Mehlville Messenger

November 2024

A Mehlville School District Publication

An inclusive school culture Starts With Hello

One little word can make a big difference in the culture of a school. It's one of the most basic words in each language, but it's also one of the most critical ones at the start of any friendship.

Hello.

At Forder Elementary School, Starting With Hello helps students and staff combat social isolation and ensures every student feels valued and included.

During Start With Hello week in September, staff at Forder Elementary School welcomed students to school each morning with signs saying "Hello" in each of the 17 languages spoken by Forder families. Students also participated in classroom lessons designed to teach empathy, how to be inclusive and how to connect with other students. Forder began celebrating Start With Hello week, which is a program offered by Sandy Hook Promise, in 2019.











"We knew the concept was something that kids could understand that was needed among our community," said Dr. Whitney Maus, principal of Forder Elementary School. "We wanted to teach kids to include others, and we saw this as a great place to start."

The school invites parents and community members to participate in Start With Hello. This year, first responders, including police, firefighters and members of the National Guard, and sports mascots, including Louie from the St. Louis Blues, participated. In previous years, high school marching bands have visited Forder. The warm community greeting is something Dr. Maus hopes provides students with a positive feeling about school and a memorable experience.

"I have noticed over the past six years we have done Start With Hello that our students' level of empathy has greatly grown, and they have become more purposeful in their friendships," Dr. Maus said. "Our kids look out for one another and want to make sure everyone in their class feels included."

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT: Peggy Hassler

Building success together



The Board of Education is excited that our district is embracing the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model, a strategic approach to enhancing student learning across all grade levels. This initiative reflects our ongoing commitment to improving education through collaboration and shared responsibility among teachers, administrators and staff.

Our approach:

The PLC model's core focus is ensuring that all students learn at high levels. We are aligning efforts across the district, from teacher teams to district leadership, using strategies centered on student outcomes. By working together, analyzing data, and implementing research-based practices, we believe we can significantly impact student achievement.

Initial steps:

A district-level guiding coalition is leading the implementation of PLCs. This team is responsible for:

- Establishing a timeline to ensure PLCs are well-paced and goal-driven.
- Creating a guidebook outlining PLC practices, strategies for building effective learning communities and resources for support.

Our vision:

We believe every student deserves to learn at a high level. To achieve this, our guiding coalition supports faculty and staff by:

- Encouraging a collaborative culture focused on improving student learning.
- Sharing and modeling proven, research-based best practices.
- Using data to monitor progress and adjust strategies, ensuring high-quality instruction for all students.

Building a collaborative culture:

The success of our PLC initiative depends on fostering continuous improvement and shared responsibility. By empowering educators to grow professionally and work together, we are creating an environment where innovation and commitment to student success thrive.

On behalf of the Board of Education, we extend our gratitude to parents, community members and staff for their role in building a stronger learning community. We are confident these collective efforts will result in significant improvements in student outcomes.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

Board of Education

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Mehlville School District

The Mehlville School District mission is to build a high-performing school system rooted in the community's desire to build a culture of improvement for staff and students.

Mehlville School District believes that all of our graduates should be creative and critical thinkers, self-aware, persistent, communicators, and ethical and global. We call this our Portrait of a Graduate.

The *Mehlville Messenger* is published for Mehlville School District residents and businesses to share district news. For questions or comments, call 314-467-5000 or email messenger@msdr9.org.

Candidate filing for Board of Education opens Dec. 10

Any person wishing to file for the Mehlville School District Board of Education may do so at the St. Louis County Board of Elections, 725 Northwest Plaza Drive, St. Ann, MO 63074. Filing will be held Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024, through Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2024, during regular office hours 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. On Dec. 31, 2024, the office will close at 5 p.m. The office will be closed on Dec. 25, 2024. Please check the county website, stlouiscountymo.gov, for any additional dates they may be closed.

An election for two seats on the board will be held Tuesday, April 8, 2025. Both seats carry a three-year term.

Under the provisions of Missouri Statute Section 115.124, if the number of candidates who file is equal to the number of positions to be filled by the election (two), no election will be held. However, if the number of candidates filing exceeds the number of positions at any time during the filing window, the annual school board election will be held on April 8, 2025. Candidates will be listed on the ballot based on a lottery drawing conducted by the St. Louis County Board of Elections.

For more information, visit bit.ly/boecandidatefiling, or call 314-467-5000.

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT: Dr. Jeff Haug

Mehlville is proud to provide world-class education



Our students do unbelievable things everyday, and I am so lucky to get to experience this as I visit our schools. I believe more and more with every passing day, that this is an amazing school district and an unbelievable community. We cannot provide the education for our students at the level we do without community support, and for that I am grateful.

We also could not provide the education for our students without our amazing staff. I see bus drivers and the maintenance team here before the sun rises and leaving late in the evening. I see beautifully clean schools, maintained with pride by our custodians. I see our coaches and directors putting in long hours so our kids can participate in extracurricular activities. I see a welcoming, safe and open atmosphere in our front offices. I see cafeteria workers in hot kitchens, smiling at students as they ensure they are fed. And from what I hear, everyone is especially happy in the cafes when orange chicken is on the menu!

I see students engaged in the work of learning on a daily basis. From classroom conversations to group work, from designing robots to dissection labs, our teachers lovingly challenge our students to grow every day. I have seen kindergarten students shaping playdough to mimic the hump on a camel. I have seen elementary students discuss in-depth and draw detailed ecosystems. I have seen biomedical classes at the high school trying to solve fictional murders. I have seen our students create incredible artwork and produce amazing music. Your children are receiving a world-class education.

The district hosted our first 60plus luncheon at Point Elementary. I loved hearing the attendees reminisce about when they were students in our district or what school their child attended. I enjoy the conversation even more when they talk glowingly about what school their grandchild currently attends or where their grandchild is attending college because of the education they received from the Mehlville School District.

To hear the pride in their stories only reiterates how amazing this district and community is, and how honored I am to be a part of it.

Mehlville Board of Education approves 2024 tax rate

At its annual Tax Rate Hearing on Sept. 26, 2024, the Mehlville Board of Education approved the 2024 tax rates. The 2024 blended tax rate will be $4.0070.

This rate is similar to the prior year blended rate of $3.9680. The blended rate is a weighted average of the following four tax levy rates for 2024:

- Residential – $3.7914
- Commercial – $4.2175
- Agricultural – $4.7160
- Personal Property – $4.8161

The Mehlville School District is estimated to receive $100.8 million in local tax revenue based on the approved tax rates. This is $1.1 million less than originally budgeted. The decrease is due to lower assessed property values – primarily personal property – and a lower tax collection percentage, said Marshall Crutcher, Chief Financial Officer for Mehlville School District. Due to careful financial planning, the Mehlville Board of Education could absorb this revenue shortfall using its cash reserves.

Tax rates are computed each year based on the state auditor tax schedules and assessed values as provided by St. Louis County Revenue. The county assesses real estate values every two years. This year (2024) is not a re-assessment year.

The Mehlville School District is maintaining its reputation as a fiscally conservative district. As of the fall of 2023, the Mehlville School District had the 18th lowest tax rate of 22 St. Louis County school districts. The district ranks last in the county in outstanding debt expense per student.



Students in Ricquel Riddle's class at Oakville Elementary School test their structural designs in a pumpkin-stacking activity.

Get a 60plus Gold Card

Mehlville School District residents 60 and older can get free admission to games and performances and invitations to special events. Call 314-467-5137 for more information.

Security entrances, HVAC were the focus of summer maintenance

Mehlville School District students had safer school entrances and more comfortable classrooms at the start of the 2024-2025 school year due to summer construction. Several schools received new security entrances, while others received HVAC upgrades.

Security entrances

Work was completed to create more secure entrances at Beasley Elementary School, Forder Elementary School, MOSAIC Elementary School, Wohlwend Elementary School, Buerkle Middle School and Oakville Middle School. Crews also completed work that began last school year at Point Elementary School.

Previously, school visitors had access to main hallways after entering through the exterior doors. In the new configuration, visitors enter a secure lobby, where they must present identification to a staff member and provide a reason for their visit before being granted access to the rest of the building.

Work is ongoing to create new security entrances at Trautwein Elementary School and Washington Middle School. These projects are more extensive because the main entrances are being relocated to improve accessibility. The current entrances at these schools require visitors to use stairs. Once this work is complete, every school in the Mehlville School District will have a security entrance thanks to the community's support of Prop S in April 2021.



Visitors to Oakville Middle School now enter this secure lobby and speak to a staff member before they're granted access to the rest of the school.

HVAC improvements

The week of August 21, 2023, was one of the hottest and most humid weeks on record for St. Louis. Schools with the oldest equipment, like Oakville Elementary School, Wohlwend Elementary School and Bernard Middle School all experienced HVAC outages during the heatwave. These schools were among those receiving HVAC upgrades over the summer. Here is a rundown of HVAC work completed over the summer:



Crews use a crane to replace 10 rooftop HVAC units at Bernard Middle School.

Oakville Elementary: One new rooftop unit, two new boilers and new controls and wiring. The equipment replaced was original to the building, which opened in 2004.

Point Elementary: Six new rooftop units, two new air-handling units, two new boilers and one domestic water boiler. The equipment replaced ranged in age from 20 to 30 years old.

Wohlwend Elementary: Two new rooftop units (equipment replaced was more than 25 years old), a new chiller and new pumps

Bernard Middle: Ten new rooftop units, five new water heaters, two new boilers and temperature controls in each classroom. The equipment replaced was original to the building, which opened in 2003.

District pool: New dehumidifier, two new boilers (one to heat the pool and one to heat the facility), a domestic water boiler (for showers and sinks in the locker rooms). The district's pool is used by Mehlville High and Oakville High swim, dive and water polo teams, physical education classes from both schools, and about 500 Community Education participants each year. This work is ongoing.

Many of the district's HVAC systems are 20 to 30 years old. The typical life cycle for HVAC systems is 15 to 20 years. The Mehlville Board of Education also approved a plan to complete HVAC replacements at 10 other schools during the summer of 2025 and summer of 2026.

"By the end of 2026, all of our HVAC equipment will be at or under 10 years old," said Dr. Jeff Haug, Superintendent of Schools. "By making smart investments in our critical infrastructure with our current tax revenue, we are able to delay asking voters to borrow funds through a general obligation bond. This saves the district over $12 million in interest expense and ensures comfortable learning environments for the community's 10,000 students."

Alumni share how their high school experience prepared them for their career



As outlined in the Mehlville School District Portrait of a Graduate, our goal is for graduates to possess a wide range of values and skills to help them lead successful professional and personal lives by being creative and critical thinkers, self-aware, persistent, communicators, and ethical and global citizens. We spoke to 10 alumni about their career accomplishments and how their experience in the Mehlville School District prepared them for life after graduation.

Nick Bognar, Mehlville High School Class of 2010

While attending Mehlville High School, Nick Bognar enrolled in the culinary arts program at South Technical High School. He worked in his mom's restaurant, Nippon Tei, and wanted to turn his passion for restaurants into a career.

Following successful stints as a chef in restaurants in Austin and Cincinnati, Bognar returned to St. Louis to run the family restaurant. It was there that he won his first James Beard Award. He has since opened iNDO in Tower Grove and relocated Nippon Tei to The Hill, rebranding as Sado.

"I'm thankful for all of the people from my time at Mehlville High School who realized I had something unique going on with cooking," Bognar said.

Melina Delkic, Oakville High School Class of 2013

Following graduation, Melina Delkic attended Georgetown University where she studied English and journalism. Delkic is an editor and reporter for The New York Times. She's covered business, breaking news and international news. Delkic found passions as a student at OHS that followed her into her career as a journalist.

"Getting to find different passion projects through my English classes, like finding out what I like to read and what kind of writing was exciting to me, ended up being a really great guide to my career," said Delkic. "Getting to take responsibility for different initiatives and events in high school was a great way to become independent and learn the impact of your actions and planning when you see it out in the world."

Dr. Sejla Turnadzic, Mehlville High School Class of 2016

While attending Mehlville High School, Dr. Sejla Turnadzic was involved in the National Honor Society, Student Council and took biomedical science courses through Project Lead the Way. Following graduation, she attended the medical program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. For the past two years, she's been doing her residency in anesthesia at Stanford University.

"I like anesthesiology because you get to see your effects immediately," said Dr. Turnadzic. "You get to keep people alive and keep them comfortable, which is a big thing that isn't talked about in medicine. A lot of the things we do are very painful. It's very gratifying to be able to take some of the pain away."

Donald Rabin, Oakville High School Class of 2015

After attending Truman State University, Donald Rabin earned a Master of Music Performance at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. He's currently studying for his doctorate in musical performance and master's in arts leadership at the University of Houston. In addition to performing flute in many different orchestras, Rabin has also found ways to give back to his community through music.

At Oakville High School, Rabin played flute in the band, was in the leadership class and served as a Tiger mentor. He says experiences and the character education he received still help him in his work.

"Those resources to be a better person have helped me to be the person I am today," Rabin said.

Other alumni we spoke to include Meghan Miller, MHS 2018; James Bragg, OHS 2022; Toi Hall, OHS 2007; Julie Oehler Kelly, MHS 2010; Javier Duren, OHS 2011; Briana Ward, MHS 2018

Visit bit.ly/msdr9fromcampustocareer to watch videos about all 10 alumni.

Curriculum Connections



1

1. Changing characters
Students in Christen Otto's fourth-grade class at Beasley Elementary School learned about character traits. After reading a book, they explained how a character changed throughout the story. Students used critical thinking to hypothesize why those changes occurred.

2. For the birds
Fourth-grade students in Janis Dirnbeck's class at Trautwein Elementary School completed a hands-on lab to understand how animal structures and behaviors serve different functions. Students used spoons, chopsticks and tweezers to simulate different types of bird beaks. They used their "beaks" to scoop up "bugs" in water, seeds in fields of rocks, and fake worms in dirt. Students recorded their observations and determined which bird beak was best suited for each environment and food source.



3



2

3. Honoring heroes
Blades Elementary School honored first responders and military members during their Patriot Day assembly. Students and staff invited family members who've served in the armed forces and as firefighters, police officers and EMTs to campus and celebrated them with a musical performance.


4

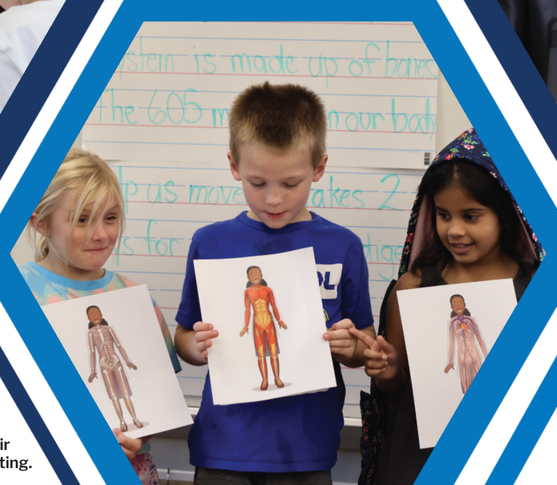
4. Counting and comparing
Students in Melanie Heveroh's kindergarten class at Point Elementary School collaborated with classmates to sort shapes by color. They compared the groups of objects by saying whether each sorted group had "more than" or "less than" another. This activity allowed students to review their colors, improve their teamwork skills and practice counting.

For more photos of student learning, scan the QR code or follow us at Facebook.com/MehlvilleSchoolDistrict

Learn more



5


6

5. Sorting shapes
Sixth-grade students in Erin Pfundt's math class at Oakville Middle School have been learning about four-dimensional figures like prisms, pyramids and polyhedrons. Students sorted images of these figures by type and used their knowledge about the characteristics of each shape to defend their selections.


7

6. Body systems
Leah Baker's first-grade students at Rogers Elementary School learned about body systems. They discussed the respiratory, muscular, skeletal and digestive systems and shared facts about each system.

7. Musical moods
Fourth-grade students in Renato Durante's music class at Wohlwend Elementary School learned how music can impact mood. They edited short films and searched for the right song for the mood of their video.

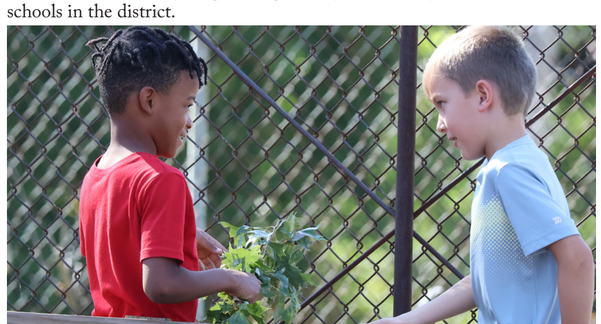
Can we have class outside? YES!

Learning in the Mehlville School District isn't confined to the four walls of our classrooms. Many of our teachers provide students with unique learning experiences using outdoor classrooms on our campuses.



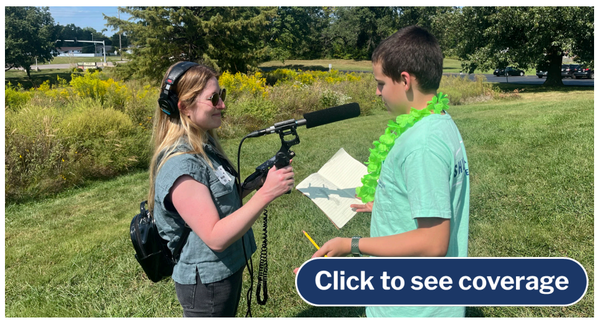
Exploring to learn

John Cary Early Childhood Center teachers use the outdoor classroom daily to provide exciting lessons for our smallest learners. The outdoor classroom, which includes a nature trail, a treehouse constructed by Mehlville High School Geometry in Construction students, and activities for students of all abilities, is also used by neighboring Beasley Elementary School and other schools in the district.



Natural literature

Second-grade students at MOSAIC Elementary School participated in a joint lesson between their library and art classes. Students learned about authors and artists who write and create art about nature. They searched the school grounds collecting leaves, sticks and other natural material that were combined to create a piece of art.



Learning on the prairie

The Wohlwend Elementary School prairie restoration project provides students with countless opportunities to observe plants and animals as part of the science curriculum. Wohlwend students in Betsy Leeker's class shared how they use the prairie as a classroom with Kate Grumke, a reporter for St. Louis Public Radio. That day students were making observations and taking notes and sketches about a "pocket world" – a small area of the outdoor landscape that seemed interesting to them.



Exercise and exploration

The Adventures and Outdoor Pursuits class, offered as a physical education elective at Mehlville High School and Oakville High School, teaches students new skills that can turn into healthy lifelong hobbies. Students learn about kayaking, fishing, rock climbing, archery and more! OHS students completed a unit on hiking that concluded with a trip to Castlewood State Park. As part of the unit, students learned about birdwatching and used an app to identify the birds on the OHS campus by recording their calls.



Heather Mastis' kindergarten students at Oakville Elementary constructed a shelter that would protect from the sun's rays.



Three early childhood students enjoy the outdoor classroom at John Cary Early Childhood Center.

How to enroll a student in the Mehlville School District

We are looking forward to welcoming your child into our schools! Mehlville School District teachers provide high-quality, free education for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. We also provide tuition-based half-day early childhood education.

Enrolling a new student in the 2024-2025 school year

Current school year enrollment is always open for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Parents or guardians should contact the school where their child will attend to enroll a student in the current school year. If you need help determining your child's school, you can use our interactive map at bit.ly/msdr9map or call Mehlville School District at 314-467-5000.

Enrolling a new student in the 2025-2026 school year

Kindergarten enrollment – and enrollment for all other grades – for next school year will open on Jan. 13, 2025, and will be completed through Infinite Campus. More information, including registration links, will be posted on the enrollment section of our website, bit.ly/msdr9enroll, by Jan. 13.

To enroll in kindergarten, students must turn 5 before Aug. 1, 2025.

MOSAIC Elementary School lottery

MOSAIC Elementary School provides personalized learning to empower students for life beyond the classroom. Instruction and authentic learning opportunities are based on each student's academic and social needs. Teachers use a variety of tools and strategies, including learning menus, technology and blended learning opportunities to explore the curriculum. Students are encouraged to learn the curriculum at their own pace and within the context of their unique interests.

MOSAIC Elementary will hold an information night for prospective families on Thursday, Jan. 9, from 6 to 7 p.m. The information night will be held at MOSAIC Elementary School, 3701 Will Ave.

To enroll in MOSAIC, parents must apply for the lottery, which opens Jan. 27 and closes at 5 p.m. on Feb. 28. The lottery application will be available at mosaic.mehlvilleschooldistrict.com beginning on Jan. 27.

Parents of selected students will be notified in March and must complete district enrollment for their child at their home elementary school by the end of April to maintain their placement at MOSAIC.

Mehlville Early Childhood programs

Mehlville Early Childhood provides a variety of services to families with children from birth to age 5.

Parents as Teachers offers parents support and access to special events families love. A certified parent educator visits with parents and children to play together while sharing age-appropriate child development and parenting information. Parents as Teachers is free to Mehlville School District residents. For more information, call 314-467-5304 or visit bit.ly/parentsasteachersmsdr9.

Early childhood education is offered to children ages 3-5 at the John Cary Early Childhood Center and at several elementary schools in Mehlville School District. Registration for new families begins on March 1 at 8 a.m. Learn more on the Mehlville Early Childhood website, bit.ly/mehlvilleec.

Additionally, Mehlville Early Childhood provides free special education, and therapies and evaluations for children with developmental and other disabilities who reside within Mehlville School District. To access special education services and therapies, families can be referred by Missouri First Steps, be referred following a development screening (like DIAL 4 screening) or parents can request a diagnostic evaluation. For more information, please call 314-467-5300.

Share the JOY OF LEARNING by gifting a class!



Registration opens in late November for 2025 winter/spring classes

bit.ly/msdr9commed

Community Education
Proud Member of the Mehlville School District

Distinctions

Nationally certified school nurses

Nancy Dixon, the nurse at Blades Elementary School, and **Lindsey Bayless Boyet**, the nurse at SCOPE, passed the National Certified School Nurse (NCSN) exam.

The test covers growth and development, health appraisal, nursing management and more. It also requires a Bachelor of Science in nursing and 1,000 clinical hours in school nursing. Out of 65,000 school nurses across the United States, only 640 passed the exam last year.



Lindsey Bayless Boyet



Nancy Dixon

Board Governance Award

The Mehlville School District Board of Education received the 2024 Governance Team Award from the Missouri School Boards' Association. This award honors school boards whose members have shown a dedication to ongoing professional development in effective governing practices and a commitment to regional and statewide leadership.



(L-R): Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jeff Haug, Board Director Jeff Wolman, Board Director Scott Huegerich, Board Director Grace Wright, Board Vice President Tori Behlke, Board President Peggy Hassler, Board Director Jean Pretto, Board Secretary Patrick McKelvey.

We're hiring transportation staff



Mehlville School District is hiring bus drivers, bus monitors, substitute drivers, and a mechanic.

Join our team: bit.ly/employmentmsdr9

Distinctions

Award-winning yearbook

Oakville Middle School yearbook students received the Jostens National Yearbook Program of Excellence award at the gold level. This award recognizes yearbooks that reflect a broad representation of the student body while helping students develop communication and collaboration skills, as well as information and communication technologies literacy.



Oakville Middle School yearbook students

National technology student

Ray Meier, Oakville High School senior, placed in the top 10 of the computer-aided design category competing against students from across the world at Technology Student Association Nationals. Ray previously placed first in the same category at the state level.



Ray Meier

Commended scholars

Julia Gentemann and **Ian Parai**, Mehlville High School seniors, were named National Merit Commended Scholars.



Julia Gentemann



Ian Parai

National Student Council

Jocelyn Ridenour, an eighth-grade student at Buerkle Middle School, was elected as the Junior Vice President of Leadership Development for the National Student Council. Jocelyn is one of just five middle school students from across the country elected to serve.



Jocelyn Ridenour

View more distinctions:
We're now sharing all student and staff distinctions on our website at bit.ly/msdr9distinctions.

Now performing

The **Mehlville High School Symphonic Band**, **Oakville High School Wind Symphony** and **Oakville High School Chorale Choir** were selected to perform at the Missouri Music Educators Association conference in January. Only 10 band programs and 10 choir programs from across the state, including K-12 and collegiate programs, were selected to perform.



Mehlville High School Symphonic Band



Oakville High School Wind Symphony



Oakville High School Chorale Choir

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IMPORTANT DATES

Find district event information at mehlvilleschooldistrict.com.	
Nov. 4	No school for students - Professional Development
Nov. 5	No school for students - Teacher Workday - Election Day
Nov. 21	Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Mehlville High School Library
Nov. 27-29	No school - Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 11	Early release for students
Dec. 19	Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Mehlville High School Library
Dec. 20	End of second quarter/first semester
Dec. 23-Jan. 2	No school - Winter Break
Jan. 3	No school for students - Teacher Workday
Jan. 15	Early release for students
Jan. 16	Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Mehlville High School Library
Jan. 20	No school - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Feb. 17	No school - Presidents Day
Feb. 20	Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Mehlville High School Library
Feb. 26	Early release for students
Mar. 7	End of third quarter
Mar. 10-14	Spring conferences
Mar. 13	Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Mehlville High School Library
Mar. 17-21	No school - Spring Break

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Nature's classroom

How teachers are using outdoor spaces to enhance student learning. See page 8.

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Mehlville School District
Individually Focused. Committed to All.