



Pirate Pride

September 2022

www.mvsc.k12.in.us * 219-650-5300

The Newsletter of the Merrillville Community School Corporation

Candace Lillie

**Director of Student Services,
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**



Ms. Lillie is responsible for coordinating, supporting and growing diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives throughout the district such as S.T.A.N.D. (Socially Together and Naturally Diverse) Clubs, IMPACT Day and other student/staff programs.

She will represent the school corporation by serving on various district and community committees and organizations, such as the Urban League, NWI Civil Rights Organization and university diversity programs.

Ms. Lillie served as MHS assistant principal for six years and started with the school corporation 18 years ago as a classroom teacher. She holds a master's degree from Ball State University.

Christine Waugh, Ed.S.

**Director of Early Childhood
and Student Support Programs**



Mrs. Waugh transferred into this new position, where she is responsible for oversight and supervision of the pre-school program, high ability program, Title 1 program, and English Language Learner (ELL) Program.

Mrs. Waugh has been an administrator in the school corporation since 2013, most recently serving as assistant principal at Iddings Elementary School and coordinator of the corporation's preschool program.

She holds an education specialist degree from Indiana State University and is a graduate of Merrillville High School.

New faces New places!

Families may notice some leadership changes this year at the Merrillville Community School Corporation. Most of these changes involve familiar faces that have moved into new places; a couple of changes bring new faces into the Pirate Family.

"We are excited about these new appointments for the 2022-23 school year," said Superintendent Nick Brown. "We hope our new administrators enjoy their new roles in the school corporation."

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Sharon Igras

**John Wood Elementary
School Principal**

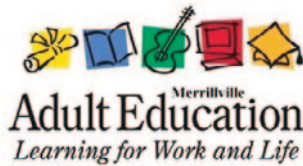


Mrs. Igras has been in education since 1990 and began her career in Merrillville as a math teacher in 2002.

She was an assistant principal at Pierce Middle School since 2013 and earned her master's degree from Ball State University.

Service helps adults earn their high school diplomas

The year 2022 could be your year for obtaining your high school equivalency credentials.



Merrillville Adult Education (MAE), located in Merrillville High School, can help do that by preparing individuals to complete the HiSET exam.

MAE's free preparation classes are designed for students to go from their current knowledge to a point where passing the HiSET the first time is a reasonable goal. Instruction is available Mondays through Thursdays. Preparation classes are not required prior to taking the HiSET.

Upcoming HiSET test dates include: Oct. 4 and 5, registration deadline Sept.

29; Oct. 18 and 19, registration deadline Oct. 13; Nov. 1 and 2, registration deadline Oct. 27; Nov. 15 and 16, registration deadline Nov. 10; Nov. 29 and 30, registration deadline Nov. 22; Dec. 13 and 14, registration deadline Dec. 8.

To register for a testing date or for more information, visit the Merrillville Community School Corporation website, www.mvsc.k12.in.us, or contact the Adult Education Office: sgreen@mvsc.k12.in.us or 219-650-5318.

¿Quieres aprender más inglés?

ایا تاسو غواړئ نور انگلیسي زده کړئ؟

Ви хочете вивчити більше англійської?

Adult English Language Classes
at Merrillville High School

Mondays & Wednesdays
6:00-9:00pm

Come join our brand new program!
For more information, please
call 219-650-5318 or email
rrodea@mvsc.k12.in.us

INDIANA ADULT EDUCATION

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

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SUPERINTENDENT

Nicholas G. Brown, Ed.S.

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of Pirate Pride. If you have story ideas, questions or comments, please contact the Corporation's Public Information Officer at mcscmedia@mvsc.k12.in.us or 219-650-5477.

2022-23 breakfast, lunch prices

Since the pandemic began in March 2020, all students have enjoyed free school meals due to universal meal waivers granted by the USDA; however, the USDA are not extending meal waivers into the 2022-23 school year.

The Merrillville Community School Corporation has begun charging for breakfasts and lunches

Please make sure your children have money in their Skyward accounts to pay for meals. For more information, contact Food Services, 219-650-5300.

2022-23 Meal Prices

Elementary K-6:
Breakfast \$1.70, Lunch \$2.70;

Middle School 7-8:
Breakfast \$1.70, Lunch \$2.80;

High School 9-12:
Breakfast \$1.70, Lunch \$2.90.

2021-22 applications for free/reduced lunch program expire September 28

Parents whose children are on the free and reduced lunch and textbook program can reapply to participate in the 2022-23 school.

Applications on file from the 2021-22 school year will expire Sept. 28.

Families who qualify can also take advantage of other benefits that may be offered by state or federal programs, like [P-EBT](#) and the [broadband benefit](#).

Parents can reapply using any of these convenient methods:

- Apply online using Skyward;
- Download an application from the website to complete and mail or bring it to the Central Office, 6701 Delaware St.
- Visit your schools or the corporation's central office during office hours to obtain a form to complete.

Schools change starts, dismissals, early releases

The national shortage of school bus drivers has hit home at Merrillville Community School Corporation.

“Throughout the 2021-22 school year, our human resource and transportation departments have worked to find solutions to this major issue,” Supt.

Nicholas G. Brown, Ed.S., said. “We have purchased local advertising, participated in job fairs, and increased the starting pay for bus drivers so we could attract additional drivers for the 2022-23 school year.”

Mr. Brown said instead of waiting and hoping the corporation will hire more bus drivers by the beginning of the school year, schools’ start and dismissal times were changed in order to safely accommodate the number of children who require school transportation.

At its June 21 meeting, the Merrillville Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees approved the new schedule, highlighted below.

In addition, the school corporation will discontinue early release Thursdays

for teacher professional development. Instead, on the second Tuesday of each month (except one), students will attend school in the morning and be dismissed early to return home for e-learning. Students will receive lunch before they leave school.

For more information, parents and guardians can contact the school corporation’s central office, 219-650-5300, or check the website for updates.

2022-23 Start, Dismissal, Early Release Times

MERRILLVILLE HIGH & PIERCE MIDDLE SCHOOLS

**Regular
Schedule Start**
7:30 a.m.

Dismissal
2:15 p.m.

**Monthly Tuesday
Early Dismissal Start**
7:30 a.m.

Dismissal
11:30 a.m.

**Two-Hour
Delay Start**
9:30 a.m.

Dismissal
2:15 p.m.

MERRILLVILLE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

**Regular
Schedule Start**
9:15 a.m.

Dismissal
3:45 p.m.

**Monthly Tuesday
Early Dismissal Start**
9:15 a.m.

Dismissal
1:25 p.m.

**Two-Hour
Delay Start**
11:15 a.m.

Dismissal
3:45 p.m.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (Fieler, Iddings, Miller, Salk, Wood)

**Regular
Schedule Start**
8:25 a.m.

Dismissal
3:05 p.m.

**Monthly Tuesday
Early Dismissal Start**
8:25 a.m.

Dismissal
12:35 p.m.

**Two-Hour
Delay Start**
10:25 a.m.

Dismissal
3:05 p.m.

2022-23 dates for early dismissal/e-learning: Sept. 13, Oct. 11, Dec. 13, Jan. 10, Feb. 14; March 14, April 11. Election Days, Nov. 8 and May 2, are completely e-learning days.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Sept. 8

MHS Parent/Teacher
Conferences, 3:30-6:30 p.m.

Sept. 13

AM at school; PM at home
e-learning

Sept. 29

Pierce Middle School
Parent/Teacher Conferences
3:30-6:30 p.m.

Oct. 11

AM at school; PM at home
e-learning

Oct. 28-31

No School/Fall Break

Nov. 8

Election Day/E-Learning Day

Nov. 14

No Students/Teacher
Work Day

LaFonda Morris, Ed.S.
Fieler Elementary School
Principal



Mrs. Morris has been with the school corporation for 23 years. She brings to Fieler more than 17 years of school leadership. She served as principal of Pierce Middle School for three years.

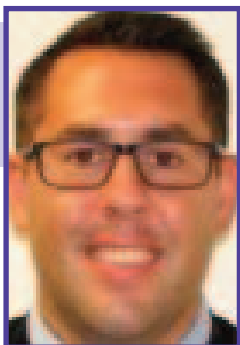
She earned her education specialist degree from Indiana Wesleyan University.

New faces! New places!

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Michael Megyesi
Pierce Middle School
Principal



Mr. Megyesi, a graduate of MHS, started with the school corporation years ago as a teacher and returned in 2019 with administrative experience to serve as principal of Fieler Elementary

School. He brings seven years of experience as a middle school principal with Duneland Schools.

Mr. Megyesi earned his master's degree from Ball State University.

Kasey Rogers
Merrillville Intermediate School
Assistant Principal

Ms. Rogers has served as MIS dean of students since 2020 and has been with the corporation since 2019.

She holds a master's degree from Purdue University.



Dee-Etta Wright, Ed.S.
Pierce Middle School
Assistant Principal



Ms. Wright came out of retirement for this position and brings more than 30 years of experience in education. She served as an administrator with the School City of East Chicago, making her way from principal all the way to superintendent.

Ms. Wright earned an education specialist degree from Indiana Wesleyan University.

Victoria Patton
Iddings Elementary School
Assistant Principal



Mrs. Patton comes back to Merrillville from Gary Community School Corporation where she held the same title of assistant principal.

From 2016 to 2019, this MHS alumna taught English at Merrillville High School.

Mrs. Patton earned a Master of Education degree from Indiana University Northwest.

Kristie Gore
Merrillville High School
Assistant Principal



Kristi Gore, former MHS dean of students, started her fifth year with the school corporation as MHS assistant principal. Prior to MHS, Ms. Gore spent three years at Pierce Middle School.

She has been in education for 17 years and holds two Master of Education degrees from Indiana University Northwest: one in curriculum and the other in administration.

Tammy Rassbach
Salk Elementary School
Assistant Principal



Mrs. Rassbach started her seventh year with the school corporation.

She spent last year as dean of students at Wood Elementary School, but also served as a second grade teacher and instructional coach along the way.

She has been in education for 19 years and holds a master's degree in educational studies and leadership from Purdue University.

New faces! New places!

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Michelle Curry
Miller Elementary School
Dean of Students

This MHS alumna came from the Lake Central School Corporation where she was an ED teacher for a year.

Prior to Lake Central, she worked for NISEC as an autism teacher at Fieler Elementary School. She also taught at Crown Point Christian School.

She has a Master of Management degree from the University of Phoenix and a Master of Science degree in special education from Indiana Wesleyan University.

Amanda Aardsma
Iddings Elementary School
Dean of Students

Ms. Aardsma came from Lansing Christian School, where she had been principal since Dec. 2020.

She worked at Highland Christian School as the director of assessment and fourth grade teacher for three years. She has been in education for more than 18 years and held a number of different teaching positions.

She earned her Master of Science degree in education studies and educational leadership from Purdue University.



Angela Escobedo
Merrillville High School
Dean of Students

The MHS alumna returned to her alma mater in 2020 as a high school Spanish teacher. She previously held a number of roles at Lighthouse Prep Academy.

She has a master's degree from Ball State University.



Samantha Struzik
Merrillville Intermediate School
Dean of Students

Ms. Struzik moved up from Merrillville Intermediate School sixth grade teacher to dean of students. She has worked at MIS since 2012 and served as an administrative intern during the last school year.

Ms. Struzik has a Master of Science degree in educational leadership from Indiana University Northwest.

MHS Football

HOME COMING

Friday, Sept. 30
7 p.m.

Against
Valparaiso High School

Parade:
Thursday, Sept. 29, 6 p.m.

*From MHS parking area, west down
E. 68th Pl., north on Broadway, east into
the main MHS entrance and back
to MHS parking area.*

**GO,
PIRATES!**



Retirees honored at school board meeting

At the June 7 meeting of the Merrillville Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees, employees who retired during the school year were honored for their years of service and presented with plaque in appreciation for their dedication to the schools and students.

Employees who were honored included:



Susan Hayes receives her plaque for her years of service as a teacher.

2021-22 MCSC Staff Retirees

- **Cheryl Austin**, MHS Teacher, 10 Years
- **Thomas Sweet**, MHS Asst. Head Custodian, 10 Years
- **David Thomas**, Bus Driver, 11 Years
- **Elaine Aikens**, MHS Assistant Cashier, 12 Years
- **Prezonia Carroll**, Salk Cook/Server, 14 Years
- **Susan Hayes**, MHS Teacher, 15 Years
- **Susan Budde**, Bus Driver, 17 Years
- **Michele Ventura**, MHS Instructional/Behavior Aide, 17 Years
- **Celia Pollard**, MHS Registrar, 19 Years
- **Charles Seligman**, MHS Teacher, 19 Years
- **Stephanie McCord**, Wood Custodian, 22 Years
- **Tina Detterline**, Fielier Secretary/Clerk, 23 Years
- **Danny Lackey**, Executive Director of Student Support Services, 24 Years
- **Margaret Sanchez**, Miller Teacher, 24 Years
- **Sandra Scholtens**, MHS Teacher Aide, 24 Years
- **Laura Farver**, Miller Teacher, 26 Years
- **RoseAnn Wilson**, Pierce Secretary to Principal, 29 Years
- **Jeanette Thiel**, Iddings Teacher, 30 Years
- **Jane Warren**, Iddings Teacher, 30 Years
- **Bridget Gates**, Wood Teacher, 36 Years
- **Chris Szot**, Miller Secretary/Clerk, 36 Years
- **Helen Moravskij**, MHS Head Custodian, 46 Years

Sept. 15 deadline for 2023 Lilly Endowment Scholarship

The Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship is accepting applications through Sept. 15 from graduating seniors (class of 2023) and third year graduates (juniors graduating early).

The scholarship provides full tuition to any public or private college or university in Indiana.

Along with tuition expenses paid, this scholarship can give up to \$900 per year for textbooks and other required equipment.

Six high school students from Lake County, Indiana will be selected as recipients for the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship.

For more information, visit the MHS website or contact Jodi Kateiva, scholarship administrator, 219-736-1880, or jkateiva@legacyfdn.org.



2022 MHS graduate Kiersten Stowe won the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship and is attending Notre Dame University to study neuroscience.

Immunization Deadline * Sept. 19, 2022



MCSC Nurse website

Download the app to track your children's bus

The Merrillville Community School Corporation adopted an innovative mobile device app and website entitled, Here Comes the Bus®.

Here Comes the Bus® is a bus and tracking software tool that helps keep you informed and your children safe as they travel to and from home and school on the school bus. Here Comes the Bus® gives you real-time bus location and alerts to help you get your children to the bus stop at just the right time.

This easy-to-use technology is free to you. Simply download the Here Comes the Bus® app, create a secure account, add your students and you're all set!

Here Comes the Bus® is powered by Synovia Solutions™, makers of the GPS-tracking technology used by Merrillville Community School Corporation to increase safety and cost savings as it relates to our school bus fleet.

What will you see with Here Comes the Bus?



**Here Comes
The Bus**

- * Real-time location of your child's bus on a map.
- * Scheduled and actual bus arrival times at home and school.
- * Confirmation that your child's bus has arrived at the bus stop, at school or both.
- * Your child's scan data including bus number, time and location of scan.
- * Push notification and email alert when:
 - Bus has entered the radius around the home stop.
 - Bus has been substituted.

GET ON BOARD Here Comes the Bus!

Sign up today or to learn more about Here Comes the Bus® and Student Ridership, visit <http://www.herecomesthebus.com>.

- * Download Here Comes the Bus® app or visit [herecomesthebus.com](http://www.herecomesthebus.com)
- * Click the "Sign Up" button.
- * Enter school code 6601 and click "Next" followed by "Confirm."
- * Complete the "User Profile" box.
- * Under "My Students," click "Add." Enter your child's last name and student ID number.
- * Once you confirm your information, you're ready to begin.

Should you have any questions, please contact MCSC Transportation Department via email transportation@mvsc.k12.in.us or by phone at 219-650-5311

GO, PIRATES!



TRICK OR TREAT

**Thursday, October 27
5:30 - 7:00 PM**

Merrillville High School

(Outside At The Track Stadium)

**Youngsters to 6th Grade
(Merrillville Students ONLY)**

**\$5 Admission Per Child
(All Proceeds Donated to Special Olympics)**

**All Trick or Treaters MUST Be
In Some Kind Of A Costume And
Accompanied By An Adult**

Concession Stand Open

Hot Dogs	\$3.00
Nachos	\$3.00
Popcorn	\$2.00
Cold Beverages	\$2.00
Hot Chocolate	\$1.00
(Come and Have Dinner)	

MUSIC AND FUN

Sponsored By: Merrillville Student Athletes



Teachers win Merrillville Education Foundation grants

Merrillville Education Foundation (MEF) announced it will award five grants totaling \$3,759.50 to teachers in the Merrillville Community School Corporation to enhance learning experiences for students. Reading, math and physical education are just a few of the subject areas that will be upgraded, thanks to this funding in the foundation's 39th round of awards.

"The grant committee is very pleased to award this round of grants to very deserving winners," said MEF Executive Director Mary Hoffman. "We are happy to support these educators. Their projects will inspire students to be successful in the classroom and beyond."

Salk Elementary School

Ladd Downham, physical education educator at Salk Elementary School, won funding for DrumFIT, a program and video curriculum to bring modern technology and activity into the physical education classroom through a web-based video program.

Mr. Downham said the videos can be projected onto the gymnasium wall, and children will be able to follow along to energetic songs that are provided by trained instructors.

"There is an extensive library with activities added monthly," Mr. Downham said. "The DrumFIT program includes dance, drumming and cardio routines and can also be used with just the stability ball to go into lessons for flexibility, stretching, upper body, lower body and core strengthening."



Merrillville High School Educators Josh Haynes, industrial technology, and Sheryl Loving, art, reveal the new Little Free Library constructed in front of Merrillville High School. The project is one of 454 funded by the Merrillville Education Foundation since its inception in 2002.

Miller Elementary School

Nancy Fleming, school social worker, collaborated with Miller Elementary School kindergarten teachers to win a grant to help incoming kindergarteners that have difficulties sitting still, focusing, following directions, listening to adults and getting along with others.

"The purpose of this project is to allow teachers to help those students who exhibit ADHD tendencies and struggle with these essential classroom behaviors," said Ms. Fleming. "A student that is engaged has a better chance of reaching his/her full potential."

Ms. Fleming said the items purchased through this grant can help them get engaged and stay engaged.

Fielier Elementary School

Fielier Elementary School Kindergarten Teacher Michelle Frey and Nicole Olson won MEF grant funding for their project "Kindergarten Story Retelling and Enactment."

The grant will help them purchase characters and props from children's stories, such as "Brown Bear," "The Very

Hungry Caterpillar," "The Snowy Day," "The Kissing Hand" and more.

Students will be able to use these kits for hands-on activities during whole group, small group and independent time to retell stories, sequence events, talk about the characters, etc.

Wood Elementary School

Wood Elementary School Teacher Morgan Vlassopoulos along with school staff won funding for their project "Recess is FUNdamental!"

"Recess is extremely important in the development of children, because it helps them grow socially, emotionally, physically, and yes, academically, as it leads to more on-task behavior and longer attention spans," Ms. Vlassopoulos said. "We plan to use grant money to purchase materials to help restructure our outdoor and indoor recess time when we are unable to utilize our playground."

Ms. Vlassopoulos said the staff plans to paint several games and play areas on the blacktop in the back and on the side of the building that can all be used to create a more structured recess environment.

"We also plan to use part of the funds to purchase equipment such as balls, hula hoops, and quick easy games that can be played in a short period," she added.

More information about these projects is available on the foundation website, merrillvilleeducationfoundation.org.

Since 2002, the Merrillville Education Foundation has awarded 454 grants to teachers totaling \$393,040.51. These grants have impacted more than 124,382 education experiences for students in grades K through 12.

The foundation is committed to being the primary private sector partner in supporting public education where public funds are not available in the Merrillville Community School Corporation.

Merrillville Education Foundation, Inc. is designated a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, and participates in a variety of ongoing fundraising events to generate monies for grants. All donations are tax deductible.

Oct. 8 walk fundraiser to support Merrillville schools

Get some exercise and make a difference in the lives of Merrillville students by participating in the Merrillville Education Foundation Fifth Annual Walk-A-Thon fundraiser on Saturday, Oct. 8.

Participants in the “Better Health, Better Minds” event will walk at the Merrillville High School Soccer/Track & Field Area (east of the football stadium) to raise funds for Merrillville Education Foundation teacher grants that provide new education opportunities for students.

The day will be filled with prizes, food, exercise and fun. Registration will begin at 8 a.m. and walking at 9 a.m. In case of rain, everyone will walk in the MHS Field House.

Minimum participation donation is

\$10 for ages 5 and up.

Registration forms can be downloaded from the Merrillville Education Foundation website, www.merrillville-educationfoundation.org.

Participants raising \$100 or more are guaranteed prizes! The student who raises the most money will get first choice of the available prizes.

T-shirts for ages 5 years and older will be given to each participant who raises/brings in at least \$20 in sponsorship donations and submits the registration form and donations to their school's office by Friday, Sept. 23.

Late registration and additional funding may be turned in on the day of the event, but no T-shirt can be guaranteed.

Additional T-shirts will be available



Families participated in the 2021 MEF Walk-A-Thon to help raise funds to support teacher grants that provide new educational opportunities for students.

to purchase on Saturday, Oct. 8, while supplies last.

Participants will receive one raffle ticket for a chance to win a door prize on the event day.

Sponsorship opportunities for community businesses are available on the foundation's website.



MEF board members wanted

The Merrillville Education Foundation is looking for new board members! They are a dedicated group of individuals whose primary goal is to fund innovative and creative educational grants to teachers in the Merrillville schools.

They also provide funds for educational materials where public funding is not available. Through their efforts, many opportunities that enhance student learning and achievement are available to all Merrillville students.

The board meets at 6 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month at the Merrillville Community School Corporation Central Office. To learn more about the Merrillville Education Foundation and see all the good things they do, visit their website at merrillvilleeducationfoundation.org.

Help them make a difference in the lives of Merrillville teachers and students! To express interest in becoming a board member, send an email to contactus@merrillvilleeducationfoundation.org.



MERRILLVILLE
EDUCATION FOUNDATION
WEBSITE

Principal/Alumni Feature

'My colleagues and I truly believe in our children and the success they deserve'

Kara Bonin, principal of Merrillville Intermediate School, has enjoyed a 28-year career with the school corporation in the capacity of both a teacher and administrator.

In fact, her relationship with Merrillville schools goes beyond that of a career; she is also a Merrillville High School alumna!

"It's been an honor to serve the same district I graduated from," said Mrs. Bonin. "Merrillville has been my home. The school corporation has provided me so many opportunities to create wonderful friends, colleagues, and experiences over the years."

Not only are great colleagues and friends a benefit of Mrs. Bonin's long Merrillville career, she said students are the highlight.

"The students inspire me," she said. "They keep every day different, exciting, and fun!"

"My colleagues and I truly believe in our children and the success they deserve and can have," she continued.

"I am always thinking of how we can improve to help our students. My inspiration is to see that we, as a school, helped each child in some way, and that help will have changed or improved their life's trajectory," Mrs. Bonin said.



**Kara Bonin, Principal
Merrillville Intermediate School**

Teacher/Alumni Feature



**Patti Tubbs, Culinary Arts Educator
Merrillville High School**

Culinary arts impacts everyday life

"One day I had a special education teacher approach me to inform me that she had a student that was doing a great job with his fractions," MHS Culinary Arts Teacher Patti Tubbs said. "She said when she asked him about how he learned to do fractions so well, he commented that he learned all about fractions in his culinary class."

For this high school educator and MHS alumna, teaching how culinary arts lessons impact students' everyday lives is all in a day's work.

Her love of culinary arts inspires her to continue to explore the field and de-

velop a program that works for MHS students.

"Good educators are always exploring ways for keeping their lessons fresh and make changes based on the needs of their students," she said.

Ms. Tubbs has taught cooking in some form throughout her entire 23-year career with the school corporation, even while teaching for two years at Harrison Junior High School and 12 years at Pierce Middle School.

Now at MHS for 10 years, she has been teaching culinary arts exclusively for three years. Along the way, she taught subjects like financial literacy and child development.

"I enjoy working for the school system I grew up in, helping to keep its academic standards and providing guidance to the next generation," said Ms. Tubbs.

"I love working with our students and teaching them the life skills they will need as adults; skills for healthy relationships, parenting, culinary, nutrition and wellness," she added.

The Mirror

MHS Student
News Site



Father's Day gift turns students into published authors

Brothers Luvonte' Smith and Derrick Jones couldn't figure out what to get their dad for Father's Day in 2020. All of the stores were closed due to COVID-19, so their choices were limited.

Mom Lisa Smith tried to help.

"Why don't you make up a story?" she asked. "These boys are always telling stories."

So, the duo set out to make a book for dad.

Luvonte', now an eighth grader at Pierce Middle School, said they cut up some comics from newspapers, added characters on each page for pictures, and wrote the story on a notebook.

His father loved it.

"He said it was a really good book," Luvonte' said.

Inspired by Salk Elementary School fourth grader Derrick Jones, who the family nicknamed "Fattah" and who happens to spend much of his time in



capas and superhero costumes, the book's hero "Super Fattah" is a kid who dreams of becoming a superhero and experiences real everyday life, encountering things like spiders and bullies, playing ball and going to the zoo.

"Derrick loves costumes," Mrs. Smith said. "One day he's Spiderman, the next day he's Superman; that's who he is for real."

"It's a cute little story for all ages," she added.

Family members also loved the brothers' story so much that it inspired Mrs. Smith to work on illustrations and seek guidance to get it published.

Fast forward 18 months later, January 2022, their notebook compilation has become the 18-page children's book "Super Fattah," now available for purchase on Amazon.

The cover features Derrick turned



Salk Elementary School student Derrick Jones (left) "Fattah" and Pierce Middle School student Luvonte' Smith are published authors.

into cartoon form.

"I was excited that our book was published and that everyone can see it," Luvonte' said.

While the family earns \$2 from Amazon per \$10.99 book sold, Mrs. Smith said it's icing on the cake.

"For me, I felt like the boys could inspire another child to think they can write a book," she said.

Alumni Connections

Read their stories
on our website
www.mvsc.k12.in.us

Share your story, inspire
others & make a difference.

Send an email to
mcscmedia@mvsc.k12.in.us



Dr. Collins Mbachu
2014 MHS Graduate



Kirstin (Olson) Bullington
1995 MHS Graduate

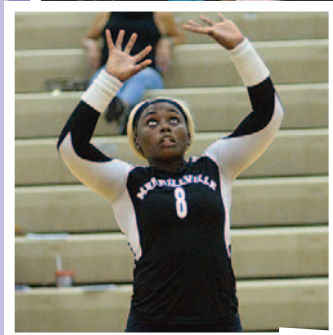


Rick Bella
1975 MHS Graduate

Once a Pirate, Always a Pirate!



VOLLEYBALL



PIRATE ATHLETICS

MHS FALL SPORTS



CHEER ON OUR PIRATES!

For schedules, ticket info, rosters, camps, and more info, visit www.merrillvillepirates.com

Follow our teams on Facebook and Instagram:
@MvillePirateAthletics

Twitter: **@MvillePirates**



MHS Athletics Website

GIRLS' GOLF



SOCCER



FOOTBALL

CROSS COUNTRY



BOYS' TENNIS



CHEERLEADING



Corporation embarks on 10-year facility plan

The Merrillville Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees approved a 10-year facility upgrade plan to address immediate needs and renovate and add spaces to buildings to meet the needs of students and staff.

2022-23 Projects

This year, funding was secured to do several important but smaller projects with plans for bigger projects to start soon. The smaller projects include:

- The roofs at MHS, Iddings, Fieler, Wood and Salk elementary schools have been replaced or are in the process of being replaced.
- Fieler had office spaces added for F.A.C.E.S. and social workers.
- MIS had the football field repaired so it can be used.
- Fieler had three boilers replaced.
- The planetarium was upgraded with a new projections system and software.
- Iddings will get new univents, the air handling system in the classrooms. Many teachers reported that these are very loud and are not maintaining temperatures.
- The MHS football stadium had some major renovations due to water damage. The bleacher section of the stadium is actually the roof that covers instructional, training, and storage rooms underneath. The outside seating area was sealed to make the facility waterproof. The inside spaces were renovated and repaired from water damage.
- Lightning detector has been installed and wired on the north side of the stadium press box to provide lightning alerts for the entire district that can help inform decisions for athletic events as well student arrival and dismissal to keep students safe.

Construction plan includes new CTE building



A CTE building will be added to the back of the high school to house programs designed to prepare students for the workforce by teaching employable and technical skills. Take a virtual tour of our Career & Technical Education programs →



The larger projects will address needs in every building that were identified through an in-depth analysis with project experts in with collaboration building level staff. They will be started during the first five years of the 10-year plan.

The school board secured \$140 million in funding that is tax rate neutral to the debt service fund, which means the funding for these projects will not cause any increase to the tax rate in the debt service fund.

Below is a list highlighting some of projects that will be included:

- A CTE program building will be added to the high school.
- Each building will have sidewalk, concrete, and parking lot repairs.
- A new cafeteria will be added to the high school, and the old cafeteria will become learning spaces.
- Each elementary school will have upgrades to playground equipment.
- Miller Elementary will have a multi-purpose room added.
- Each building will receive interior renovations including carpet, paint, media center upgrades, etc.
- All buildings will have upgrades to mechanical, plumbing, and electrical components of the buildings.
- Reinhart Auditorium will undergo renovations and upgrades.

All of these projects will take several years to complete. Through the years, Merrillville schools have done an excellent job maintaining buildings and equipment. Many of HVAC mechanicals are past the useful life expectancy; some items are from the 70s.



GO, PIRATES!

JOIN US!

MHS PERFORMING ARTS

Upcoming Shows

Fall Play George Orwell's '1984'

Nov. 3, 4, & 5; 7 p.m.

Nov. 6, 2 p.m.

Ticket info: <https://bit.ly/3w86RgT>



Students perform in the Fall 2021 play "Rose and the Rime."



2021 "Sneak Peek" Choir Concert

SNEAK PEEK Choir Concert

featuring MHS,
Pierce Middle School &
Merrillville Intermediate
School students

Sept. 27, 7 p.m.

Admission: One non-perishable
food item to support Ross Town-
ship Food Pantry.

MHS Orchestra Spooky Strings

Oct. 13, 7 p.m.

FREE ADMISSION!



MHS orchestra students at their the 2021 Spooky Strings concert.

**All performances in Reinhart Auditorium,
located through Door M of Merrillville High School, 276 E. 68th Pl.**

Preschool now available to all township families

The Merrillville Community School Corporation has been a delegate of the Geminus Head Start Preschool Program for the last three years, offering preschool classes to eligible families.

For the first time in its history, the school corporation has opened up preschool opportunities for all Ross Township families by launching its own preschool available to families with children who are three years-old by Aug. 1, 2022.

"We want to give all children in Merrillville the opportunity for a high-quality preschool experience," said Christine Waugh, Ed.S., director of early childhood and student support programs. "Preschool is so important to help prepare children for kindergarten."

The Merrillville Community School Corporation's preschool includes a total of seven classrooms offering options for full or half days and two and three days a week.

Classrooms are housed in three Merrillville elementary schools; follow the corporation calendar; feature developmentally appropriate furniture, curriculum, and materials; and are structured with a play-based design. Children will learn school readiness skills which will prepare them for kindergarten.

Families who are not eligible for Head Start will spend \$4.40 per day for meals, but all books, materials and

supplies are provided. Merrillville Preschool is approved to accept On My Way Pre-K vouchers, which awards grants to 4-year-olds from low-income families, so that they may have access to a high-quality pre-K program the year before they begin kindergarten.

Merrillville Preschool will partner with the Merrillville High School Child Development course that prepares high school students hoping to earn a child development associate credential. MHS students will complete some of their field experience requirements in the Merrillville Preschool classrooms.

For more information, parents can call the Merrillville Schools preschool office, (219) 756-5940.



Merrillville teachers and aides have fun introducing children to the areas of their new preschool classrooms.



The MHS Guidance Center dedicated to the memory of Michelle Sulich

Last May, the MHS Guidance Center was renamed the Michelle Sulich Guidance Center in memory of the counselor credited with guiding hundreds of students toward career paths.

Mrs. Sulich spent her entire 28-year career with the Merrillville Community School Corporation before she passed away from aggressive form of cancer at the age of 51. She began her career as a special education teacher then earned her master's degree in school counseling and her administrator's license.

The plaque, donated by the Class of 2021, will serve as a much as an inspiration as it will a remembrance of a passionate soul who tirelessly served Merrillville students.

Fieler students have a place to reset, regroup

Administrators at Fieler Elementary School created an environment to help support classroom learning for all students.

With the assistance of grant money provided by the Merrillville Education Foundation and Burlington, along with some personal funding and donations, the school established an Amygdala Regulation Room as a way to help students, and sometimes even staff, manage their emotions and regulate their brains.

According to research, when children get upset or angry, the amygdala, a part of the brain focused on emotions, floods with stress hormones.

In this state, children cannot learn. Using focused attention practices, such as exercises or manipulating textural objects, children can regulate the stress hormones in the brain so learning can continue.

While most Fieler teachers provide some tools for amygdala stations inside their own classrooms, Assistant Principal Amy Hinkel said some students who may struggle or experience frustration or anxiety may need a break from their environment in order to reset their brains to be successful in learning.

"A teacher will call the office and ask a staff member such as the principal, assistant principal, secretary, or social worker to take a child for a walk or to the

Amygdala Room," she said. "We don't want the teacher involved because we want the child to be away from that environment and not associate any of that with the teacher."

The Amygdala Room comes equipped with a self-regulation path which is a type of physical course that any student who enters the room must follow and complete; gaming chairs; sensory tools like sand, putty, and bean bags; music; books; puzzles; lights; Legos; yoga mats; head phones, if they don't want to hear anything; drawing and coloring tools; and emotion identifiers to help students communicate their feelings to the accompanying staff member.

Once the student and accompanying adult arrive in the Amygdala Room, the student is asked to complete a few minor movements by following the physical



Once the student arrives in the Amygdala Room, he or she is asked to complete a few minor movements by following the physical course, like a deep breath, squat, hopscotch, and high five as a way to help clear his or her mind and shift focus.

course, like a deep breath, squat, pushup, and high five as a way to help clear his or her mind and shift focus.

The accompanying adult then asks the student "How are you feeling now?" Mrs. Hinkel said.

The student will choose an emoji to reflect his or her frame of mind. She said sometimes the little ones will describe their emotions using weather metaphors like sunny, cloudy, rainy, and even thunder.

"What can I do right now to help you feel better?" Mrs. Hinkel said the adult would ask. "Do you need to be left alone? Do you want to talk?"

She said the student may choose to talk, and if he or she isn't ready, the child may choose to color or play with any of the available sensory gadgets.

"Sensory can be used to calm, excite or alert," said Evelyn Sebastian, school physical therapist.

"It's all different," Mrs. Hinkel said. "We try to have things in the room to spark their interest."

At the end of their time in the room, 10 or 15 minutes later, the adult would again initiate a conversation with the stu-



Fieler's Amygdala Room comes equipped with gaming chairs; sensory tools like sand, putty, and bean bags; music; books; puzzles; lights; Legos; yoga mats; head phones, if children don't want to hear anything; and drawing and coloring tools.

cont'd next page

GET ENGAGED!

WOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTO Meetings

First Thursdays of the month, 6 p.m.

Next ones: Oct. 6, Nov. 3

Title 1 Family Meeting & Movie Night Friday, Sept. 16

Virtual: 10 a.m.; In-person: 5-7 p.m.

In-person meeting: Children can attend a supervised movie night and watch "The Bad Guys" while parents join the in-person Title 1 meeting. Children can wear their PJs and bring their favorite stuffed animal and blanket.



MERRILLVILLE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Title 1 Annual Meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 28, 9:45 a.m.

PTO Meeting/Title 1 Annual Meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 28, 6 p.m.

FIELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTO Meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 14, 5 p.m.

Title 1 Annual Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 27

In-person: 10 a.m.; Virtual: 4 p.m.

IDDINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTO Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 20, 5:30 p.m.

Held on the third Tuesday of each month. Next one Oct. 18

Title 1 Annual Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 27

Virtual: 10 a.m.; In-person: 3:30 p.m.

Parents, your children will benefit from your involvement in their school. Check out some of the activities in which you can participate. We hope to see you there!

If you'd like more information about your PTO, contact the school office or F.A.C.E.S.



MILLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTO Meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 14, 6 p.m., Miller cafeteria

Agenda: fundraising and movie night!

Title 1 Annual Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 27

In-person: 9 a.m.; Virtual: 6 p.m.

PIERCE MIDDLE SCHOOL

PTO Meeting/Title 1 Annual Meeting

Thursday, Sept. 15, 8 a.m. in arena

(PTO meeting only 5 p.m.)

Title 1 Annual Meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 21, 4 p.m.

SALK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTO Meetings

6 p.m. first Wednesday of the Month

Oct. 5 & Nov. 2

Title 1 Annual Meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 28

In-person: 10 a.m.;

Virtual: 6 p.m.

Monster Bash

Wednesday, Oct. 26

5-6:30 p.m.

