



Pirate Pride

November 2022

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

The Newsletter of the Merrillville Community School Corporation

2022-23 Most Inspiring Teachers

pages 8-11



School Trustee set to retire next month

After 30 years of serving on the Merrillville Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees, Mark Lucas has set himself up for a big lifestyle change.

He is retiring from the board at the end of the year, leaving a role he began in 1992.

"I would like to thank all of the people that I worked with over the 30 years," Mr. Lucas said. "Great teachers, administrators and all of the workers in the corporation have made this a great job. My underlying thought in my tenure on the school board has always been what is in the best interest of the students. Also, once a Pirate always a Pirate!"

He thanks his wife, Barb, and children for all of their support. His five daughters are all Merrillville graduates.

"They were the main reason I ran in the first place," he said. "They were very active in sports and other extracurricular activities. This allowed me to get out to the schools on a regular basis and have contact with parents, teachers and students.

"My daughters went to a total of six of our eight schools over the years," he continued. "The contact I had with all of the schools was an invaluable resource for being on the school board."

He plans to spend more time at home on the first and third Tuesdays of each month, which were previously reserved for school board meetings. In fact, Mr. Lucas said he hasn't missed a meeting for 27 straight years!

"I will still work my regular job, and I hope to be able to watch my 10 grandchildren play their sports and participate in

other activities," he said.

A practicing attorney in Merrillville for 42 years, Mr. Lucas said his career with a flexible schedule allowed him to

pursue his interests in politics and community that led him to his service with the schools. He also coached community sports for 20 years.

"Most people are not aware of how many meetings board members have to attend besides regular school board meetings," he said. "This would include a number of school activities. That is a big part of the job."

Mr. Lucas said a typical school board day would be for him to work his regular job until approximately 5 p.m., then attend executive sessions and school board meetings.

"When I first got on the board, the meetings lasted until midnight on most occasions," he continued. "We had a lot of construction projects and some litigation that necessitated this."



Mark Lucas
Board President

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Save your Strack's receipts & support our schools



Some of our schools are collecting receipts from Strack & Van Til during the 2022-23 school year so they can earn points for educational equipment.

If you shop at Stracks, save your receipts dated from Sept. 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023. Ask your family and friends to save their receipts as well!

Our schools must turn their collected receipts by April 12, so bring the last of them in around the beginning of April.

Schools in our corporation that are accepting your receipts include:

- Merrillville Intermediate School
- Miller Elementary School
- Fieler Elementary School
- Wood Elementary School

Customers can visit a Strack & Van Til location for further details or visit <https://strackandvantil.com/apples-for-the-students/>

Holiday shopping with AmazonSmile makes a difference

The holidays are just around the corner, and you know what that means:

***** SHOPPING! *****

You can support Merrillville Schools when you purchase your gifts through AmazonSmile!

The Merrillville Education Foundation partners with AmazonSmile.

When families choose the foundation as their favorite charitable organization while they shop with AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to the Merrillville Education Foundation.

Twice a year, the foundation awards grants to Merrillville teachers who use the money for opportunities that enhance



student learning and achievement, promote social and emotional development of our students, and contribute to a strong community through a belief that education is key.

Be sure to choose Merrillville Education Foundation as your favorite charitable organization.

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

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President

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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.

Coat giveaway scheduled



Coats for Kids & Families, a community-wide effort to provide coats for children and families facing economic hardship, will distribute coats it recently collected to families in need.

Coats will be given away from 9 a.m.-noon on these Saturdays at these locations:

- Nov. 12, Merrillville Intermediate School, 1400 W. 61st Ave.;
- Nov. 19, Impact Christian Church, 7071 Broadway, Merrillville.

Coats for Kids is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information, visit the Merrillville School Corporation website, www.mvsc.k12.in.us, or the organization's Facebook page, facebook.com/coatsforkidsandfamilies/

GO, PIRATES!

New faces! New places!

A few leadership announcements:

Alan Dickerson

**Pierce Middle School
Assistant Principal**

Mr. Dickerson steps into this new role after serving a year as Pierce Middle School Dean of Students.

He has been a part of Merrillville Community School Corporation for more than 14 years, all at Pierce. He has also served as a department head for three years and as a team leader for four years.

Mr. Dickerson is a graduate of Indiana University Northwest with a degree in secondary education.

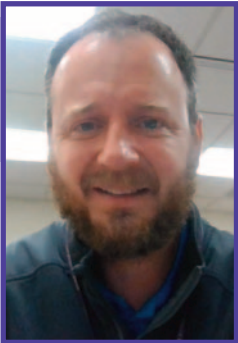


Adam Waldier

**Pierce Middle School
Dean of Students**

Mr. Waldier starts his sixth year at Pierce and at the school corporation by stepping into this new role. He previously taught both social studies and math.

He has two bachelor's degrees: one in hospitality and tourism management with a fitness management endorsement from Purdue and the second in secondary education with social studies and math endorsements from Indiana University Northwest.



Abigael Swift

**Wood Elementary School
Dean of Students**

Ms. Swift is new to the school corporation, coming from Porter County Education Services where she spent the last 11 years: five as a resource teacher at Boone Grove Middle School and six as a behavior specialist, working in various school districts across Porter County.

Prior to PCES, she spent four years at a therapeutic day school through the Menta Group in Park Forest, Illinois. She is a certified CPI instructor and facilitator/trainer for Challenge Education.

Her undergraduate degree in education is from Lewis University, and she holds both special education and general education licenses. She is working on her educational leadership master's program through Northcentral University.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Nov. 8

Election Day/E-Learning Day

Nov. 14

No Students/Teacher
Work Day

Nov. 17

K-6 Parent/Teacher
Conferences, 12:30-7:30 p.m.
K-6 Students
do not attend school.

Nov. 23-25

Thanksgiving Holiday
No School

Dec. 8

Grades 9-12 Parent/Teacher
Conferences, 3:30-6:30 p.m.

Dec. 13

AM School/
PM At-Home E-Learning

Dec. 23-Jan. 6

Winter Break/No School

Jan. 9

Return from Winter Break

Jan. 10

AM School/
PM At-Home E-Learning

Jan. 16

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
No School

JROTC cadets tackle first grueling Raiders event

Merrillville High School Air Force JROTC cadets participated in their first official Raiders event, finishing ninth out of 13 Indiana schools. The team was made up of freshmen, sophomores and one senior!

Major John Robinson, senior aerospace studies instructor, said he was impressed with their performance, considering they don't have a course to train on.

"They really put forth a lot of effort," he said. "It is very physically demanding, but the cadets really enjoyed it. They were all sore and dirty by the end of it."

The Raiders competition, run by the Army JROTC, consists of five events: a 5K run; a rope bridge that the team ties and crosses; and combinations of climbing walls, flipping tires, low crawling, etc.; all while they carry heavy ruck sacks and equipment.

"Each event is very exhausting, so I try to get the cadets into as good of physical shape that I can," Major Robinson said. "We run and do calisthenics. I found two trees to practice for the rope bridge. Since we don't have a wall, we climb on a shipping container that is in the high school parking lot."

He hopes one day the JROTC will have its own training course out by the railroad tracks.

While the cadets participated in an event last spring, it wasn't an official Raiders event.

"That one only had six-person teams, while the official event has 12," Major Robinson said. "Ten cadets are in each event, which means two can sit out each event. There must be at least four girls in



AFJROTC cadets use a rope bridge to cross a ravine (above). The competition also included combinations of climbing walls (below). Watch the video of the competition:



each event."

Major Robinson said there were five girls on the team this year.

"Each team does one event per hour, and there is a rotation schedule so all events are running all the time," he said. "It takes about five hours for the whole thing to be done."

Major Robinson added each state has a championship, and the top three teams go to nationals in Georgia. Indiana's state championship is at Camp Atterbury, which is south of Indianapolis.

"I am hoping to grow the team to be more competitive in future years," he said.



Order Your Pirate Gear Today!



MHS CTE program prepared alumnus for first job

2021 Merrillville High School graduate Adrian Lopez entered the workforce after graduation, becoming a welder at a company called Industrial Maintenance.

While he found his education and experience in Joe Sokol's welding classes valuable, it's what he did the week after graduation that made the difference.

"The Summer Bridge changed my life, quite literally," said Lopez. "When Mr. Sokol first mentioned it, I was kind of skeptical because I was a senior, and why would I do summer school after graduating?"

"But then I realized how much of a factor that could play essentially graduating with actual certifications in a trade that is always high in demand, and I



Adrian Lopez
2021 MHS Graduate

went," he continued. "The work definitely paid off. I only went for a few hours a day for one week, and now I have a well-paying job with full benefits due to that."

Mr. Sokol, welding educator in the MHS Career & Technical Education program, worked over the summer to help some of his students who needed extra support due to the pandemic earn their certifications in a program the school called "Summer Bridge."

Now the MHS graduate works to build and repair parts and machines from steel mills.

Lopez said he enjoyed Mr. Sokol's classes; they were his favorite part of the school days. He said he was drawn to a career in welding because of its earning potential.

"It's not an easy job," he said. "Just

know that there will be hot sweaty days where you don't know why you chose that job; but then pay day comes and you realize how much you love your job."

Lopez credits his teacher for preparing him for an immediate career.

"My courses with Mr. Sokol taught me the fundamental skills I use every day at work; things like workshop safety such as PPE and being aware of your surroundings," he said. "Mr. Sokol always said, 'always assume everything in the shop is hot and heavy,' to make you realize how much potential danger is around you.

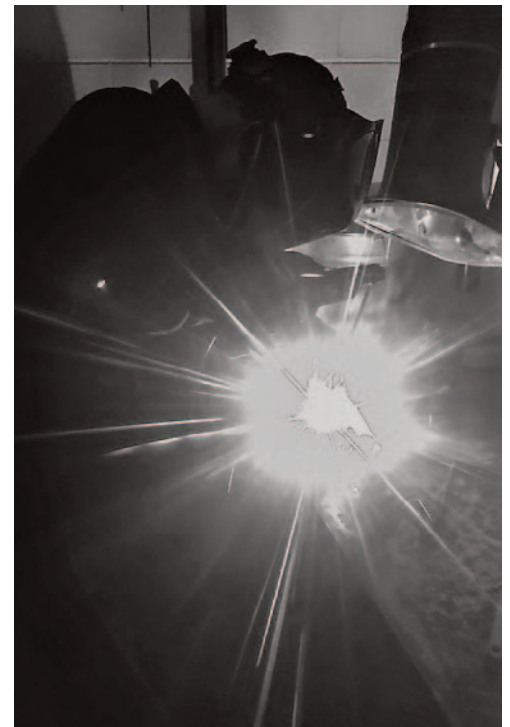
"He also taught how to weld with proper technique, which is absolutely essential in the field which allows me to do what I do," he added.

Lopez said he found the job opportunity with the help of his dad's neighbor. When the company called him in for an interview, he was prepared and passed the weld test that was presented to him.

Lopez said he sees himself years later in a higher position in the shop or maybe even at a new one.

"Welding is an experience-based trade; the more time you invest into learning more, the more you're worth," he said.

Take a virtual tour of our CTE programs



MHS 2022-23 yearbook information

Order the 2022-23 yearbook at

www.jostensyearbooks.com

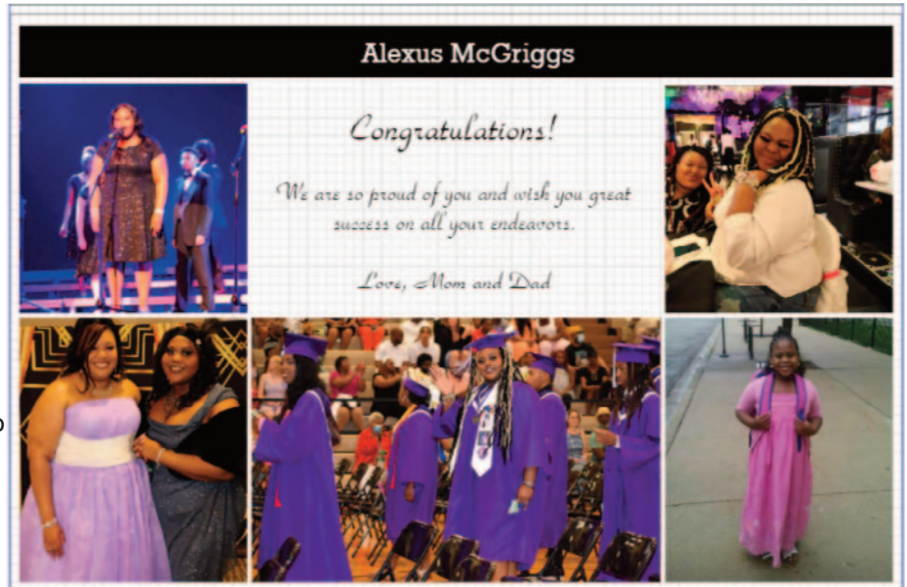
and go Behind the Scenes of life at MHS where every student has a starring role. Payment plans are available so you can spread the cost out over three payments.

The summer-delivery book captures all the events from the first day of school through graduation with pages devoted to sports, clubs, academics, student interests and more. Don't miss out - order your book now! If you would like to pay cash, please email Mrs. Skertic at askertic@mvsc.k12.in.us.

The Yearbook Plus feature allows students to upload their own photos -- which will be accessible by QR code when the books come out. Watch for more information next month about this special feature.



www.jostensyearbooks.com



Would you like to commemorate your senior in a special way? Senior recognition ads are available through March 31. Information is also available from Jostens. The process is simple: just upload your photos -- write your tribute and Jostens creates the ad for you.

School Trustee set to retire next month

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Over the last year he served as board president, a position he held many times during his three decades of service.

Board members rotate positions annually.

"As the president, I am talking to the superintendent on almost a daily basis regarding issues as well as communicating with the rest of the school board as to those issues," Mr. Lucas added.

"Having email communication and text communication has certainly made for quicker and more efficient communication over the years," he said. "Obviously, when I started we did not have that availability."

One of his favorite things about Merrillville schools is they are inclusive toward students.

"I believe the Merrillville School Corporation has provided an acceptance of all students and has provided all students an opportunity to display their talents, whatever they might be," he said. "Our diversity of students has really set us apart from other school districts."

Mr. Lucas said he experienced a lot of moments he will remember the rest of his life.

"My favorite moment was my participation with other administrators and student athletes in the ceremony prior to the first home football game after 9/11," he said. "That brought everyone together and was a special moment that no one can forget."

Board meetings where students performed musical or dramatic acts were also some of his favorites.

"Every graduation ceremony was special," he added. "I also enjoyed participating in the 4th of July parades for many years representing Merrillville Schools."

From their leadership during the pandemic, to the way the schools have maintained their buildings and equipment, to improved technology, this retiring school trustee is proud of the board's many accomplishments.

"It is important to maintain quality schools for all of our students," he said.

"I am also very proud of our change of grade configurations over the years such as Merrillville Intermediate School

and Pierce Middle School," Mr. Lucas continued. "This was a response to a request from our parents that wanted to see sixth grade students in their own building.

"I am especially proud that we have been able to keep our arts and music programs over the years when some corporations throughout the country were eliminating them," he said. "We felt this was a very important part of the educational system."

While the accomplishments were memorable, so were the challenges the board faced during his tenure.

"We were underfunded for years, and this limited the opportunities for students," Mr. Lucas said. "Also, when we would lose great teachers and administrators to other systems, it made for challenging times.

"Once in a while certain people would try and bring politics into the school system, but we were able to keep that from happening when faced with it," he continued. "Concern for school safety has always been a challenge."

Pirate Pantry comes to aid of families in need

The Merrillville Community School Corporation has taken a step to make sure its families have the food they need.

The corporation recently opened its new food pantry, named the Pirate Pantry, to families with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Through feedback from the school corporation's social workers and family and community engagement specialists, we determined that food insecurity was a bigger issue than we originally believed," said Superintendent Nick Brown.

The goal of the Pirate Pantry is to provide temporary food support to families in the Merrillville Community School Corporation, in addition to direction if families need a more permanent solution.

School social workers and engagement specialists will identify the families in need and refer them to Angelica Claiborne, school corporation food service director, who will make arrangements for families to pick up meals.

The creation of the pantry was made possible through a \$15,000 grant from No Kid Hungry, written and received by



Food Service Director Angelica Claiborne and Superintendent Nicholas Brown cut the ribbon in front of the high school room where the Pirate Pantry is located. Also in the photo from left: Assistant Superintendent Dexter Suggs, School Trustee Linda Jonaitis, Executive Director of Personnel Reid Amones, Director of Instructional Technology/CTE Bob Phelps, MHS Principal Mike Krutz, and School Trustee DeLena Thomas.

Mrs. Claiborne. Money from the grant will be used for food purchases as well as storage units.

"The pantry will stock shelf-stable food, and ongoing efforts to keep the Pirate Pantry stocked will include food

drives by Merrillville students," said Mrs. Claiborne.

For more information on the Pirate Pantry, contact food@mvsc.k12.in.us or call (219) 650-5300.

National School Lunch Week serves up 'blast from the past'



Some administrators and even a member of the school board helped Food Service staff serve up healthy lunches to students to mark National School Lunch Week.

A few of them even took the throwback to the 70s theme seriously with costumes, tunes and decorations.

Students not only got some delicious and nutritious food, but some got a little history lesson, listened to some disco tunes, and exercised with a dance party or two.

★ Can you dig it? ★

Each year, the Crossroads Chamber of Commerce asks the school districts within the communities it serves to nominate their most inspiring teachers.

Based on interviews and applications, the Chamber chooses one teacher from each district as the Most Inspiring Teacher of the Year.

This year, the Merrillville Community School Corporation nominated these educators for this distinguished award. See what their administrators had to say about them.

2022-23 Most Inspiring Teachers



Michelle Foster, Second Grade Teacher Wood Elementary School

Started with Merrillville Schools in 2014

I am nominating Michelle Foster as my inspiring educator for John Wood Elementary School. Michelle is one of the most dedicated teachers you will ever meet. She is a true inspiration to her students, and they love having her as their teacher. She is always looking for ways to improve herself as well as her students. She is one of the most animated teachers I have ever had the pleasure of working with. She reminds me of the story character Mrs. Frizzle, always looking on how to connect with her students so they understand the importance of the material presented. She has been known to sing to her students so they understand difficult material. The growth of her students due to this instruction is nothing short of remarkable, and they truly enjoy having her as their teacher.

Michelle goes above and beyond not only with her students but with her teaching partners as well. Together as a team they always look for ways to improve instructional practices. Michelle participates in various events throughout the school year to help build those relationships with students and the community. She is part of the John Wood PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) team. Michelle is a great role model for her students and an amazing teacher. When this form was presented to me, I immediately thought of Michelle and what an inspiring educator she is at John Wood Elementary School.

-Tammy Rassbach, 21-22 Dean of Students

Adrienne Rohrbacher, Seventh Grade Science Teacher Pierce Middle School

Started with Merrillville Schools in 2018

It is with total confidence and great pride that I compose this letter in support of Mrs. Adrienne Rohrbacher for your Inspiring Educator Award. Adrienne is an over-comer, a problem-solver, an innovator and a dynamic member of our middle school faculty. Her enthusiasm, patience, and passion for teaching (and her students) is second to none. Adrienne does not work or serve for awards or accolades, but simply to inspire and impact all those she comes in contact with each day. She has mastered the elusive art of being firm, but fair, having rules yet maintaining positive relationships, and she freely offers compassion, acceptance, and kindness to her students. While remaining current with the latest instructional strategies and educational technologies, she can still reach a troubled or struggling student with simple, yet profound, instincts and empathy coupled with complete professionalism. Likewise, she can accelerate and challenge her brightest of students because of professional development experiences and innovations she has pursued. Adrienne has a calling in her life, and that calling is teaching. She teaches her students to strive for excellence, to love science, and to respect each other; and she teaches all of us to give our best for our students. Thank you for this opportunity to nominate my colleague and consummate professional, Mrs. Adrienne Rohrbacher.



-Mike Megyesi, Principal

2022-23 Most Inspiring Teachers

Erica Copeland, Instructional Coach Miller Elementary School

Started with Merrillville Schools in 2017

Hardworking, passionate, and dedicated are just a few words that describe Miller School's Inspiring Teacher. Erica Copeland is a true example of what it means to do all she can to ensure the success of all students through the lens of an instructional coach.

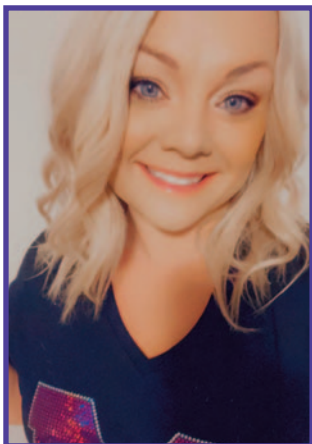
As a coach for not only Miller School, but for the entire school corporation, it is evident that her passion for what she does shows greatly. Working with classroom teachers, Ms.

Copeland is a great resource in sharing research-based strategies to improve student achievement. She works tirelessly to be sure that teachers are equipped with what they need to provide effective instruction for the students of Merrillville. Ms. Copeland is data-driven. As the point person for our district's assessment framework, she uses data to col-

laborate with all stakeholders to create strategies that will close achievement gaps. She is also the district's chairperson for our MTSS framework. Her job descriptions don't stop there. She is on the planning committee for our district's professional development days, she runs our annual summer boost program, she facilitates the dyslexia screenings, and the list goes on. What is an Inspiring Educator and how does one qualify as such? Some may define an inspiring teacher as someone who will be long remembered or someone who ensures students' success and encourages them to fulfill their potential. Well, not only does Ms. Copeland ensure students' success, she does the same for teachers as well. Ms. Copeland sets high standards for herself and others in which she works. She provides professional development on a variety of topics for teachers. She is a wealth of knowledge and thrives on sharing what she knows with others. If ever one is looking for an Inspiring Educator, look no further.

Ms. Erica Copeland meets the criteria.

-Jennifer Griffin, Principal



Anna Bobbitt, Second Grade Teacher Salk Elementary School

Started with Merrillville Schools in 2009

I am nominating Anna Bobbitt as my inspiring educator for Salk Elementary School. Anna is a second grade teacher here at Salk Elementary School. Anna is one of the most dedicated people that you will ever meet and a true inspiration for our students and staff. She continually is looking at ways to move her students forward and always gets tremendous growth for her students. She will do anything to help ensure that they will be successful. She is always looking for ways to get better as a teacher and infuse creativity into her classroom. The amount of growth that her students get simply by being in her class is nothing short of remarkable. She will take some of our most at-risk students and help them reach their full academic and behavioral potential. Anna's students love coming to her class, and she is willing to go above and beyond for the benefit of her students. She

participates in various events in and out of school to help her build relationships with her students and the community she serves. She is part of our CIC (Continuous Improvement Committee). Anna volunteers and comes to any and all school functions to help assist our school. She volunteers for after-school events such as Back-to-School Nights, Touch-a-Truck, and PTO led events. Anna is a great person and an even better educator. When this nomination form was passed along to us, she immediately came to mind as the person that I wanted to nominate for the 2022-23 school year.

-Nicholas Petralia, Principal

2022-23 Most Inspiring Teachers

Michael Hoffman, Math Teacher

Merrillville High School

Started with Merrillville Schools in 1997

It is with great pleasure that I provide this letter of recommendation for Michael Hoffman as our nominee for the 2022-23 "Inspiring Educator Award." As principal at Merrillville High School, I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Hoffman for the past 26 years, first as a classroom teacher and also as our cross country and track coach. Mr. Hoffman brings the highest quality in terms of professionalism, experience, and integrity in his service and has proven to be absolutely vital to our success in creating and promoting our vision and mission at Merrillville High School. Mr. Hoffman is a leader within our math department, always exploring "Best Practices" and leading professional development activities for our entire staff. He demonstrates a strong example to his colleagues of what going "above and beyond for kids" is all about. Mr. Hoffman's AP calculus students scored above the state, national, and global average with an average score of 3.41, which was the highest in the history of our school. Mr. Hoffman is an accomplished and dedicated teacher who is highly trusted and respected by his students, parents, and colleagues. It is my pleasure to endorse his nomination for the Inspiring Educator Award.



-Mike Krutz, Principal



Joy Kent, Allied Science Teacher

Merrillville Intermediate School

Started with Merrillville Schools in 2012

It is our pleasure to provide this letter of recommendation for Ms. Joy Kent as our nomination from Merrillville Intermediate School for the Inspiring Teacher Award. Ms. Kent is currently our Applied Science teacher after spending years at our fifth grade math/science honors teacher. Our nomination was voted on by her peers for this award. Ms. Kent has developed our entire Applied Science Curriculum for our school. She has designed our Makerspace into the Applied Science Classroom as well as developed units of study that incorporate our tools in the Makerspace such as Little Bits, OzBots, Makey Makey, Lego Robotics, and our video production room. As a fifth grade honors math/science teacher, Ms. Kent led her students to high academic achievement and growth. With a school demographic that includes a high percentage of minority and free and reduced lunch students, under Ms. Kent's leadership, her students demonstrated consistently the highest levels of academic performance. Her IGM scores of 4, highly effective, and consistent passing/growth rates on ISTEP+ and ILEARN of 90%+, demonstrate the effectiveness of her teaching strategies. The philosophy of Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships is integrated throughout her classroom and within the school. Her rigorous classroom includes the interwoven application of STEM as well as a growth mindset. She models this mindset by stretching herself outside her own comfort zone trying new things, taking independent classes to learn, and implements new ideas constantly in her classroom. Ms. Kent's students have high expectations, where failure is not an option. Her ability to build positive relationships with students is a strength. Ms. Kent is a leader in our building. She is our PTO teacher rep, runs the Time to Invent Club, serves on the PBIS committee, and volunteers at all school functions. Ms. Kent shares resources, videos, and opens up her classroom and expertise to any staff that wants to come in to observe and learn. Joy Kent is in the very top tier of educators who have the rare combination of personality and educational skill set that makes an exceptional and inspiring teacher.

-MIS Administrative Team

2022-23 Most Inspiring Teachers



Jennifer Jongsma, Interventionist
Iddings Elementary School

Started with Merrillville Schools in 2021

It is my privilege to nominate Jennifer Jongsma as an Inspiring Educator. Jennifer works with a true passion for students and does what is best for everyone. Jennifer works with small groups of students to improve their reading and math skills. In addition, she takes on different roles throughout the building to help multiple students and community members. Jennifer works to build relationships with students in order to work more effectively with them. She plays games with students during their recess if they need to have an alternative recess. She has lunch with students who struggle socially. She even will go out to recess with various students who need support playing in groups. All of these things help students to trust her and allow them to grow socially and in turn academically. Jennifer has dedicated her time at work to helping students be successful.

This is both socially and academically. In addition, Jennifer works in our car rider line every day. She talks with parents and stakeholders while they are in line. She builds relationships and answers questions on a daily basis while making sure students are safe in the car line. I truly believe she is an educator who inspires others and me to do what is best for kids at every moment of the day!

-Michelle Coughlin, Principal

Amy Burkhart, Kindergarten Teacher
Fier Elementary School

Started with Merrillville Schools in 2002

Amy is extremely professional and positive. She creates lessons that are engaging and meaningful for her students. She incorporates technology to enhance her instruction, and every day, her kids are actively participating, learning and having fun. Every lesson is designed to adapt to a multitude of learning styles and learning differences. Many lessons are hands-on activities, or technology-enhanced, and her lessons reach all of her students. As part of each day's instruction, she incorporates learning stations for kids and as part of the rotation, and she meets with small groups of students to reinforce or enrich skills. She also integrates literacy into her math and science instruction by consulting with her teammate to determine the metacognitive strategies being taught in language arts, and infusing these strategies into other content instruction. Amy's



iREADY scores were some of the highest in our building last year. Students work hard for her because they enjoy learning due to the way she teaches. She ensures that every lesson reaches a multitude of learning styles. She is always looking for new ways to teach concepts and finds new resources that will help students. We are really proud to have Amy at our school. Parents and students are always impressed with her. She is the consummate professional and is very well-respected by our school community. She shares all of her ideas with fellow teachers and is a true team player. She always puts "Kids First." She worked on refining our math and reading curriculum and planned activities in the summer to help her colleagues this school year. Besides all the work she does each day during instruction, she continues to look for innovative ways to extend her influence and provide motivation for students. She truly goes above and beyond. She finds various ways to develop relationships and to provide additional support and intervention for her students. She also works our PM bus duty to ensure that all of our students get to their buses safely. She sets a great example for our staff because she never complains and implements all district and school initiatives with a positive attitude. For Back-to-School Night at our school, she provided positive encouragement and support to the parents.

-Amy Hinkel, Assistant Principal

The flu

Influenza (or flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses.

Most people with flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. If you get flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with others except to get medical care.

Know the symptoms of flu

Flu viruses can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold.

The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms: Fever* or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue (tiredness). Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea. This is more common in children.

Take antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them!

Antiviral drugs can be used to treat flu illness. Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They also can prevent serious flu complications.

CDC recommends that antiviral drugs be used early to treat people who are very sick with the flu and people who get flu symptoms who are at high risk of serious flu complications, either because of their age or because they have a high risk medical condition.

Stay home when sick

When you are sick, limit contact with others as much as possible. Remember to cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw tissues in the trash after you use them. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities.

**Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine before resuming normal activities.*
www.cdc.gov/flu/treatment/takingcare.htm

Myths and facts about influenza

Myth: Flu vaccines can cause flu.

Fact: Flu vaccines are made with flu viruses that are either weakened, inactivated (killed), or recombinant (made without influenza viruses or eggs). Therefore, flu vaccines cannot cause flu. It typically takes two weeks for the flu vaccine to become effective and during those two weeks, it is still possible for a vaccinated individual to get flu or another respiratory virus.

Myth: Flu vaccination is not necessary every year.

Fact: Immunity from the flu vaccine declines over time, so annual vaccination is critical to provide the best protection. And since the vaccine may change each year to match circulating flu viruses, it is important to get vaccinated annually. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual vaccination for all individuals age six months and older.

Myth: Healthy people don't need a flu vaccine.

Fact: Anyone can get the flu, even young, healthy people. Getting vaccinated each year is important for everyone age six months and older. And vaccination can help prevent the spread of the virus to others who may be vulnerable to flu and related complications.

Myth: The flu is nothing more than just a bad cold.

Fact: Flu is not the same as a common cold—it can be far more serious, and can cause high fever, headaches and body aches, chills, and severe fatigue for up to two weeks or more. Flu can also lead to more serious complications, even death. On average, flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and tens of thousands of deaths in the U.S. each year.

Myth: There is nothing you can do if you get the flu.

Fact: Know the symptoms. If you, your child, or a loved one gets sick, contact a healthcare professional immediately to discuss treatment options. Prescription antiviral drugs can make the illness milder, make you feel better faster, and may also prevent serious flu-related complications.



Myth: Vaccines can be dangerous and may have adverse health effects.

Fact: Most people do not experience serious side effects from flu vaccines. Some may experience a sore arm at the injection site, fever, muscle pain, and feelings of discomfort or weakness. These side effects typically last 1-2 days after vaccination and are much less severe than actual flu illness. The risk of a flu vaccine causing serious harm or death is extremely small. Flu vaccines are given safely to millions of people in the U.S. and around the world each year.

Myth: All flu vaccines are approved for all age groups.

Fact: Everyone age six months and older should get flu vaccine every season. Different flu vaccines are approved for different age groups. For people younger than age 65 years, there is no preference for any one vaccine over another. Beginning with the 2022-23 flu season, there are three flu vaccines that are preferentially recommended for adults age 65 years and older.



Info provided
by our
school nurses

Students stand out with grades & test scores

Sixteen National Recognition Scholars were named at Merrillville High School by the College Board.

These students earned their recognition based on their GPAs of 3.5 or higher; and either scoring in the top 10% within the program by state on the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 or scoring 3 or higher on two or more distinct AP exams; and are African American or Black, Hispanic American or Latinx, Indigenous, and/or attend school in a rural area or small town.

MHS students receiving African American Recognition from the College Board include seniors Amiria Galburth, Diamond Sims, Diamond Wright, Dorian Fuller, Folasade Zannou, Janiya Milton, Robert Barnes, Sincere Peterson, Taliyah Dean, and Wisdom Chandler. Juniors earning African American Recognition include Dayja Bland, Mareo Mukes, and Nomi Green.

Seniors earning College Board Hispanic Recognition were Alyzandra Nunez, Monica Valladares, and Vincent Velasquez. Diamond Sims also received Hispanic Recognition.

The College Board National Recognition Programs grant students aca-



Front row from left: Amiria Galburth, Monica Valladares, Taliyah Dean, Diamond Sims, Wisdom Chandler, Alyzandra Nunez, Mareo Mukes and Diamond Wright. Back row from left: Nomi Green, Folasade Zannou, Sincere Peterson, Robert Barnes, Janiya Milton, Dorian Fuller. *NOT PICTURED*: Vincent Velasquez and Dayja Bland.

demic honors that can be included on college and scholarship applications. Colleges use these honors to identify students from underrepresented groups who have excelled on their PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, or AP Exams and in their classrooms.

The College Board National Recognition Programs create pathways to college for underrepresented students by awarding them academic honors and connecting them with universities across the country.

Fieler Elementary School wins Enchanted Backpack



Fieler Elementary School Principal LaFonda Morris shows excitement as volunteers unload school supplies from two Enchanted Backpack vans.

Fieler Elementary School won more than \$8,800 worth of school supplies from Enchanted Backpack.

Though each school can only win once, this is the second time Principal LaFonda Morris has won for her school. She won last year as principal of Pierce Middle School, receiving \$8,500 worth of supplies.

The organization arrived with two vans filled with boxes of supplies, including items such as coloring books, notebooks, construction paper, copy paper, markers, pencils, pens, folders, crayons, dry erase markers and erasers, glue sticks,

pens, pocket folders, pencil sharpeners, toothpaste, gloves and hats, sneakers, socks, shoes, recess equipment, incentive items and much more.

Volunteers from the school and the school corporation helped wheel in the supplies using hand carts.

Enchanted Backpack is a 501(c)3 organization in Illinois that was started with the belief that all children deserve to have the tools they need to learn and excel and that all teachers deserve to have the support and materials to make their classrooms exciting learning centers.

Miller Elementary School also won last February, making Fieler the third winning school in the corporation.

PIRATE ATHLETICS MHS WINTER SPORTS



WRESTLING

GYMNASTICS

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](https://www.instagram.com/MvillePirateAthletics)

Twitter: [@MvillePirates](https://twitter.com/MvillePirates)

CHEERLEADING

SWIMMING & DIVING

BASKETBALL



MHS Athletics
Website

SARAH WICKO
MARISA WALSH
MARISA WALSH
LISA P...
DANIELLE MOLCH
LISA ROSS
DANIELLE MOLCH
LISA ROSS
JENNIFER ORCHIA
DANIELLE MOLCH
DANIELLE MOLCH
LISA ROSS
KATE BALLO
ANDELA EAST
KAREN BALLO
SARAH WICKO

Seiss named Coach of the Week

MHS Football Coach Brad Seiss was honored by the Indianapolis Colts as Coach of the Week for Football Week 7.

The Colts donated a \$2,000 check to the MHS Athletic Department in his honor. A representative of the Colts organization former NFL player for the Colts and Packers, Mike Pryo, presented the award today in front of the entire football team.

**WE ARE PIRATE PROUD!
GO, PIRATES!**



Attorneys share life lessons with MHS students

Approximately 100 MHS students who expressed interest in legal careers got a lesson in perseverance and resourcefulness when three attorneys from around the state of Indiana shared with them their own professional and personal journeys to becoming lawyers.

Paul Sweeney, attorney with Ice Miller Legal Counsel in Indianapolis; Kendra Key, attorney with South Bend Schools; and Holly Wojcik, attorney with Theodoros & Rooth, P. C., in Merrillville; connected with students studying criminal justice and participating in clubs like debate and Mock Trial.

All three attorneys of different ages and different stages in their careers helped the group understand that nothing is easy and every path is different.

“I can’t needs to go away,” said Mr. Sweeney.

Overall, they discussed goals, perceptions of accomplishment, money, debt, schools, majors, tests, setbacks



Holly Wojcik (from left), attorney with Theodoros & Rooth, P. C., in Merrillville; Kendra Key, attorney with South Bend Schools; Paul Sweeney, attorney with Ice Miller Legal Counsel in Indianapolis, talked with students about choices and paths that led them to become lawyers.

and opportunities with the promise to return at a later date with two more guest speakers: a trial judge and a Marion County prosecutor, both originally from Northwest Indiana.

Mr. Sweeney said he had to change his preferred college and law school destinations to attend other schools due to limited financial resources, which were disappointments to him at the time. Along the way, he reconnected with his faith, met his wife and ultimately landed his current job, turning what seemed like negatives into posi-

tive, life-changing events. He said he never looked back.

Ms. Wojcik said when she graduated from law school, she had no idea what to do next. When she had dinner with the bosses of her current law firm, she realized where she wanted to be.

“Find a place that you really love,” she said. “What I love about my job is people that I work for.”

Ms. Key said she always knew she wanted to go to law school, but didn’t know how she was going to get there. Her family didn’t believe in debt, so it was scholarships she was interested in.

She finished her undergrad degrees without debt, but she said law school was a different challenge.

“You don’t know what you don’t know,” she said.

After receiving some help to pass the LSAT and getting into the university of her choice, she discovered ICLEO, a state program that helps minority, low-income and educationally disadvantaged scholars pursue a law degree in Indiana.

“Know that you can, and give yourself permission to do it and be yourself,” said Ms. Key. “Other people will see you and give themselves permission as well.”

JOIN US!

PERFORMING ARTS SHOWS



2021 MHS Sounds of the Season

CHOIR

MHS Sounds of the Season

Dec. 15, 7:30 p.m.

**Admission:
\$6 or \$20 Family Pass**

**Grades 6-8
FREE Holiday
Choir Concert
Dec. 13, 7 p.m.**

Pierce Middle School Cafetorium

MHS Orchestra Holiday Concerts

Dec. 8 (two shows)

Admission: \$5

6:30 p.m. featuring

*MIS 6th Grade, Pierce 7th Grade,
MHS Beginning &
Advanced Orchestras*

8 p.m. featuring

*Pierce 8th Grade,
MHS Intermediate &
Advanced Orchestras*



2021 MHS Orchestra Holiday Concert



2021 MHS Holiday Band Concert

MHS Holiday Band Concert

Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m.

Admission:

One can of food or other
non-perishable food item
per person for donation
to Ross Township Food Pantry.

Featuring:

*MIS 6th Grade Band; Pierce 7th &
8th Grade Bands; &
MHS Freshman, Intermediate
& Advanced Bands*

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

MHS MARCHING BAND OF PIRATES

won Gold at the ISSMA State
Marching Band Festival held at
Crown Point High School on Oct. 1.



Precious Moore, Christon Williamson, Izza Aftab, Ember Wolstenholme, Hailey Nolan, Nomi Green, Precious Moore, Theatre Teacher Tom Mackey.

Thespians host retreat

While summer is a great time for students to kick back and relax, MHS students in Thespians Troupe #1692 used a couple days of their break to learn more about their craft and connect with others with similar interests.

For the second year in a row, the group hosted the annual Indiana State Thespians Leadership Retreat last August. The event created an opportunity for troupe directors and 100 students from a dozen schools across the state to participate in various workshops and advocacy activities.

Enjoy the talents of
many of our students
in this annual
Ross Music Theatre
production.

**Evening
performances**
Nov. 26, Dec. 2 & 3;
7:30 p.m.

Matinee
Dec. 4, 3 p.m.

‘SCROOGE the Musical’

Reinhart Auditorium



Tickets available from any MHS choir member or online:

GET ENGAGED!

PARENT UNIVERSITY

ALL PARENTS FROM ALL SCHOOLS INVITED

Nov. 22, 2:45-6 p.m.

Learn how to best work with your schools and students: from navigating technology, to working with your students at home, to exploring careers, preparing for tests & more!

**RSVP by Nov. 18 to Cheryl Smith,
219-650-8105 or clsmith@mvsc.k12.in.us**

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.



PIERCE MIDDLE SCHOOL



PTO MEETING

Dec. 6, 5 p.m.

2023 MONTHLY WORKSHOPS START

Jan. 10, 4-5 p.m.:

How to build financial literacy

More info on future workshops available on www.mvsc.k12.in.us

IDDINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTO MEETINGS

Nov. 15 & Dec. 20, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

MERRILLVILLE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR

Nov. 10-18

PTO MEETINGS, 6 p.m.

Nov. 30, Dec. 21, Jan. 25

COFFEE & QUESTIONS

Dec. 7, 10 a.m.

in Parent Resource Room

CHRISTMAS MOVIE NIGHT

Dec. 2, 6-8 p.m.

Visit our Parent Resource Room weekdays from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. or call Maria Elliott for an appt., 219-650-5306 x6892.

FIELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MOVIE NIGHT

Nov. 9, 4-6 p.m.

SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR

Dec. 5-9

TITLE 1 FAMILY FUN NIGHT

Nov. 29, 4-5:30 p.m.

WINTER WONDERLAND GIFT SHOP

Dec. 14-21

For more information, email ptofieler@gmail.com.

MILLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

POPCORN WEDNESDAYS

Nov. 30, Dec. 14, Jan. 25

BOOK BLAST

Nov. 9-18

VETERANS DAY PROGRAM

For Veterans only
Nov. 11, 9 a.m.

MOVIE NIGHT

Dec. 9

WOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTO MEETING

Dec. 1, 6 p.m.

FOOD DRIVE

Now through Nov. 18

HOLIDAY SHOP TBD

SALK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PTO MEETINGS

First Wednesday of the Month

Dec. 7, 6 p.m.

& Jan. 11, 3:30 p.m.

BINGO NIGHT

Nov. 9, 5-6:30 p.m.

LITTLE CAESARS FUNDRAISER

Nov. 18-Dec. 2

PENGUIN PATCH

Dec. 5-9 (during school)

MOVIE NIGHTS

3rd-4th Grades

Jan. 18, 5 p.m.

K-2nd Grades

Jan. 19, 5 p.m.

PENNY WARS

Jan. 9-31 (during school)

