned space and ask for permission before getting out of your seat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions • Sit in assigned areas • Wearing face mask/shield at all designated times is strongly recommended • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Practice good hygiene by washing and sanitizing hands • Do not share school supplies with others |
| Restrooms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the restroom for the purpose intended • Honor the privacy of others • Use supplies correctly • Avoid social gatherings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the restroom during the designated times • If restroom is full wait to go in • Only 2 or 3 at a time in the restroom depending on size of restroom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash hands with soap and water • Keep the restroom clean • Use hand sanitizer before and after entering bathroom • Wearing a face mask/shields is strongly recommended • Keep hands, feet and objects to self |
| Cafeteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk and move carefully • Clean eating area • Dispose of throw away bowls and trays in garbage • If it does not belong to you, do not touch it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice good table and line manners • Follow cafeteria supervisor's directions • Wait your turn in line | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain seated • Ask permissions before leaving the cafeteria • Put face mask/shield in a safe place and put on after eating. • Do not share food • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Practice good hygiene by washing and sanitizing your hands |
| Media Center | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat media materials with care • If it does not belong to you, do not touch it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return materials promptly or on time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use school approved computer programs and websites • Wait your turn • Wearing a face mask/shield is strongly recommended at all times • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Practice good hygiene by washing and sanitizing your hands |
| Recess/Playground | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain in designated play area • Wait your turn • Be a good sport if you win or lose • Use appropriate language • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Sanitizing your hands going to and from recess | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dress for the weather • Stop when you hear the whistle and line up right away in a single-file line • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Remain in designated play area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play safely by the rules of the game/activity • Wait your turn • Remain in your designated play area • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Sanitize your hands going to and from recess |
| Car Rider | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use quiet /inside voice • Follow all directions • Sit in designated spot • Keep hands, feet and objects to self | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen for your name or number • Take your things with you | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain seated in designated spot • Keep hands, feet and objects to self • Walk to your car |

If you have COVID symptoms- STAY HOME