



2025-2026 SCHOOLHOUSE MT. ZION SCHOOL DISTRICT #3 MMXXV



Jeffrey Sams
Board President



Kyle Janvrin
Board Vice President



Michelle Shumaker
Board Secretary



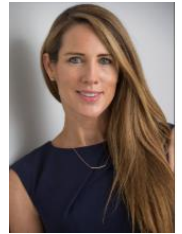
Regan Deering
Board Member



Kent Newton
Board Member



Eric Law
Board Member



Dr. Courtney
Gaine Cuddy
Board Member

School Start Times:

Grades 7-12.....7:45 a.m.
Grades K-6.....8:30 a.m.

Early Dismissal Times:

Aug 15, Dec 19 & the last day of school
Grades 7-12..... 11:05 a.m.
Grades K-6..... 11:35 a.m.

Regular Dismissal Times:

Aug 18 & each regular school day after that
Grades 7-12.....2:30 p.m.
Grades K-6.....3:00 p.m.

SUPERINTENDENT



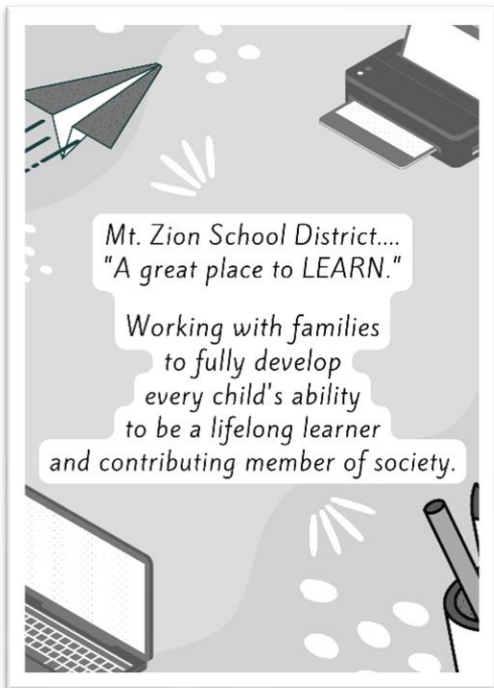
Dr. Travis R. Roundcount

WELCOME TO THE 2025–2026 SCHOOL YEAR!

We're excited to welcome all of our Mt. Zion families to another fantastic school year! Linked here is the [\[2025–2026 School Calendar\]](#), so you can plan ahead.

Our teachers, staff, and administrators will officially kick off the year with Institute Days on **August 13th and 14th**. These days are set aside for building-level and district-wide meetings, as well as important organizational sessions. **Students return to school on Friday, August 15th**, with a **half-day dismissal**. Regular bus transportation will begin that day. Please note, however, that pick-up and drop-off times may vary slightly in August as families and drivers adjust to the new routes.

If you have any questions about school programs or need to share special circumstances, please reach out to your child's school principal or the district office—we're here to help.



STAFFING & ENROLLMENT UPDATES

We're proud to have such a talented and dedicated team returning for this school year. Our teachers go above and beyond to meet the needs of our students, and their efforts are deeply appreciated. We're incredibly proud to announce a **94% teacher retention rate!** This figure reflects our unwavering commitment to creating a supportive and thriving environment for our educators. This high retention rate directly benefits our students, ensuring consistency, experienced instruction, and strong, lasting relationships that foster exceptional learning outcomes. In addition to internal movements, we posted a few teaching positions for the next school year, including:

- Show Choir Director at the Junior High and High School
- Pre-K Teacher at McGaughey
- Speech Teacher at McGaughey & Mt. Zion Grade
- Special Education Teacher at Mt. Zion Grade
- Junior High Science Teacher
- Junior High English Teacher
- High School Math Teacher
- High School English Teacher

Mt. Zion Schools now serve **16% of all students in Macon County**, a milestone we reached last year and expect to build on as new families register in August.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

We look forward to the release of the 2025 school report cards this fall. While test scores aren't the only measure of success, they do offer insight into how well we're preparing students for the future, and we're proud of the results they reflect. Across multiple grades, Mt. Zion is outperforming other students across the state in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics on the Illinois standardized tests. To view last year's report card, [\[click here\]](#).

SCHOOL SUPPLIES (K-6)

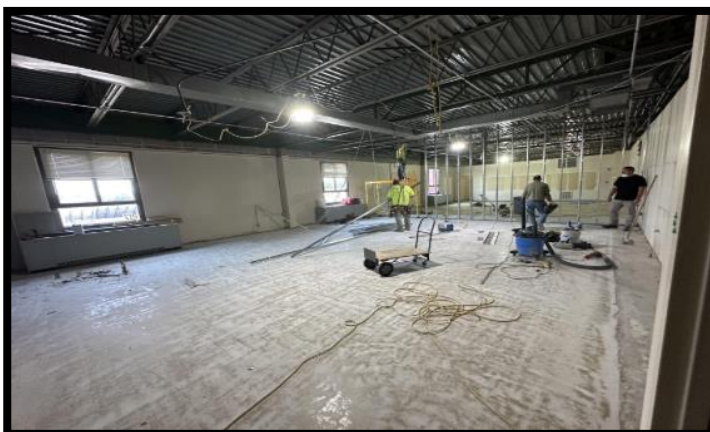
Great news for elementary families—**no more shopping for school supplies!** For grades K-6, just send your child with a backpack. Supplies will be at the school when students arrive on the first day! No more trying to find the right items, dealing with sold-out

supplies, paying tax on school supplies when the school doesn't pay tax, or schools dealing with not all the students having what they need.

FACILITIES & IMPROVEMENTS

We've been busy improving our schools over the summer:

- **Science Lab Renovations** at the Junior High and High School are underway and expected to be completed by the first week of August. This will provide an enhanced learning environment for our students. I'll share the "after" photos on Twitter at the start of the year.



- The **Fieldhouse track** will be repainted this winter—it's hard to believe that the facility is already over 10 years old!
- **New accessible playground equipment** is being installed at the Intermediate School, including a wheelchair-friendly swing.
- **Gym floors** at Mt. Zion Grade, Intermediate, and High School are all scheduled to be refinished this summer.
- The **McGaughey bus circle** is undergoing major upgrades, including new pavement, improved drainage (eliminating "Lake McGaughey" after it rains), and additional visitor parking near the front entrance.
- **Turf baseball and softball fields** are currently being planned for the summer of 2026.

CELEBRATING STUDENT SUCCESS

Congratulations to our **7th-grade girls track team**, who placed **3rd at state**, and the **8th-grade boys**, who placed **4th!** In total, Mt. Zion has had **25 sports teams place in the top 4 at state over the past 13 years**—an incredible accomplishment.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

A balanced budget today ensures a stronger, more secure tomorrow for our school community. We again concluded the fiscal year with a balanced budget, and we remain committed to fiscal responsibility, ensuring that tax dollars are spent wisely and effectively.

HOMESCHOOL PARTICIPATION

Homeschool students are welcome to participate in many of our extracurricular activities if they are enrolled in at least one class. Please visit our district website to learn more about eligibility and policies.

MASCOT LEGISLATION UPDATE

Many of you may have heard about proposed state legislation regarding school mascots. We can confirm that the bill **did not pass** this spring. If it had, the impact on our district would have been minimal. Any required changes would have occurred only during scheduled renovations of facilities displaying the name “Braves” or the spear symbol. Additionally, our current uniforms and many displays already align with what would have been permitted. We will continue monitoring this issue in future legislative sessions—but for now, **Mt. Zion remains the home of the Braves.**

LOOKING AHEAD

We hope everyone is enjoying a restful and fun summer. We have so much to look forward to in the coming year, and we remain committed to making Mt. Zion Schools a **great place to learn!**

Let's make it a
great year
together!

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

Per the Illinois School Code, permanent records must indicate that the parent/legal guardian resides within the boundaries of this school district. Families who are new to the District or families enrolling new students in the District must observe the residency requirements [found here](#). The residency documents must be provided to school personnel in the building where the student will attend.



MT. ZION FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

We are fortunate to have the Mt. Zion Foundation assist our schools with items that fall outside of the school budget. The Mt. Zion Foundation for Quality Education is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization governed by a Board of Trustees whose members are parent volunteers, business leaders, and professionals from the community with a commitment to education. The Foundation operates as an independent entity, established to enrich programs throughout the Mt. Zion Schools. To donate please follow this link. If you would like to provide the Foundation an extra hand please email mzfqe@mtzschoos.org.

Once again, the Mt. Zion Foundation for Quality Education has made a remarkable impact on our schools by providing generous grants that enrich classrooms and create exciting new opportunities for our students. This year's projects reflect a wide variety

of enhancements across the district, including flexible seating areas, new desks and tables, wheelchair-accessible furniture, updated science classroom seating, and expanded resources for our agricultural programs. The Foundation also supported literacy by funding the Bluestem Award book sets for every 4th and 5th grade classroom at the Intermediate School, strengthening their thriving Battle of the Books program. Additional grants provided social-emotional learning tools for younger students, upgraded classroom reading areas, and new foreign language books to better support our growing English language learner population.

Beyond the classroom, the Foundation's support is helping bring learning to life through engaging field trips, guest speakers, interactive zoo visits, and hands-on programs like the Probability Fair where high school students teach math concepts to younger learners through fun games. Arts and music programs also benefited from the purchase of new instruments and technology like iPads for creating digital portfolios. Classroom upgrades continued with new interactive flat panels, glockenspiels, and even materials to expand the monarch butterfly garden. The Foundation also continued to support programs like The Tribe, which helps freshman students build positive connections and adjust to high school life.

For over 32 years, the Mt. Zion Foundation for Quality Education has provided more than **two million dollars** to help bring innovative projects and meaningful experiences to Mt. Zion Schools, and we are incredibly grateful for their ongoing partnership and generosity.

Mt. Zion is fortunate to have the following individuals as Foundation for Quality Education Trustees for the 2025-2026 school year: Zach Anderson, Jessica Allen, Amy Brammer, Katy Doolin, Trisha Erickson, Lisa Flora, Jamie Foster, Amanda Jones, Ross Munsterman, Kylee Roney, Billy Rockey, Michelle Shumaker, Mary Swartz, and Betsy Tanner. To continue our success, our schools are staffed with dedicated men and women who are committed to providing our children with an excellent education in a safe and secure environment. Parental involvement also contributes immeasurably to the success of our schools. We encourage our parents to join us and be involved in the many active parent organizations in the District. This combined effort makes Mt. Zion Schools "a great place to learn."

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT



Brian Rhoades

To our new families, welcome to the Mt. Zion School District! We are excited to have you join our community and look forward to supporting your child's success in our schools. To our returning families, welcome back—we're glad to have you with us again for the 2025-26 school year!

In the Business Office, our mission is to continue providing an exceptional educational experience for all students, while responsibly managing the financial resources entrusted to us. Every decision we make is centered on what is best and most necessary to help our students grow into productive and successful citizens.

The State of Illinois continues to support schools through the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula, which combines local property tax revenue with state aid. This model determines a target funding level for each district based on its demographics and provides additional resources to districts that fall below that goal. Mt. Zion currently receives increased funding through this formula, as we are still funded at around 70% of the adequacy target—placing us in one of the lowest funding tiers statewide. On the local level, we continue to have one of the lowest two property tax rates in all of Macon County. We remain hopeful that our increasing EAV and the EBF funding will help us to move closer to the full adequacy level in the years ahead and help us to continue to offer more and more opportunities to our students.

As always, I welcome your suggestions, questions, and feedback. We will continue building on past successes and actively seek opportunities for improvement throughout the district. I look forward to partnering with all of you as we work together to ensure Mt. Zion remains a "great place to learn."

STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE COVERAGE

All students enrolled in Mt. Zion CUSD #3 are covered under the District's Supplemental Student Accident Insurance policy. This coverage provides benefits for eligible medical expenses resulting from accidents that occur during the school day or while participating in school-sponsored co-curricular activities.

Please note that this policy serves as secondary insurance. It is designed to help cover medical expenses when no other health insurance is available, or to supplement existing coverage by filling in gaps.

In the event of an accident, the student will be provided with a claim form for a parent or guardian to complete and submit to the insurance carrier. For any questions or additional information regarding this coverage, please contact the Mt. Zion CUSD #3 Central Office at (217) 864-2366.

E-FUNDS AND ELECTRONIC PAYMENT OPTIONS

Mt. Zion CUSD #3 is pleased to continue offering **E-Funds** as a convenient way for parents and guardians to make real-time payments for various school-related expenses.

To get started, you must create an E-Funds account using the link provided on the Family Access Food Service page or through the school district's website. Once your account is set up, you can select your child's name and make payments via checking account transfer or credit card. Funds are deposited directly into the appropriate school account.

Please note that E-Funds applies the following convenience fees:

- \$1.25 per transaction for payments made via checking account.
- \$2.85 per \$100 transaction for credit card payments.

In addition to E-Funds, the District accepts electronic payments for student food service accounts, registration fees, and other applicable school payments. However, please be aware that this payment method may take up to one week to process. As a result, it should not be used for lunch balances under \$10.00 or for any payments that require immediate credit. Funds will not be applied to your child's account until the District receives confirmation of the transaction from the bank.

To access the free electronic payment system, please follow the instructions provided on the district website or contact the school office for assistance.

1. Go to your local bank's online bill pay system. Enter a school building's name and address from the list below, as the company you wish to pay. For children in different buildings, please make separate entries and the bank will send separate checks. If you are making a payment for Registration and Food Service to the same building we would again ask that you make separate entries and the bank will send separate checks. This will allow the District to better track the payments being made by the bank.
 2. On your bank's online bill pay system, enter the amount of the payment you wish to make.
 3. On your bank's online bill pay system, enter in the memo line/description line the reason for the payment. Please be specific and provide as much information as possible (student's name, student's ID#, reason for payment - food service, registration fee, etc.).
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START DATES:

***Teacher Institute Days
(No Student Attendance)***

August 13th and 14th

***First Day for Students
Grades K-12, Early Dismissal,***

August 15th

11:05 for Grades 7-12,

11:35 for Grades K-6

McGAUGHEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Heather Ethell, Principal

Greetings from the entire faculty and staff at McGaughey! We want to welcome all new and returning families and students to the 2025-2026 school year. We look forward to partnering together in educational and social efforts in order to assist the McGaughey Busy Bees to "Be the Best You Can Be!" As your student begins their educational career at McGaughey, please feel free to ask questions, assist in activities, and become part of our extended family.

REGISTRATION

Online registration will be open beginning Monday, July 21, 2025. Onsite registration is scheduled for Wednesday, July 30, 2025 from noon until 6:00PM. Parents of returning or registered first grade students, along with incoming kindergarten students that were screened and pre-registered in the spring, are able to complete registration online beginning July 21st. Online registration will allow parents to update contact and health information, update transportation information, deposit money into your child's food service account, and pay the registration fee if not already paid.

Kindergarten and first grade families that do not have easy access to a computer to complete online registration may come to the building during registration times for online assistance. Anyone who has not already enrolled in the Mt. Zion School District must attend registration at the building instead of registering online.

Registration fees for kindergarten and first grade students will be \$85.00. Registration fees, and most others, may be paid online using e-Funds, by cash, or by check made payable to "Mt. Zion School District".

A friendly reminder that **all** incoming kindergarten students will need to provide a physical and up to date immunization record to enter school. Dental and eye exams are required as well.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

This school year, the district will be providing the majority of student school supplies. Families will only need to send their students with:

- One backpack
- A lunchbox (if desired)
- One full change of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, and socks) in a labeled bag to be kept in each student's backpack

OPTIONAL ORIENTATIONS

All incoming kindergarten students, and new first grade families, are invited to attend an optional orientation event. The purpose of this orientation is to introduce families to McGaughey Elementary School and provide them with important information that will be helpful in getting to know the routines and procedures of McGaughey. There will be four different orientation dates and times available in August. Information presented at each session will be the same.

- Tuesday, August 5th, 2025 at 5:30PM
- Wednesday, August 6th, 2025 at 10:30AM
- Thursday, August 7th, 2025 at 5:30PM

OPEN HOUSE

Open house for all kindergarten, first grade, and ASPIRE students will be held on Thursday, August 14th. To ensure ample parking, and space in our classrooms, there will be assigned times based on students' last names.

- **Students with LAST NAMES beginning with letters A-L are invited to attend from 3:00PM-3:40PM**
- **Students with LAST NAMES beginning with letters M-Z are invited to attend from 3:50PM-4:30PM**

KINDERGARTEN, FIRST GRADE & ASPIRE SCHOOL HOURS

McGaughey school hours are from 8:30 AM until 3:00 PM. Children who arrive before 8:00 AM should register for the Before and After School Activities Program (BASAP). Detailed information regarding drop-off and

pick-up procedures will be available prior to the start of school.

Please note, the first day of school for all kindergarten, first grade, and ASPIRE students will be Friday, August 15th with an 11:35 AM dismissal time.

PREKINDERGARTEN HOME VISITS & ORIENTATION

Prekindergarten families are not required to attend registration. Prekindergarten parents will be contacted by PreK staff to schedule an introductory home visit which will be done on August 18th or 19th. Preschool family orientation will be held on Wednesday, August 20th. Our AM families should plan to attend from 8:30AM-9:15AM. Our PM families should plan to attend from 9:45AM-10:30AM. The first day of student attendance will be on Thursday, August 21st.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL HOURS

AM PreK hours are from 8:00 AM to 10:30 AM, and PM PreK hours are from 12:00 PM to 2:30 PM. There is no supervision available for PreK students prior to or after their school day. Detailed information regarding drop off and pick up procedures will be available prior to the start of school.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS & SUPPORTS

McGaughey Busy Bees follow the motto of "Be the Best You Can Be!" Our motto is incorporated into the school through the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) which is a proactive systems approach to establishing the behavioral supports and social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional, and academic success. McGaughey will be entering the 13th year of PBIS.

All students are encouraged to follow the 3 R's: Be Ready! Be Responsible! Be Respectful!

All students practice the 3 R's throughout the building in various settings, such as during PE, on the playground, during lunch, and on the school bus. We begin the school year with PBIS by establishing clear expectations for behavior that are taught, modeled, and reinforced across all settings by all staff. Students

participate in Beehive Boot Camp and travel throughout the building with staff to learn and practice the 3 R's.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Educating students is a team process involving students, parents and the entire school staff. Communication between students, home and school creates the atmosphere we need for successful learning. The use of Family Access to look up attendance, lunch accounts and grades is a helpful communication tool. You can also find useful information by visiting McGaughey's website and clicking on Parent Resources. At any time throughout the school year, please contact teachers by note, voicemail, or e-mail. We also invite you to share your time and talent with us through volunteering at school or through the Community Club.

The Community Club welcomes participation of all families in its activities throughout the school year. The Community Club is a volunteer organization that supports McGaughey, Mt. Zion Grade, and Mt. Zion Intermediate. The purpose of the Community Club is to promote family events and projects for the direct benefit of the students. Membership is open to any parent/guardian with a child in PreK – 6th grade. Volunteers can participate in a range of activities from helping during one of the many family activities to facilitating classroom celebrations.

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

A nurturing, family friendly environment with academic excellence for all students is the climate we strive for at McGaughey. We expect the students, teachers, office staff, and support staff to "Be the Best They Can Be!" Technology will continue to be an important part of learning this school year as well as other advancements in educational practice. For math, we will continue to use Guided Math, along with Number Corner, in Kindergarten and Go Math! for 1st grade. McGraw-Hill-Wonders Reading Series will continue to be used in 1st grade this year. Our curriculum is supplemented with guided reading, Accelerated Reader, and other research based educational programs. The Response to Intervention (RtI) model is utilized in order to help all students reach their fullest academic potential. Teachers and support staff provide students with research-based interventions in a small group setting based on student need of remediation

and/or enrichment on a daily basis. In order to aid in effective and consistent data gathering, computer aided assessment tools as well as one-on-one reading and math diagnostic testing are used with all students. It is our goal to keep parents well informed of student progress.

Our Pre-K classrooms use Creative Curriculum while our kindergarten and first grade classrooms are guided by the Common Core Standards. Curriculum guides and home-based activity ideas for all grade levels are available via the McGaughey website.

The ASPIRE Program at McGaughey Elementary School serves students in Kindergarten and 1st grade. The ASPIRE classroom at McGaughey meets the special educational needs of students within a modified self-contained setting. The ASPIRE program uses the Unique Learning Systems; a standards-based curriculum.



McGaughey Elementary School:
"Be the Best You Can Be!"



MCGAUGHEY FACULTY & STAFF

- Principal:** Mrs. Heather Ethell
- Lead Secretary:** Mrs. Kaye Moran
- Attendance Secretary:** Mrs. Alicia Berg
- Pre-K:** Ms. Gracey Reynolds
Mrs. Jennifer Taylor
Mrs. Tonya Freeland
Mrs. Melissa Hilton
Mrs. Amanda Richardson
- Kindergarten:** Ms. Courtney Barter
Mrs. Mandi Ditty
Mrs. Angie Hamrick
Mrs. Amber Larkins
Ms. Dana Perry
Mrs. Alysa Peters
Mrs. Brittany Reatherford
- 1st Grade** Ms. Angelina Adams
Mrs. Rachel Cravatta
Ms. Lori Hanson
Mrs. Kathryn Holtfreter
Mrs. Christine Koehn
Mrs. Sarah Nichols
Mrs. Katie Patrick
Mrs. Dianna Weirman
- Nurse:** Mrs. Carley Morey
- Social Worker:** Mrs. Marie Baker
- Remedial Reading:** Mrs. Rachel Orris
- Music:** Mrs. Jamie Sill
- Art:** Mrs. Jenny Cowgill
- Speech:** Mrs. Allison Hammer
Mrs. TBA
- Special Education:** Mrs. Jill Driscoll
Mrs. Allison Behrends
Mrs. Kristen Bollhorst
Mrs. Andrea Gensler
Ms. Addison Orris
- Physical Education:** Mr. Mike Patrick
Mrs. Jenny Moore
- Library Resource:** TBA
- BASAP Director:** Mrs. Shirley Johnson
- Custodian:** Mrs. Kristina McKean
Ms. Embralynn Cuttill
Ms. Angelynn Freuind
Ms. Brittany Cochran
- Playground Supervisors:** Ms. Carey Flesch
Mr. Chance Mendenall
Ms. Samantha Niana

MT. ZION GRADE SCHOOL*Gary Gruen, Principal***Helping Students to Create the Future****WELCOME TO THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR**

Abraham Lincoln is purported to have said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." This sentiment captures the spirit at Mt. Zion Grade School as we prepare for the 2025-2026 school year.

Last year, we enjoyed teaching our students and welcoming new staff who enriched the learning environment. As the new school year approaches, our anticipation grows for meeting new students and re-engaging with those returning. This year, we will have eight Third Grade classrooms and seven Second Grade. All but one of our excellent teachers will return.

Also, we have done the school supply shopping for all K-6 students this year! The District will provide K-6 students with their school supplies on the first day. Each student will still bring his or her own backpack, lunchbox, and water bottle. We will not distribute student supply lists. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to the office.

STAFFING UPDATES

This year, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and best wishes to three team members who have departed. Mrs. Barter, Second Grade, has transferred to a First Grade position at McGaughey Elementary School. Ms. Connelly, our Speech and Language Pathologist, has moved with her family to California where her husband takes on a new endeavor. Mrs. Grove, our librarian, has taken a First Grade position at Cerro Gordo. We wish each of them well in their new endeavors.

We also happily announce a new addition to our staff. Mrs. Sarah Bone joins us as an additional ASPIRE teacher. She comes to us from Cerro Gordo, and we look forward to welcoming her to the Mt. Zion Grade School team. Additionally, we will welcome two additional aides to support that program. We will share news about any open positions as soon as possible.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

On July 18, we will email registration information to families; we will not announce teacher assignments until August 4. Online registration opens July 21 for all current students. New student onsite registration occurs on July 30, from Noon-6:00 p.m. If current families experience difficulty registering online, please come this day to use one of our computers, or give us a call at 217-864-3631. Registration fees cost \$100 per student. You may pay this fee online using e-Funds anytime or with cash or check made payable to "Mt. Zion School District" in our office during business hours.

New student registration may also occur during office hours on any day prior to the on-site registration day. Parents/guardians must present a government-issued certified birth certificate and the parent/guardian's driver's license or State of Illinois ID. Complete proof of residency for new enrollments must also come within 30 school days of the child's enrollment date. For more information on meeting the residency requirements of the District, see the section on Residency Requirements located elsewhere in this publication.

KEY DATES: TEACHER ASSIGNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT, FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL, & ORIENTATION

- August 4: Teacher Assignments Available in Skyward
- August 4: Open Halls for students to find their homeroom and see their class roster (time to be determined).
- August 13: Teacher Institute Day – No School
- August 14: Teacher Institute Day – No School
- August 14: 5:30-6:15 PM – Second Grade Come-and-Go Open House
- August 15: First Day for Students – 11:35 a.m. Early Dismissal and Teacher In-service. Due to early dismissal only breakfast will be served.
- August 18: First Full Day of School for students.

- August 18: 5:30-6:15 PM – Third Grade Come-and-Go Open House
- We will share details via email closer to the dates.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR CHILD

Mt. Zion Grade School provides a nurturing and rewarding educational environment for your Second or Third Grader. Our families will find we have staff dedicated to our students' education and growth. Our families chose Mt. Zion School District, and we recognize that they have made some sacrifice to have their child at Mt. Zion Grade School. We recognize your commitment to your child's education, and we support your desire to raise a well-rounded adult. On behalf of the staff and faculty of Mt. Zion Grade School, welcome to the 2025-2026 school year.

COMMUNITY CLUB

The Community Club provides our students and staff with those "extras" that we find indispensable. It also provides a great way for parents to become involved in the school community. The staff and I look forward to working with them, and we appreciate their hard work and dedication to the cause.

YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME

We appreciate you entrusting us with your child's education and encourage the participation of parents and guardians both at home and school. Open and honest communication serves each child best. Therefore, we'll contact you if any concerns arise, and we ask that you feel free to reach out to us via email or at **864-3631**. We'd love for you to join us at our family events, and please remember to **check in at the office** when you visit. The staff at Mt. Zion Grade School looks forward to partnering with you and your child to ensure a productive and rewarding learning experience for all students.



Mt. Zion Grade School
 "Mt. Zion Grade Rocks!"

MT. ZION GRADE FACULTY AND STAFF

Principal:	Mr. Gary Gruen
Office Secretaries:	Mrs. Sheila Drum Mrs. Amber Shobe
2nd Grade:	Mrs. Denise Hatayama Mrs. Michelle Koslofski Mrs. Allison Perry Mrs. Jessica Peters Mrs. Sadie Stambaugh Mrs. Nicole Tapscott Mrs. Kelly Wilson
3rd Grade:	Mrs. Angie Causey Mr. Michael DeMeio Mr. Derek Grove Mrs. Elizabeth Kyburz Mrs. Sarah Pierce Mrs. Sheri Schorfheide Mrs. Jessica Talty Mrs. Renee Wendell
Art:	Ms. Jenny Cowgill
Library:	TBA
Music:	Mrs. Jamie Sill
Physical Education:	Mr. Greg Blakey Ms. Jenny Moore
Special Education:	Mrs. Nicole Paulson Mrs. Wendy Ragsdale
Special Education Aides:	Mrs. Colleen Scherer Mrs. Denise Toothman
Special Education ASPIRE:	Mrs. Stephene Beller Mrs. Sarah Bone
Special Education ASPIRE Aides:	Mr. Cody Cannon Mr. Don Hudson Mrs. Cindy Warrick TBA
Special Reading:	Mrs. Julie Courson
Speech:	TBA
Nurse:	Mrs. Alex Smith
Social Worker:	Ms. Brynn Becker
Custodians:	Ms. Diana Wickline Mr. Steven Graham
Cafeteria Staff:	Mrs. Shawna Lynch Mrs. Kathy Anderson Ms. Monica Stuart Mrs. Vickie Wehr
Playground Supervisors:	Mrs. Danielle Fair Mrs. Adena McCoy Mrs. Danette Robinson Mrs. Karen Tharp

MT. ZION INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Randy Thacker, Principal

On behalf of the entire faculty and staff of the Intermediate School, I am very excited to welcome all new and returning students and families to the 2025 - 2026 school year. We are looking forward to a great school year!

At Mt. Zion Intermediate School, we take immense pride in our exceptional team of educators. They skillfully blend a rigorous academic challenge with genuine compassion for each student.

Our primary focus is to ensure students are well-prepared: ready for daily learning, accountable for their assignments and social interactions, and capable of demonstrating positive respect toward their classmates and teachers. We are also incredibly fortunate to benefit from a robust tradition of parent and family support, which significantly enhances our educational offerings and directly contributes to student achievement. As the world continues its rapid evolution, we are actively guiding our students to cultivate a global perspective, effectively integrate technology into their learning, and meet the academic demands of their grade levels.

For the upcoming school year, we're excited to continue co-curricular learning opportunities, including programs such as 6th-grade Honor Choirs, Jazz Band, Pre-Algebra, and social-emotional learning lessons. These enriching programs, combined with an enhanced classroom curriculum, are designed to deliver a comprehensive educational experience for all Intermediate School students.

Great news! The District will provide student school supplies for the upcoming school year. Students are still responsible for bringing their own backpacks and lunchboxes. Therefore, we won't be issuing a general

student supply list. If you have questions, feel free to reach out to the office.

Finally, during the upcoming school year, we encourage parents to continue a positive partnership with our faculty by maintaining frequent communication. Please phone, email, utilize assigned teacher apps, or schedule meetings to monitor your student's progress. We know your child's educational experiences will be the best when you are involved in their growth and learning. We are looking forward to our unified efforts to see every student succeed!

REGISTRATION & INSTRUCTIONAL FEE

Online registration is available for all current Mt. Zion students beginning July 21. Parents/guardians can access the online registration materials via the Skyward Family Access system. Start by going to the Mt. Zion School District website: www.mtzschools.org and click on the Skyward Family Access tab.

Onsite registration for new students will be held at the Intermediate School on Wednesday, July 30th, Noon – 6:00 p.m. **The Instructional Fee for 4th through 6th grade students is \$100.** All district fees may be paid on-line through e-Funds, or onsite by cash/check made out to "Mt. Zion School District."

HEALTH & PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

The School Code requires all students entering 6th grade to submit a physical exam, updated Immunizations and a Dental exam. Any student entering an Illinois school for the first time, regardless of grade level, is required to submit a State of Illinois Physical, Eye, and Dental exam and proof of Immunizations. Exams must be submitted on the required State of Illinois forms, available on the district website. Sports exams, required for participation in athletics, are not acceptable as a school physical. Health requirements are due on or before the first day of school, but no later than October 15th, with Dental exams due May 15th.

State-mandated hearing and vision screenings are conducted for all Special Education students, any student new to the district, and at the request of a parent/teacher. Students who fail the first screening will be re-screened in 10-14 days.

Medication of any kind during the school day must be ordered/authorized by an MD, PAC, or Nurse Practitioner, as well as a parent/guardian. The district approved medication authorization form can be found on the district website. Please contact the School Nurse with any questions or concerns regarding your child's health. If the student fails the second screen, a referral is sent home to the student's parent or guardian.

CAFETERIA PROGRAM

School lunch prices for the 2025 -26 school year are included in this publication. Hot lunch menus are posted on-line at the District web site during the school year. Additionally, breakfast is served every morning with milk and juice available.

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL HOURS

School hours for the Intermediate School are from 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. The first bell rings at 8:10 at which time students go to their lockers and then to their classrooms. A second bell rings at 8:25 at which time teachers review announcements and our student's broadcast is played. Classes begin at 8:30 a.m. Supervision of children begins at 8:00 a.m. Students should not arrive before 8:00 a.m. unless they are attending a special band or chorus practice.

SAFE STUDENT PICK-UP

To ensure a safe environment for our students, we need your cooperation during drop-off and pick-up in our south parking lot.

Morning Drop-Off:

- Please pull your vehicle all the way up to the bus shelter. This helps keep traffic flowing and out of the streets.
- Do not leave your vehicle unattended.
- If you need to visit the office, please park in the main parking lot.
- If you arrive before 8:00 AM, please park in the main lot instead of waiting in the drop-off area.

Afternoon Pick-Up:

- Do not double-park in the traffic lane.
- Feel free to use the parking spaces for pick-up.
- **Important Safety Note:** Students are directed to wait on the sidewalk until their vehicle pulls up or a parent comes to the sidewalk to receive them. With the high volume of traffic before and after school, your teamwork in creating a safe flow is essential. Our goal is a safe dismissal and pick-up process for everyone!



Mt. Zion Intermediate School:
*"Preparing students to be
 ready, responsible and respectful"*



MT. ZION JR. HIGH SCHOOL

Julie Marquardt, Principal

**HOME OF PRIDE,
TRADITION, AND SPIRIT**

Welcome from the Mt. Zion Junior High faculty and staff! We're enthusiastically preparing for the new school year and can't wait to greet all our students. We're here to support them every step of the way as they begin and complete their time at the Junior High.

It is always apparent to me through observation and discussions with students and parents that Mt. Zion residents desire a quality education for their children and they encourage them to behave in an acceptable manner both academically and socially.

The District is large enough to offer challenging programs to all students, yet small enough to maintain a feeling of "togetherness".

REGISTRATION

Online registration is available to parents/guardians using Skyward Family Access beginning Monday, July 21st. For those that cannot register online, on-site registration for students is Wednesday, July 30th from 12:00pm – 6:00pm. The instructional fee is \$100.00 per student and can be paid online by efunds or on registration day.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Mt. Zion Junior High students are required to take science, math, literature/composition, social studies, physical education, and an elective. The students may choose art, band, orchestra, French, Spanish, home economics, computer concepts, yearbook/ journalism, or study hall as an elective.

SCHOOL HOURS

School will start at 7:45 a.m. daily and be dismissed at 2:30 p.m. The schedule is as follows:

1 st Period	7:45-8:30
2 nd Period	8:34-9:19
3 rd Period	9:23-10:08
4 th Period	10:12-10:57
5 th Period (Lunch)	11:01-11:32
6 th Period	11:36-12:19
7 th Period	12:23-1:06
8 th Period	1:10-1:54
Focus Period	1:58-2:30

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education uniforms may be purchased using eFunds or they will be on sale during registration. Cost is \$15.00 per set or \$10 per item (White/Red, limited sizes, while supplies last) or new this year, (Red/Black) \$30.00 per set or \$20 per item . Uniforms are required for participation in physical education classes. The fee can be paid online by efunds or on registration day.

SPORTS

Softball, baseball, and cross country will begin in late July or early August. For exact times and dates, please call the Junior High Office, at 217-864-2369. Please remember that all athletes must have a physical on file to try out and participate. The athletic physical form is available on the school web site. There is a \$40.00 athletic fee per sport, per student for all who participate in Junior High sports. Note: There is \$260.00 cap per family.

**HANDBOOK/CALENDAR &
CO-CURRICULAR GUIDE**

As part of the registration process parents will be required to go online and sign off indicating that they have read and agreed to the terms of the documents.

PICKING UP STUDENTS AFTER SCHOOL

Parents are asked to leave the circle drive on the east side of the school open for bus pick up before and after school. The suggested place to pick up your children would be in the back parking lot on the west side of the

school. The circle drive may be used when buses are not loading and unloading.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Students and parents are reminded that we have a social worker and student dean on staff at the Junior High School. If you have any questions regarding your child's schedule, please call the office at 864-2369.

HEALTH INFORMATION

All students who attend Mt. Zion Junior High School must have a parent complete and sign a Health Information form. This form is provided at registration or may be obtained on Family Access. The health information form equips the school nurse, teachers, and coaches to deal with any health problems or emergencies students may experience while at school or participating in a sport. This form should be on file by the first day of school.

All students who will use medication of any kind while at school must have the medication authorization form filled out by their doctor and parent. This includes any over the counter medication as well as inhalers. Illinois state laws provides for students who wish to carry their inhaler while at school. However, any student with an inhaler must have the authorization form on file with both doctor and parent signatures. Any form submitted without both signatures cannot be accepted. Forms are provided at registration. If there are any questions pertaining to your student's health, please feel free to call your child's school and speak with the nurse.

PICTURE INFORMATION

Inter-State Studio will take pictures of junior high school students during the morning of Thursday, August 21st. Picture forms will also be sent home with your student on Wednesday, August 20th. Students may bring money (payable to Inter-State Studio) that day if they wish to purchase pictures or pictures may be purchased online by following the directions on their picture packet.

DRESS CODE

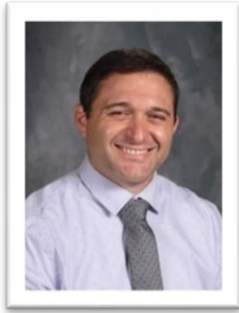
As your building administrator in the Mt. Zion School District, I am anticipating a great year! In an effort to provide a wholesome atmosphere at the Junior High

School, it is requested that parents again cooperate in monitoring the apparel your children wear to school. Specifically, the following will not be allowed; apparel that doesn't meet the dress code, shirts that have profanity on them or advertise alcohol or tobacco product, and/or shirts having scenes which imply the physical or sexual abuse of people or animals. Your understanding and cooperation with this concern will be appreciated. For additional information, please refer to the District Dress Code.

I trust the information in this publication will be helpful. If you have any additional questions, please call me at 864-2369.



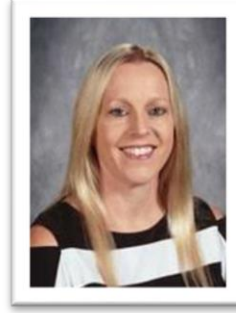
Mt. Zion Junior High School:
"Home of pride, tradition, and spirit"

MT. ZION HIGH SCHOOL

Justin Johnson,
Principal



Rob Prange,
Assistant
Principal



Diann Durbin,
Athletic
Director

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Welcome to the 2025-2026 school year!

Online registration will open on July 21st at www.mtzschools.org. Online registration will allow parents to update information, pay fees, and provide you with access to the 25-26 District Handbook. Families that do not have access to a computer are welcome to come to the school office for assistance in completing online registration. Our on-site registration day is July 30th from 12 PM-6 PM. Returning families are not required to attend, but are welcome to come tour the building, check lockers, and seek any assistance needed from office staff. Anyone enrolling in Mt. Zion School District for the first time must attend on-site registration at the building instead of registering online. New families should bring proof of residency, birth certificate, and a current transcript. We look forward to seeing returning students & meeting new students on July 30th.

GO BRAVES!

HOW TO FIND YOUR SCHEDULE

Schedules will be viewable on Family & Student Access on July 22nd. It is recommended that you print a copy of your schedule prior to the first day of school. Your locker assignment and combination are also accessible on your schedule.

CLASS SCHEDULE TERM CODES

YR - means that you will have this class all year
 S1 - means that you will have this class 1st semester only
 S2 - means that you will have this class 2nd semester only
 T1 - means that you will have this class 1st nine weeks only
 T2 - means that you will have this class 2nd nine weeks only
 T3 - means that you will have this class 3rd nine weeks only
 T4 - means that you will have this class 4th nine weeks only

CLASS/SCHEDULE CHANGES

The only changes that can be made prior to the start of school are listed below:

- If a class you previously requested did not fit into your schedule
- If you are a work program student -- see Mrs. Stephenson
- If you are a new student to our district
- If your schedule does not account for work taken or not taken during summer school
- If you have not signed up for enough classes or have too many classes scheduled for this upcoming year
- If you failed a course last semester and you need to pick up another course

LUNCH ASSIGNMENT

Your lunch is determined by your 6th hour class and will display either A (11:48-12:21) or B (12:35-1:07) next to your 6th period class on your schedule. Lunches will be designated on your schedule by early August.

GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT

Students have been assigned the following counselors:

Freshmen & Juniors.....Mrs. Kasey

Sophomores & Seniors..... Mrs. McCarty

To be able to effectively assist all families, July 30th will primarily be reserved for new students to the district to meet with guidance counselors about scheduling. Returning students are asked to email the assigned counselor (Mrs. McCarty—mccartyn@mtzschoools.org; Mrs. Kasey—kaseya@mtzschoools.org) to make an appointment to meet the first week of school to address questions regarding schedules.

FEES

Instructional Fee

The price for all high school students is \$100.00. You may also purchase an optional Chromebook protection plan for \$25.

Driver Education Fee

There will be a \$40.00 surcharge for all students enrolled in Driver Education classes for the 2025-2026 school year.

Parking Permits

Parking permits (\$40 1st semester, \$20 if purchased on/after January 5th [with a \$60 per family cap]) must be purchased in the office along with filling out a registration card.

Athletic Participation Fee

All athletes must pay a participation fee. The cost of the participation fee is \$60.00 for high school students per sport (\$260.00 family cap). The fee must be paid before the first athletic contest. If the student decides to quit the sport, a refund of the participation fee will be given

up until the first game. No refunds will be given after the first game.

Heartland Tech Academy & Richland Transfer Academy

Technical Academy fee is \$200 for the year and Transfer Academy fee is \$400 for the year.

Free/Reduced Breakfast/Lunch Applications

Applications will be available during registration and on the District webpage. Once the application is completed and submitted to the office, you will be sent a letter to notify you if you were approved or denied according to the guidelines.

PROGRAMS & POLICIES AT MTZ HIGH

- **Welcome Class of 2029!** Mt. Zion High School provides a program to assist freshmen in transitioning into high school that we call The Tribe. The Tribe is designed to welcome & support freshmen by pairing them with a junior or senior leader as a mentor. A special Tribe Orientation & Welcome is planned for incoming freshmen on August 11th from 8 AM to 12 PM.
- **New Staff:** We are proud to welcome our new staff members for this school year: Diann Durbin (Athletic Director) Josie Maul (English) Camryn Skundberg (Math) Haley Baker (Library Aid).

DRESS & APPEARANCE

Please help us set a positive tone in getting the school year off to good start by making appropriate choices when purchasing school clothes. We ask that clothing be safe and respectful.

FRESHMEN & ATHLETIC PHYSICALS

The School Code of Illinois requires that students entering 9th grade, or students who have moved into the district from out of state must have a physical exam completed prior to October 15th.

All students going out for athletics & show choir must

have a current physical to tryout, practice, & compete. A physical is good for 13 months from the date of the exam and a copy of the physical must be on file in the high school office. A 9th grade physical can be used as an athletic physical.

9th grade physical forms & athletic physical forms can be found on the website.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION GYM SUIT POLICY

Every student is required to have regulation gym clothes to participate in Physical Education. This shall consist of a solid red, t-shirt or sweatshirt, solid black shorts or sweatpants, socks, and gym shoes with laces. You may purchase MTZ PE clothing items directly from us.

HEARTLAND TECHNICAL ACADEMY STUDENTS

The first day of attendance for students attending the Technical Academy is Monday, August 18th. The Mt. Zion School District will provide transportation to the Technical Academy on all days including those when Mt. Zion High School is not in session. The bus will depart from the front of the high school at 11:15 a.m. Students attending HTA will be able to purchase school lunches following 4th hour. Morning students must supply their own transportation. All students enrolled in the Heartland Technical Academy will follow the calendar established for the Technical Academy at www.tech-academy.org

FIRST DAY & WEEK of ATTENDANCE

The first day of attendance will be a half day on Friday, August 15th. Classes will begin at 7:45 AM and dismiss at 11:05 AM. Students enrolled in Early Bird classes should report as normal at 6:50 AM.

Beginning August 18th, classes will begin at 7:45 AM and dismiss at 2:30 PM.

ATHLETICS

***Check out all athletic schedules on our website**

1st Day of practice/tryouts are as follows:

- Football—Monday, August 11th, 4-7pm, Football Field. Contact Coach Patrick Etherton @ ethertonp@mtzschoools.org for more info.
- Girls' Golf—Monday, August 11th, 2 pm @ South Side Country Club. Contact Coach Jay Driscoll @ driscollj@mtzschoools.org for more info.
- Boys' Golf—Monday, August 11th, 1 pm @ South Side Country Club. Contact Coach Colby Burdick @ burdickc@mtzschoools.org for more info.
- Cross Country—Monday, August 11th, 7 am @ HS Track. Contact Coach Kelly Fox @ foxks@mtzschoools.org for more info.
- Boys' Soccer—Monday, August 11th, 5 pm @ Intermediate Field. Contact Coach Bryce Shumaker @ 23bshumaker@gmail.com for more info.
- Girls' Tennis—Monday, August 11th, 8 am @ Fletcher Park. Contact Coach Mike Roberts @ robertsm@mtzschoools.org for more info.
- Volleyball—Contact Coach Kristin Sams @ JKSams@hotmail.com for more information.

Athletes must complete the online registration process for school before the first practice listed above.

SCHOOL PICTURES & HEADSHOTS

School pictures for all students will be taken the morning of Wednesday, August 20th. All students should have their picture taken (Grades 9-12), even if you are not purchasing a package, for I.D. cards and Family Access/Skyward use. Picture information is included in the registration email or may be picked up in the high school office. Retakes are scheduled for October 22nd.

Seniors will have yearbook senior headshot pictures taken at school on August 20th as well. They are encouraged to dress in their best for this photo.



Mt. Zion High School

SCHOOL DAY & BELL SCHEDULE AT MTZHS

Classes begin at 7:45 am daily and end at 2:30 pm. The bell schedule is as follows:

Early Bird	6:50-7:35
Warning Bell	7:35
1 st Hour	7:45-8:30
2 nd Hour	8:34-9:19
3 rd Hour	9:23-10:08
4 th Hour	10:12-10:57
5 th Hour	11:01-11:44
6 th Hour	
A Lunch	11:48-12:19
A Class	11:48-12:31
B Lunch	12:35-1:06
B Class	12:23-1:06
7 th Hour	1:10-1:54
Focus Period	1:58-2:30

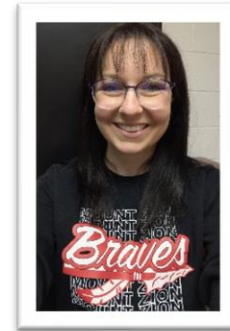
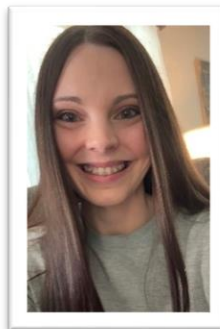
SCHOOL OPENING & CLOSING

School doors open at 7:15 AM for all students except those enrolled in Early Bird classes which begin at 6:50 AM. At 7:35 AM, a ten minute warning bell will ring and students will be permitted to go to their lockers and pick up the necessary materials for their first hour class. Students arriving before that time must report directly to the large gymnasium.

Students may see a teacher before that time by providing a hall pass from their teacher and when finished, report directly back to the gymnasium.

The regular school day ends at 2:30 p.m. **Students must be out of the building by 3:00 PM unless they are participating in an extracurricular activity.**

SCHOOL HEALTH



*Carley Morey, McGaughey, Alex Smith, Grade,
Jeanne Luckenbill, Intermediate,
Cassie Mullins, JH/HS
School Nurses*

Welcome back to the new school year! We hope that your summer was a healthy one!

Physical Examination requirements are due on or before the first day of the school year, but no later than October 15th, 2025 for all students entering the following grades for the first time:

- Pre-Kindergarten
- Kindergarten
- 6th grade
- 9th grade
- Any student who is entering an Illinois school for the first time, regardless of grade level, within 6 weeks of enrollment

Dental Examinations or Waiver are required by May 15th, 2026, for all students entering:

- Kindergarten
- 2nd grade
- 6th grade
- 9th grade
- Any student new to the District or entering an Illinois school for the first time regardless of grade level, within 6 weeks of enrollment

Eye/Vision Examinations or Waiver are required by October 15th, 2025 for students entering:

- Kindergarten
- Any student entering an Illinois school for the first time, within six weeks of enrollment

Immunizations must be up to date and on file by October 15th, 2025.

We welcome the opportunity to assist parents and students during the upcoming school year and look forward to seeing all of you soon!

SPECIAL EDUCATION



Renea Smith, Administrator

As we begin the 2025-2026 school year, we are excited to expand opportunities for parent engagement. Last year, we hosted our second Transition Night, featuring several exhibitors who shared resources and opportunities available to students with special needs as they prepare for life after graduation. We are pleased to announce that our third Transition Night is scheduled for October of this year. Please note, this is not an event just for high school students. This is an event for all students with an IEP. This event is designed to provide students with disabilities and their families with comprehensive information about the steps and agencies involved in planning for employment, post-secondary education, and independent living.

In addition, we hosted a Parent Informational Meeting during the first semester. The meeting featured a presenter informing parents about ABLE, which is a savings account that can be started for individuals with disabilities. We received positive feedback and are planning additional informational meetings throughout the school year to continue supporting and connecting with our families. This fall, Mindy Donahue, behavior

specialist, will provide a parent training on September 24th, 2025.

Save the Date: The Illinois Statewide Transition Conference will take place October 30-31st in Springfield at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. This annual event is designed for transition-aged youth and young adults with disabilities, their families, educators, vocational professionals, caregivers, health care providers, and community advocates. The conference will focus on best practices for person-centered transition planning that supports all areas of adult life. Visit their website for registration details.

As always, I am committed to strengthening the services and programs that Mt. Zion offers to support students with diverse needs. Currently, Mt. Zion provides special education services for students from PreK through age 22. These services range from speech-language therapy to self-contained classrooms, and include related services such as occupational therapy, as well as hearing and vision support.

I remain dedicated to creating a supportive and effective learning environment where every student can thrive. I believe that every child can be challenged to reach their full potential, and that success is best achieved through strong partnerships between home and school. My goal is to foster trust, collaboration, and confidence within our school community. I look forward to working with parents and community members as we continue to grow and improve our programs—because relationships come first.

Please feel free to reach out to me at smithr@mtzschools.org.



CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY



Billy Rockey, Director

Hello, my name is Billy Rockey, and I am entering my twelfth year in this position. I have been with Mount Zion Schools for the last eighteen years as a teacher and more recently as the Director of Curriculum and Technology. I am excited to continue serving the teachers, staff, and students of Mount Zion Schools. As the parent of two current Mount Zion students and one recent graduate, working with our teachers and staff on increasing student achievement through more effective use of educational technology and curricular best practices is my number one priority.

Mt. Zion Schools continues to focus on preparing our students to be 21st-century learners equipped to thrive in a rapidly evolving technological world. All students in grades 7-12 will be issued **Brand New** Lenovo 100e Chromebooks for both in-class and at-home use, while students in younger grades have dedicated devices for classroom learning. It's hard to imagine a time when Chromebooks weren't a staple in our educational environment. Today, we are embracing the next wave of technology by actively integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in a safe, ethical, and responsible manner. Through structured professional development, digital citizenship curriculum, and AI literacy initiatives, we are empowering both educators and students to harness AI as a tool for learning, creativity, and problem-solving. Our focus is on helping students critically evaluate AI-generated content, understand its ethical implications, and use it to enhance—rather than replace—their own thinking. Supported platforms like Google Workspace, Gemini, MagicSchool, and Khanmigo provide students at all grade levels with dynamic learning experiences. Many of our teachers have completed Google Level 1 and Level 2 certifications and are now leading the charge as "early adopters" in exploring and sharing best practices for AI in the classroom. We are proud of the strides our staff continues to make in developing their

technology skills to cultivate the next generation of lifelong learners and responsible digital citizens.

We are proud to continue expanding opportunities for students at every grade level. Thanks to generous funding from the **Mt. Zion Foundation for Quality Education**, we've been able to upgrade classroom technology across the district. The Foundation has supported improvements in audio systems, STEM resources, and interactive classroom displays, all designed to create more dynamic and engaging learning environments for our students. Another highlight this year was the continued success of **Braves TV**, which gives high school students hands-on experience in media production while allowing families and community members—both near and far—to tune in to Mt. Zion events and celebrations.

Student safety online remains a top priority for Mt. Zion Schools. We are committed to providing a secure digital learning environment and have implemented multiple layers of protection to safeguard student activity in compliance with the **Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)**. All student Chromebooks are protected through Google's built-in content filter, along with **GoGuardian**, which provides additional filtering, monitoring, and reporting features whether students are at school or working from home. Teachers also use **Hapara**, a powerful classroom management tool that allows them to view student Chromebook screens in real-time during class, helping to keep students focused and on task in a safe, supported environment.

We are proud of our achievements in improving our network infrastructure over the last several years. We have wifi in every classroom and continue to expand access in high traffic areas. This additional connectivity will allow us to meet the increasing demand of our district's expanding technological needs. This year our district is moving to the state supported Illinois Century Network as our broadband provider. With this move, we will receive 4 times more bandwidth. Our district Internet bandwidth will be a robust 4,000 mbps to support the continued growth of online educational learning across the district.

Mt. Zion Schools continues to look for ways to improve communication with parents. We are excited to move from Skylert to ParentSquare as our primary means of communication with stakeholders. This service will allow us to utilize text/SMS messaging with parents, staff, and students. It will also provide a more efficient means of

communication between teachers, coaches, staff and parents. We are planning for this to become the “one stop shop” for school/home communication.

Big changes are coming to Skyward this year as we upgrade from SMS 2.0 to **Qmlativ**, offering a more modern experience with better functionality and smoother integration with tools like **ParentSquare**. Skyward Family Access is a valuable resource for all parents, providing real-time updates on student grades, food service balances, discipline records, report cards, and more—all in one convenient place. If you haven’t set up your account yet, you can easily request access by filling out the **Family Access Request Form** available in the “Links” section of our district website.

Speaking of the website, we gave it a fresh new look last year when we transitioned to **Finalsite** as our web provider. You can always find the latest district news and resources at www.mtzschools.org. All of our teachers are just an email away, with contact information listed right on the district site. Don’t forget to stay connected by following **Mt. Zion Schools on Facebook and Twitter** for updates, celebrations, and important announcements.

Julie McNamara, Technology Specialist, continues to play a vital role in keeping our growing resources working efficiently. The assistance she provides to our staff, along with the behind-the-scenes infrastructure maintenance she performs enables our teachers to provide a high quality, technology-rich environment for students.

I am happy to discuss the district’s curriculum and technology matters with parents and community members. I can be reached at 217-864-2369 or by email at rockeyw@mtzschools.org.

Visit your child’s school and see how technology is being used to enhance your child’s education!



TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



Paul Reeve, Director

Hello from transportation. The 25 – 26 school year is about to start and there are a few things I would like to share with you. In case you didn’t know, the district obtained all new buses in December of last year. All of the buses are now equipped with air conditioning and a new camera system designed to be able to look down into seats instead of across the tops.

Since Covid, our ridership has increased each year and we expect another increase this year. With more and more stops being added, it is making our scheduling even more challenging. Our biggest challenge is getting our afternoon HS/JH students home and then buses back to the elementary schools as close to dismissal time as possible. We have the same issue in the morning with our elementary routes after we drop the JH/HS and picking up elementary. So this year we are looking for ways to better stay on or save time.

1. We will be looking for stops that are close together and combining them. This will mainly be for JH/HS students but may affect some elementary. For the JH/HS stops we will choose the stops based on the most central location for all the students at that stop. For elementary, we will look at the age of the students with the stops closer to or at the house of the youngest students.

2. Please have your students ready and outside a few minutes before the scheduled pick up time. This is important for many reasons. It keeps our schedule on time, it avoids drivers from missing students if they don’t see them, but mostly, it makes it safer. Students who are running to make the bus are more likely to not pay

attention to traffic and run out in front of a car or even the bus driver not see them.

I'd like to take some time to discuss how we can work together to help maintain order on the bus. Being aware of the rules on the bus are important and the support of the adults in the student's life will go a long way to help us keep students safe while on the bus. A few things I would like to highlight that cause the most issues are as follows:

1. No cell phones are allowed out on the bus for grades K-6. They must be kept in their bookbags at all times. Cell phones are allowed for ages 7-12 but absolutely no pictures or video is allowed.
2. No music or blue tooth speakers are allowed. If the students want to listen to music, they must have ear pods or headphones.
3. No toys, Pokémon cards or other items are allowed to be out on the bus. Please keep them in bookbags.
4. Please keep pencils, pens or other sharp objects in your book bags. If a student causes damage to a seat cover, the parent is responsible for the cost of replacing the seat.
5. Please affirm with your student that staying seated while on the bus is extremely important. The school bus is by far the safest mode of transporting a student to and from school. If your student is standing up or out in the aisle and the bus has to stop quickly or is involved in a collision, their likelihood of being injured or worse is greatly increased.
6. Eating and drinking are not allowed on the bus for a couple of reason. If the bus hits a bump at just the right time, it could cause a student to choke. If a student shares food with other students, there could be a case of food allergies.
7. Please let your student know that hand sanitizer, deodorants, colognes or perfumes should never be used or sprayed while on the bus. This could trigger and asthma attack for other students or the driver.

8. Please instruct your student to use inside voices while on the bus. Loud talking or yelling can easily distract the driver and cause them to have an accident or miss a stop.

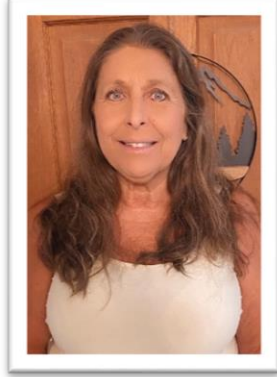
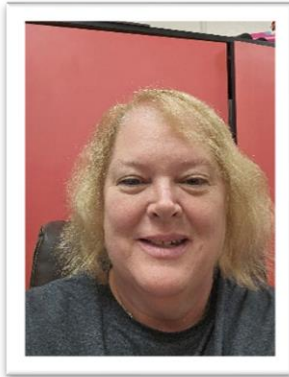
I would like to take a moment to give a shout out to our drivers. They have an almost impossible job. They have to not only safely maneuver a large vehicle in traffic, in all kinds of weather and conditions but they have to try to control behaviors on their buses. It is impossible to watch the road and to see everything that happens behind them on the bus. The more we can help them by explaining how students are expected and should conduct themselves while on the bus will only make our goal, the safe transportation of your child to and from school, an easier goal to achieve.

Lastly, I want to remind all parents/guardians that their student must ride their assigned bus to and from school at all times unless you get prior permission from the transportation office and the school. If a student tries to board a different bus other than their assigned bus, they will be sent back into the office and will have to be picked up. To contact the transportation office, call 217-864-5233.

Let's make the 25-26 school year, the best ever. We look forward to transporting your students.



FOOD SERVICE



*Nancy Jesse and Pam Mitchell
Co-Food Service Directors*

NUTRITION STANDARDS IN NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH

The 2025-26 school year continues following the National School Lunch Program requirements for hot lunch. Our school nutrition services will be participating in the DOD program this 2025-26 school year. The USDA annually allocates money for Illinois to spend with the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program. Mt. Zion Food & Nutrition Services will be maintaining a healthy balanced nutritious quality meal. Students may purchase a hot nutritious meal and healthy ala carte items.

The focus continues on offering healthier options for students in the Mt. Zion Community Unit School District #3. The District monitors the Local Wellness Policy and makes appropriate changes to improve nutrition and health education in the classroom, PE classes, and class parties. We encourage healthy choices in the breakfast and lunch program in the District. The Wellness committee includes administrators, teachers, PE staff, school nurse, food service, parents and students. Mt. Zion School District will continue to monitor the policy's implementation in the 2025-26 school year. Parents are encouraged to look at their student's food service information on Family Access. Any school organization that requires the kitchen in any of the schools for the 2025-26 should contact Pam Mitchell or Nancy Jesse four **weeks** prior to the event at 217- 864-9450. This allows for plenty of preparation in order to make the fund-raising event successful.

FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM DISTRICT #3 OVERVIEW

The food service program for grades K-12 offers a daily meal consisting of a meat/meat alternative, vegetable, fruit, and milk. A breakfast meal is offered to students in grades K-12 each day before school. A Grab N Go lunch that consists of nutritious items that are approved for the Child and Nutrition Program. The National School lunch program continues to offer nutritious ingredients in all items for the lunch program.

DEBIT ACCOUNT OVERVIEW

Nutrition and Technology team-up in the Mt. Zion School District with an automated meal purchasing system. This program provides a positive identification process used to access a student debit account and record purchases of food service items. A debit account will be established for each user and sharing of accounts will not be allowed. Students, parents, and staff may deposit advance sums of money to cover food service purchases. Advance deposits allow the user to draw from an individual debit account rather than having to handle cash during the lunch serving time. Payments and purchases are recorded daily. Parents will receive an email when the student's account reaches \$10.00. This is a reminder that will be delivered via email until a deposit is made into the student's account. If the student has a negative balance, an automatic call, email, and texted message through School Messenger will be made to the parents as a reminder. Payments may be made using e-funds through Family Access. Once online payments are made the money is automatically credited to the student account. Online payments can be made anytime. **Parents may also call the Food Service Office at 217-864-9450, by 10:00 a.m. and request a student transfer from one sibling to another.**

GRADES K-6

Payments will be accepted each morning school is in session. Payments should be sent in an envelope with the student's name, student's ID number, and teacher's name. Payments should include break-milk money for students in Kindergarten only. Payments will be posted to the student's debit account on the same day. The food service office maintains a record of student payments. Payments may also be made using e-funds through Family Access. Once online payments are made, the money automatically is credited to the student account. Online payments can be made anytime.

GRADES 7-12

Payments will be accepted **before 10:00 a.m.** each morning that school is in session. Locked drop boxes are available in five locations in the Jr. & Sr. High School buildings. This method of payment collection will ensure posting of deposits and that funds will be available in the student's debit account before lunch serving time (10:53 a.m.). and that funds will be available in the student's debit account before lunch serving time (10:53 a.m.). **Payments made after 10:00 a.m. will be posted the following school day. Students will not be allowed to purchase a la carte items Phase 5 until payments are posted.**

Payments by check, money order, cash and online e-fund payments are accepted and must contain student name and ID number to ensure proper posting. Payments of cash will be accepted in a sealed envelope, available at drop box locations.

The envelope must be labeled with student name, ID number, and amount of cash deposit. No change will be given to students. The school Food Service Administrative Assistant will maintain records of all cash deposits and parents can view these deposits in Family Access.

FREE/REDUCED MEAL APPLICATIONS

Free and reduced lunch and breakfast applications, along with letters containing guidelines, are available online throughout the school year and in each school's office. A parent/guardian wishing to apply must complete and return the application to their student's school office. Verification of income, and a letter of approval or denial will be sent by mail to the parent/guardian. **Students with Free/Reduced Status may only purchase A la Carte items if his/her debit account has funds available to cover such items. Kindergarten students with free/reduced status wishing to purchase milk for break time should make payment to cover such (\$.50 per carton) on a weekly or monthly basis.**

Meal Pricing

	Breakfast K-12	Lunch K-3	Lunch 4-12
Full	\$2.35	\$3.05	\$3.25
Reduced	\$0.30	\$0.40	\$0.40
Adult	\$2.55	\$3.75	\$3.75

Students with free/reduced status may only receive one (1) free/reduced lunch and one (1) free/reduced breakfast per day.

Second meal - \$7.00 Second meals are charged at full price; there is no federal support for second meals. Menu items may be purchased separately only in addition to a paid lunch.

K-3 one week of lunch = \$15.25

4-12 one week of lunch = \$16.25

K-3 one week of breakfast = \$11.75

4-12 one week of breakfast = \$11.75

**BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL
ACTIVITIES PROGRAM
(BASAP)**



Marie Johnson, Director

The before and after school activities program for the 2025-2026 school year will officially begin on August 15, 2025.

All children registered in the program should bring a sack lunch on this day since it is an early dismissal day

Prior to the start of school, the BASAP staff will be hosting an orientation on Tuesday, August 5, 2025 at McGaughey Elementary School at 6:30 PM. A complete overview of the program will be discussed.

We look forward to another exciting school year. If you have any questions regarding BASAP or the upcoming orientation, contact, Marie Johnson, BASAP Director, 217-864-2814, or by email at johnsonsh@mtzschoos.org.