



CHEESEMAKER PRIDE

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE

Spring Edition 2019-2020

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER

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MONROE, WI 53566
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN ELEMENTARY

2625 14TH AVENUE
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608-328-7172

NORTHSIDE ELEMENTARY

3005 8 1/2 STREET
MONROE, WI 53566
608-328-7134

PARKSIDE ELEMENTARY

920 4TH STREET
MONROE, WI 53566
608-328-7130

MONROE MIDDLE SCHOOL

1510 13TH STREET
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MONROE HIGH SCHOOL

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MISSION STATEMENT

*The School District of Monroe
will prepare each student for
the future by developing
academic, life, and
employability skills.*

*To this end, we will foster
partnerships with family and
community to ensure student
success.*

Facilities and Education



Rick Waski
District Administrator

As we have shared our concerns regarding our district's facilities, I have often been asked "what impact would new (or remodeled) facilities have on education?" This is certainly a reasonable question considering that our classrooms in many of our buildings look very similar to how they looked 20 or 40 years ago. Additionally, we have great things happening in our classrooms, even though the rooms, or furnishings in them, are dated. While facilities do not define education, improving them can improve education, and here are some examples of how improved facilities can lead to better educational outcomes for our students:

IMPROVED AIR QUALITY - We have air quality issues at both Monroe High School and Abraham Lincoln Elementary. At the high school, we have also had problems with mold. The HVAC systems in these buildings are outdated, inefficient, and do not provide the air exchange needed to keep students and staff healthy. Poor indoor air quality leads to increased incidence of asthma and allergies and negatively impacts attendance (EPA, 2016).

IMPROVED TEMPERATURE CONTROL - We all know how distracting it is when it is too cold or too warm in our homes or workplaces. While wearing a sweater or dressing in layers can help, having inconsistent temperature control in classrooms and throughout the building is an issue in our two schools on the south side of Monroe. We have classrooms that we cannot get between 68 and 72 degrees in the winter. As a result, some staff try to sneak in space heaters in order to prevent chilled extremities. Temperature control in the summer was challenging when we had summer school at these sites. This is one of the many reasons why we now have summer school at the middle school. Three years ago, we had to end the Homecoming dance shortly after it started because it was too hot in the auxiliary gym. While that facility is just over 20 years old, we didn't air condition it and that makes the facility difficult to use in the summer. Also, the lack of environmental controls is tough on the wood floors in gyms.

IMPROVED LIGHTING - Every school in the district except Parkside, utilizes fluorescent light fixtures. As part of our 2018 referendum project at Parkside, we replaced our fluorescent fixtures with LED lighting and attendance has improved and disciplinary referrals are down. Research indicates that fluorescent lighting triggers headaches in some individuals and leads to increased light sensitivity. Additional studies support LED lighting reducing stress and anxiety and improving the individual's ability to sleep restfully. Schools with LED lighting report reduced agitation among students with autism spectrum disorder and increased academic achievement among students self-reporting stress and anxiety (Nistler, 2019). While we do plan to replace light fixtures over time, we would like to replace fluorescent fixtures with LED lighting as part of our next facilities project.

BETTER EQUIPPING ROOMS FOR TECHNOLOGICAL NEEDS - Technology is a necessary part of education in a modern society. We have been a 1 to 1 device (we currently use Chromebooks) district for the last 7 or 8 years (this means that each 4th - 12th grader is issued their own Chromebook for the year). While we are committed to using technology to improve educational outcomes, our classrooms at Monroe High School and Abraham Lincoln are wired for the 1950s and 1970s, with the exception of the improvements that were made in the late 1990s. We lack an adequate number of outlets for device charging and equipment utilization, the wiring we have does not meet current building codes, and our classrooms are not laid out to allow students to utilize technology in a collaborative manner. Ask one of our students at the high school that is sitting at a 1960s or 1970s desk with a slanted top how well that works with utilizing their Chromebooks.

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Facilities and Education... (continued from page 1)

BETTER UTILIZATION OF SPACE - When people say “we used to have 1,000 students in that high school and now you only have 725 so there should be plenty of space” they are not taking into consideration that we use space differently than we did 20, 40, or 60 years ago. We would love to have more square footage so our tech ed classes could construct large stud walls or roof trusses indoors. We would like to have more square footage in our metal shops so pieces of equipment are not so closely confined. As we prioritize space, we need to think about whether what we are teaching now is still as relevant as it once was, and whether we should be focusing more on different applications of equipment and resources. However, making these upgrades one piece at a time isn't effective or efficient because often using space differently involves plumbing and electrical considerations that must accompany these upgrades.

MODERNIZING EQUIPMENT - We have amazing teachers that have built connections within and around the community to seek out a wide variety of equipment at quality prices. We have also been the recipients of many generous donations. However, there comes a time when a remodel or new construction needs to be considered. We need to replace some of our small home kitchen units in our FACE (Family and Consumer Education) classrooms with commercial kitchen equipment that is used in the food preparation industry. We have machinery in our technology education and agricultural classrooms that needs modernization. At the high school, we have been getting by with what we have; however, if we expect better educational outcomes, we need to improve and upgrade much of our equipment to get anywhere near current industry standards for safety and productivity. Not only at the high school but also at Abraham Lincoln, we have lots of equipment and furnishings that should have been replaced years ago and the district will need capital to address these needs at some point.

ACCESSIBILITY - If you are in a wheelchair or have mobility issues, Monroe High School and Abraham Lincoln Elementary School are difficult to navigate. Many people that visit the high school only see the accessible restrooms that were part of the 1998 construction project. The remaining restrooms at both sites need significant upgrades; the boys locker room at the high school is not accessible in any way, and the high school gym lacks appropriate access for students and adults with disabilities. Additionally, much of our classroom furniture does not allow students with disabilities to participate in an equally accessible manner with their non-disabled peers.

In the end, improving our facilities would make a difference educationally. We have great staff working tirelessly to do all they can to help students succeed. At the same time, research and common sense suggests that our students would perform better if key facility improvements are made.

Have a great spring and GO CHEESEMAKERS!!

Talking to Children About Change



Jenna Trame
Principal
Abraham Lincoln
Elementary

The world in which we live is constantly changing. Our day to day schedules move at a more rapid pace than ever before. This fast paced lifestyle can be overwhelming for adults, it is hard to imagine how it must feel for our children.

Children and adults alike thrive on routine, structure and “sameness” in their lives and daily schedules. Although we look forward to special events or celebrations the repetition of our daily schedule is healthy and increases our productivity. Children like knowing their daily school schedule, who will pick them up from school, what time they will have dinner, that it will be followed by homework, bath time, and their bedtime rituals.

So how then do we help children handle change? What do we do to prepare them for an expected change in routine or schedule, or furthermore, an unexpected change?

TIPS FOR HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH CHANGE

Keep Communication Open- Ask your child questions about their day on a daily basis. Ask more than just the usual “How was your day?” This will help you identify stress or anxiety they may be experiencing or specific things that are on their mind.

Additional questions to ask might be:

- What are you most proud of today?
- Is there a frustrating moment or struggle that you'd like to get off your chest?
- What's the best conversation you had today?
- What did you spend most of your time doing/thinking about today?

Give Advanced Warning- Communicate with children in advance if you are aware of a change in schedule or routine. Present it in simple language and foreshadow what you know will happen. Identify factors that you can't control or unexpected things that may come up and what an appropriate response might be.

Answer Their Questions- Allow them to ask questions and answer their questions with informative but simple answers. Too much information can also cause them unneeded stress.

CHANGE IN SCHOOL STRUCTURE

In the recent months many students across the district have heard their parents or community members talking about a big change. A

(Talking to Children... continued on page 3)

Talking to Children... (continued from page 2)

possible change in school structure in Monroe and proposed referendum questions. Students have brought these questions and concerns to school looking for clarification from school staff. Through the perspective of young children these uncertain changes sound scary and overwhelming. In their eyes change is happening now and they are unclear how to feel or respond.

While specific decisions haven't been made, kids have heard about a possible referendum, a school closing, attending a different school, or the layout of current schools being changed; it is important to talk with your child about these possibilities at an age appropriate level.

Hearing community members, their parents, school staff, or their peers talking about a different school structure than they are familiar with certainly falls in the category of unfamiliar and uncomfortable change. Keep the communication open, give advanced warning, and answer their questions to help to ease your child's concerns about this topic. By helping your child understand why changes are being proposed, who is involved in making this decision and the timeline for the process you will provide the opportunity for further conversation as your child has additional questions.

As adults, we aren't always certain when an opportunity might arise that will present change for our children but we can be prepared to talk with them about change and the possibilities of the future.

Monroe High School and a Picture of College and Career Readiness



Chris Medenwaldt
Principal
Monroe High School

At Monroe High School, we know that one of our most important duties is to prepare students for life beyond graduation day. However, how schools define that readiness has always been abstract. Some schools rely on graduation rates, some on standardized tests, and still others on college enrollment percentages. We believe that there are many indicators of readiness for life beyond high school, and the picture of a Monroe High School graduate is complex. Each student is unique, and it would be inappropriate for us to narrow our vision of college and career readiness down to a simple number or grade. We want to share with you some of the indicators that MHS tracks to show the college and career readiness of students. Furthermore, these indicators will also allow us to find ways to improve our course offerings and student opportunities for future graduates.

- Attendance freshman year is more closely linked to failure in courses than any previous test score. Nearly 95% of freshmen last year had 90% attendance.
- Co-Curricular involvement demonstrates students' willingness to be connected to the school and correlates highly with college completion. Last year, 67% of students were involved in at least one activity, and 50% of all athletes were in at least 2 sports.
- Grade point average is the only long term academic metric for schools. A 2.8 GPA from high school correlates with higher earnings as an adult. Last year, 63% of all students had a GPA of 2.8 or better.
- Advanced Placement courses demonstrate academic rigor in high school and prepare students for college-level coursework. Last year, 62% of all students taking AP courses scored a 3 or better and all of those students had a GPA of 2.8 or better.
- Passing Algebra 2 with a C or better is positively linked to both college enrollment and college graduation. Last year, 82% of students who took Algebra 2 passed with a C or better. In addition, 71% of all seniors were enrolled in a math class last year, which is another indicator of college readiness and success.
- Meeting benchmark scores on the ACT exam is a predictive indicator of freshmen year college success. Last year, 52% of students met the benchmark in English (52% in WI), 40% in Reading (38% in WI), 38% in Science (34% in WI) and 31% in Math (32% in WI).
- Work-based experiences increase the likelihood of higher earnings and consistent employment. Last year over 50 students participated in work-based learning experiences, and 5 students completed apprenticeships. This year those numbers have grown significantly with the number of apprenticeships increasing by 300%.
- Industry-based credentials indicate career readiness in a variety of employment areas. Last year, 15 individual students obtained industry certificates or credentials.
- Career and technical education allows students to learn skills in specific areas. Last year, 22 seniors focused their course work in this area by taking at least 2 CTE classes.
- Fine arts courses allow students to develop their skills and performance abilities while correlating highly with student attendance and high school graduation. In 2018-19 55% of all MHS students took an art or music course.

As you can see, there are many aspects to an MHS student. It makes sense that many of these indicators would determine college and career success. Students who come to class and complete their work are likely to have developed the kind of work habits they will need in college as well as in the workforce. Students who struggle with self-discipline or productivity in high school will likely find the challenges of college or the workplace overwhelming, regardless of their intellectual ability or content knowledge.

It is vital that we consider multiple viewpoints when determining readiness for life after graduation. Students learn in a variety of ways and should be able to demonstrate college and career readiness in a variety of ways. At MHS, we will continue to strive to provide experiences in all areas that prepare students for life beyond high school, while fostering their determination, positive attitude, collaboration, creativity, vision, and communication.

The Value of Community Feedback



Ron Olson
District Business
Administrator

As I sit here writing this article, we are actively in the middle of doing community presentations and waiting for the community survey results to provide input on what our community would like us to do with our facilities as we plan for the future. I receive a lot of questions from community members asking what the District is going to do, what exactly it will look like and why should we be doing it. I have to remind people that we are still early in the process. There are lots of decisions yet to be made. However, the time is coming where the Board of Education will need to draw upon all of the information and recommendations they have received to date, the results of the community survey, the input they are receiving from various stakeholders in our community, and determine what a possible November referendum question might be.

The Board received a recommendation in the summer of 2019 from both the District Facilities Committee and the School Consolidation Committee that supported a grade 7-12 building for a new and remodeled combined Junior/High School. That recommendation also supported closing Abraham Lincoln Elementary School. It would convert the current Monroe Middle School into a grade 4-6 intermediary school. Parkside Elementary and Northside Elementary would remain to support grades K-3.

Our Board of Education believes it is important to gather feedback from our community before addressing major issues such as referendum questions. They take that input very seriously and use it to help guide them in their decision making. They created the community survey to get feedback on various aspects of the recommended facilities plan. As you are reading this newsletter, we are likely getting ready to find out the results of the survey. The Board intends to hear the results of the survey from School Perceptions, the third-party firm who conducted the survey, at their Board meeting on March 9th. They will then take that input and in the meetings between March 9th and June work to determine what, if any, referendum question may be placed on the November ballot. Should a referendum question be adopted, the Board would pass a resolution for the question sometime in June or July and the District will then begin a communication campaign to inform the community of the question and the needs that warrant the question.

There were some very important questions in the survey that will help direct the Board. One asked whether the District should consider closing Abraham Lincoln Elementary. Another question asked whether the District should continue investing in the current 9-12 site. Were the community to say no to investing in the current site, the Board may have to consider a new high school solution on a new site. There were also questions as to whether the community would support a 7-12 and/or 9-12 solution on the current site.

Starting with the March 9th meeting and survey results, the Board will need to begin to evaluate the input from the survey and see if there is a plan or option that has been proposed, or is being considered, that best suits the input received from the community. If there is no major consensus, the Board will have to evaluate all options available to them to determine what an appropriate question might be. This may even include asking a smaller, more temporary question to address some facility needs while providing the community more time to consider and come to consensus on a broader solution.

Keep in mind that should there be a delay in addressing some of the major facility issues and concerns that are out there, whether not being able to reach consensus on a question to ask or from a failed referendum on a question that addresses the major needs at the High School and Abraham Lincoln Elementary, the problems do not go away. The cost of addressing the larger problems of a broader solution, if delayed, will only go up. In the interim, the Board would be faced with the dilemma of determining what money, if any, is put into the existing buildings with the most significant issues while we await an ultimate solution.

Hopefully there will be some strong consensus on the results from the community survey that will allow the Board to work toward a solution and a referendum question that will have the support of much of the community. Ideally, that may align with an option the Board has already been considering. If not, you can count on the Board of Education to work hard to reach a solution that they feel is not only in the best interests of our students and their education, but that also considers and values the various input they are receiving from community stakeholders. Once the Board decides on a potential referendum question, if any, that would be run, it is the community that has the ultimate say as to whether a referendum gets approved and whether a project moves forward.

To date, I am very pleased with the input and interactions I have had with a number of community members. Although many have very good and valid questions and some will be waiting to see what the referendum question is and the cost associated with it before making up their minds, all have agreed that there are concerns with our District facilities that need to be addressed and that something needs to be done. So we seem to have at least one point of consensus that we can build on as we address the current and future needs of our schools and the community.



Improving Special Education: An Action Research Approach



Joe Monroe
Director of
Pupil Services

I have had the great pleasure of working in the School District of Monroe for the last 22 years. During this time we have built a team of incredibly dedicated teachers, therapists, counselors, psychologists, nurses and paraprofessionals that work tirelessly each day to support our students. The special education team has employed a variety of evidence-based programs and strategies to support the learning needs of our most at-risk students. Great strides have been taken over the last several years, and we have countless student success stories that serve as validation of our work.

Despite this success, we also understand that as educators we have an obligation and responsibility to do more for the community's most at-risk learners. The School District of Monroe's special education achievement numbers compare favorably to the State average, but we have yet to reach a level of performance that we believe our students can achieve. Simply put...the special education team believes we can do better.

Over the past few years the special education staff has made some fundamental changes to how we serve kids with special needs. These changes include increasing the number of students that are integrated in regular education classes, developing plans that are the result of careful analysis, frequently monitoring student performance, and collaborating as a team to problem-solve challenges that interfere with student learning. While these changes have resulted in some positive incremental gains, it is clear that there is more that needs to be done.

The special education team is engaged in a cycle of continuous analysis of our performance, and this has led to an impassioned quest for answers. A variety of books, articles and podcasts were reviewed to identify potential solutions. After several months of research, a theme began to emerge. Successful students are not the result of innate qualities that some possess and some do not, but rather, develop over time through a combination of appropriate experiences along with effective instruction, support and feedback. Much of our modern special education practice is based on the idea that many at-risk students have some kind of "defect" that inhibits their learning. While there are certainly some students with significant developmental and neurological disabilities, this represents less than 5% of our student population. Most students in special education have been identified as having some kind of learning deficiency. We contend that this isn't a within-child deficit, but instead, the result of a combination of experiences and circumstances that have led to delayed skill development. In other words, we believe we can overcome this experiential deficit by employing sound instructional and relational strategies. The real question is what are the right strategies and how can they be effectively implemented in an efficient manner?

Educational research suggests that students that are supported through consistent and frequent feedback that includes high expectations, collaborative problem-solving, two-way feedback, self-charting, and genuine positive relationships will achieve at high levels despite any perceived challenges. As a result, the District has initiated an Action Research Team that is currently developing a pilot program that will develop and implement an evidence-based protocol to improve our services. Our hypothesis is that if special education teachers consistently provide support through a framework for goal setting, advising, deliberate practice, and feedback, student achievement performance will improve. In addition, it is believed that their perceptions of school and themselves as learners will also improve.

This is an ambitious project. We are setting out to not only improve how we serve students in Monroe, but to also change how educators approach students with disabilities. If we are successful we will not only positively impact the lives of students in Monroe, but also make a lasting impact on special education in Wisconsin and beyond.

Early Childhood Special Education in the School District of Monroe



Jennifer
Neuenschwander
Early Childhood
Education
Parkside Elementary

Parkside Elementary is home to the School District of Monroe's Early Childhood Special Education Program. This program is designed to help children who have special needs. However, typically developing children are included in the program and are encouraged to apply to become peer models. For those who may need more support or information, please visit our district website at www.monroeschools.com and look for the Integrated Early Childhood Program under Pupil Services. There is no cost for the program. Children come to school two half day sessions per week and busing is provided for those that qualify.

Qualification for Program: Any child who is 3 years old and demonstrates a delay in two or more areas of development can qualify for the program. The following areas are looked at through a standardized test procedure: social/emotional, cognitive readiness, adaptive behavior, fine and large motor skills, as well as speech and language development. Test administrators include at least two of the following people (it could be all four depending on concern): Early Childhood Teacher, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, and Physical Therapist.

Goal of Program: The most important goal of our Early Childhood program is to help children become enthusiastic learners. This means encouraging children to be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas and to think their own thoughts. Our goal is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners. We're teaching them how to learn, not just in Early Childhood, but all through their lives! We're allowing them to learn at their own pace and in the ways that are best for them. We're encouraging good habits and attitudes, particularly a positive sense of themselves, which will make a difference throughout their lives.



(Early Childhood... continued on page 6)

Early Childhood... (continued from page 5)

Our curriculum identifies goals in all areas of development:

- **Social:** To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are part of the group.
- **Emotional:** To help children experience pride and self-confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.
- **Cognitive:** To help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success, and by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings.
- **Physical:** To help children increase their large and small muscle skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do.
- **Adaptive Behavior:** To help children get along in their environment with the greatest success possible. This includes everyday skills like dressing, eating, and toileting skills.

Feel free to contact Jennifer Neuenschwander at 608-328-7831 if you have any questions or comments regarding the development of your child.

Memorization ≠ Mathematics



Emily McGee
Title 1 Math Teacher
Abraham Lincoln
Elementary

Elementary teachers throughout the district have been hard at work this year deepening their own understanding of what it means for a student to do mathematics. In order for students to be prepared for the 21st-century workforce, we believe they must be able to do more than simply carry out memorized procedures. Students need to understand how, why, and when to apply their knowledge in order to solve higher-level tasks.

*“To use mathematics effectively, students must be able to do much more than carry out mathematical procedures. They must know which procedure is appropriate and most productive in a given situation, what a procedure accomplishes, and what kind of results to expect. Mechanical execution of procedures without understanding their mathematical basis often leads to **bizarre** results.”*

-Principles to Actions, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, pg. 42

Our teachers plan to promote these abilities in our students by teaching them the habits of mind described in the Standards for Mathematical Practice in the Common Core State Standards.

What will my child's mathematics class look like?

Developing the mathematical knowledge described above requires instruction that actively engages children in doing mathematics—solving unfamiliar problems alone and collaboratively, analyzing different solutions, and generalizing those solutions to methods and procedures that apply to other similar problems—rather than listening to the teacher show and tell them which procedures to apply and how to carry them out. Math is not a spectator sport, and we want to encourage our students to get in the game.

How can I help my child?

Traditional ways of helping, such as showing children the steps to get answers, often prevent students from engaging in solving high-level tasks and developing conceptual understanding, thinking, and reasoning. A key shift is for teachers and parents is asking questions to help students solve unfamiliar problems rather than showing them how to solve them. When your children are struggling with a problem, try asking questions such as the following:

- What are you being asked to find out?
- What does the problem tell you? Can you describe it in your own words? Have you seen a problem like this before?
- Is there any part of the problem that you already know how to do?
- Is there anything you don't understand? Where can you find the answers to your questions?
- Will it help to make a list, a chart, a table, a drawing, a diagram? Can you act out the problem?
- What do you estimate your answer will be? Why?
- Is your strategy working? Why or why not?
- Is there another way to check your answer?
- How do you know if your answer is right or wrong?

Other ways you can support your child's learning:

- *Practicing basic facts.* Children are expected to develop immediate fact recall as well as understand the meaning for operations. Immediate recall requires practice, in addition to understanding—and time for practice in the school day is limited. Perfect times to practice are while driving, walking, waiting, and so on. This practice will build on the understanding of operations students are developing at school.
- *Playing games.* Games are a great way for parents to give their children practice with mathematics concepts and skills and develop strategic thinking, while also promoting positive student outlooks on mathematics.
- *Posing contextual problems.* Mathematics problems are part of everyday life. Encourage your children to see that math is all around them by posing problems that arise in everyday situations.

Curriculum Update—Curriculum Course Overviews



Terri Montgomery
Director of Curriculum
and Instruction

Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year we began the process of developing curriculum course overviews. Curriculum course overviews are documents that explain what each grade level and content area teaches and allows us to map and align our curriculum Kindergarten through 12th grade. The district feels it is important to have these documents so students, parents, and community members all know what we teach in each class.

In the 2017-2018 school year, teachers received professional development on how to determine mastery standards and then began the process of unwrapping the standards (seeing if the standard met the criteria of endurance, leverage, and readiness). Teachers worked diligently on Monday's during our collaboration time evaluating the state standards for each of their respective content areas to determine which of the standards would be their mastery standards. Teachers teach **all** standards, but mastery standards are those standards that have endurance, leverage, and readiness. **Endurance** means the standard provides students with knowledge that is of value beyond a single test or unit. **Leverage** means the standard provides students with knowledge that is of value in multiple disciplines and **Readiness** relates to the standard providing students with knowledge that is needed to move to the next level of learning. The process of unwrapping the standards took a year to accomplish.

The next step in the process was to produce Essential Questions based on the content being taught. Essential questions are overarching questions that can be asked throughout a course of study and most importantly could have various answers. The best way to understand an essential question is that it doesn't have one specific answer; essential questions can have numerous answers. Teachers received professional development on how to write essential questions in January of 2019 and were expected to complete their course essential questions by December of 2019. Again, most of this work was completed during our Monday early release time.

The last phase of preparing our course overviews was developing learning targets. Professional development on learning targets took place in January of 2020 and the deadline for the learning target completion is June 2020. Learning targets are directly related to the mastery standards; they are smaller parts of the mastery standards broken down into student friendly language. Teachers will continue to work on their learning targets on early release Mondays, but the course overviews require more than just Monday early release time to complete.

Once the course overviews are reviewed and edited, the district plans to make them available on our district website (www.monroeschools.com) under the Curriculum tab. Our goal is to have the course overviews live on our district website by September of 2020. We hope the course overviews will provide definitive information pertaining to what is taught in each grade level and each content area Kindergarten through 12th grade.

MHS Junior Optimist Club Hosts 9th Annual "Prom for Pennies"



Katie Lehto
Science Teacher and
Junior Optimist Advisor
Monroe High School

On January 19th, the Monroe High School Junior Optimist Club hosted the 9th annual Prom for Pennies. As in previous years, all proceeds from the event were donated to Jacob's SWAG Foundation, a local organization that provides suicide education and outreach to students in the community.

Prom for Pennies has grown from its humble beginnings with a \$1000 donation and a few dozen dresses to over 500 items of formalwear sold, including tuxedos. Dozens of Junior Optimists volunteer between 20-50 hours annually, honing their organizational skills to improve this fundraiser. Through this event, we have been able to raise and donate over \$10,000 to Jacob's SWAG to support their programs.

The impact of this student-run event is three-fold. First, prices are suggested donations, which means every student has the chance to experience prom regardless of their financial circumstances. In a world where prom dresses can cost well over \$1000, this makes prom much more affordable. In fact, many Green County high school students count on Prom for Pennies to be able to attend their junior prom. The event also gives Junior Optimist members the opportunity to develop leadership skills that open the door to a lifetime of service within our community. An event of this size requires a high level of organization and communication with our community partners to ensure success. Students take on leadership roles, handle marketing and promotions, and network with other clubs and area businesses. Finally, the event supports Jacob's SWAG and their initiatives to help support students in times of adversity and guide them toward a strong future. Kurt and Teri Ellefson have been a strong and welcomed partner in this event and the Junior Optimists are proud to be able to support such an impactful organization.



This event would not be possible without the support of our community. Thank you to the over 30 local businesses and organizations who provided grants, dress/raffle donations, transportation services, or loaned us racks. Special thanks to the MHS welding class for building our dressing rooms. Finally, we couldn't do it without the dozens of volunteers, or the young adults who show up every year on a cold Sunday in January. Thank you to everyone who was involved.

If you would like to donate (or re-donate) a dress or suit to Prom for Pennies, please contact MHS Junior Optimist Adviser Katie Lehto at katherinelehto@monroe.k12.wi.us.

Parkside Elementary's PTO—Supporting Students and Staff



Todd Paradis
Principal
Parkside Elementary

In my ten years at Parkside Elementary, one of the most important and impactful organizations I've worked with has been the Parkside Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). This group has done amazing work in supporting both students and staff at Parkside.

The PTO is made up of parents and teacher representatives that volunteer their time to attend monthly meetings, organize and work after-school events, and take part in important school committees that assist in creating a better school experience for all students.

What are the benefits of being involved?

Participation in PTO allows parents to play an active role in their child's school experience, meet other parents and teachers, and be informed and stay connected to the educational experiences that are provided to our students.

Studies show children do better in school when parents are involved. According to Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla, editors of *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*, "When parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in school. And when parents are involved in school, children go farther in school and the schools they go to are better."

What does the PTO do?

The two biggest responsibilities of the PTO are assisting in fundraising, organizing and running several fun family events throughout the year.

In the fall, the PTO hosts a Halloween Dance for all Parkside students. This is our most well-attended event. Students enjoy a haunted hallway, costume competitions, and fun with friends as they dance to the music. It is a great event for all family members and even brings back former parents and students.

Our biggest fundraising event of the year is our annual Family Fun Night. This event includes carnival-like games, food, and a basket raffle with amazing prizes. It's a wonderful opportunity for the families and staff of Parkside to come together at the end of the school year while helping to support the school.



Family Game Night, Culver's Night, clothing drives, and book fairs are just a few other annual events and fundraisers that PTO members assist with. In addition to these events, the PTO has been very supportive of our Parkside staff. They provide monthly wellness treats/gifts and go all-out in creating a special week during teacher appreciation week.

Over the last ten years, the PTO has helped fundraise over \$100,000 dollars. The money raised is put back into many educational, nutritional, and fun programs for the students that otherwise would not be available. Over the years, the PTO has supplied classrooms with new technology, new classroom libraries, and other resources that teachers need to run special projects or programs. Most recently, new equipment was added to provide more options for students on the playground.

How to be involved?

The Parkside PTO meets once a month on Monday nights from 6:00-7:00 pm. To encourage more participation, Mr. J runs a PE Club during the meeting for all school-aged students. If you are unable to attend the meetings, you can still sign-up to volunteer for any of our PTO events. Thank you to all of the parents who have served on the PTO and put in hours and hours of time to help make Parkside a great school!

If you have questions or want more information on how to get involved, please contact the Parkside office at 608-328-7130 or Leah Houston, the PTO President at leahhouston@monroe.k12.wi.us.



Online registration is open
March 16th - 27th, 2020

School District of Monroe Summer School

1st Session:

Monday, June 15 - Thursday, July 2nd
(NO Classes July 3rd or July 6th)

2nd Session:

Tuesday, July 7th - Friday, July 24th

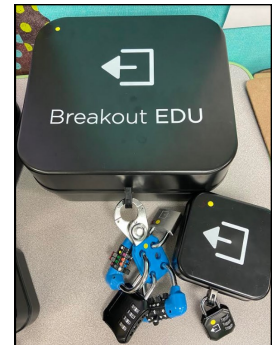
Summer School Course Offering Books
are available online at
www.monroschools.com
or at any school building office

Breakout EDU



Sarah Compton
5th Grade Teacher
Northside Elementary

Our class was fortunate enough this year to receive an Excellence in Education grant for Breakout EDU kits. Breakout EDU is an engaging learning platform that aims to replicate the excitement of an escape room. Teams of students are given a locked box and clues to the combinations. Multiple lock types are used - numeric, alphabetic, directional, shape, and key locks. This adds a layer of difficulty as students work to figure out which clues will help them open which locks. Students are given a certain amount of time to solve all the puzzles and clues, thereby opening all locks to get into the box. Occasionally a special treat will be found inside!



Breakout kits have been an amazing opportunity for our students to practice the 4 C's of 21st Century Learning: collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking. It also reinforces a lot of social and emotional learning, including how to work through difficulty, compromising, advocating for yourself, and perspective-taking. At the end of each Breakout game, teams spend time reflecting on their experience by answering questions such as, "How did your group utilize each individual's strengths?" and "How did your group work through moments of frustration?" We're truly promoting the idea of having a growth mindset!

Often Breakout experiences are aligned with our instructional content. For instance, we may have a Breakout in which all the clues require students to solve math problems or utilize science vocabulary. Some Breakouts are learning experiences in and of themselves, such as a Breakout where we learned about the life of Dr. Seuss. We also have thematic Breakouts, centered around events like the first day of school or the holidays.

When asked what the students think about Breakout boxes, they have had an overwhelmingly positive response. One student said, "It's fun and teaches people to work as a team instead of being individuals." Another noted, "It's not just about schoolwork. It lets us practice leadership and communication. I think it's challenging our brains to think carefully and creatively." One student reflected, "In our first Breakout, I got really frustrated. I was used to teachers telling us exactly what to do. Now, I know how to persevere and think for myself."

Breakout EDU kits have had a tremendous impact on our students this year. As I stand back and watch the fifth graders taking part in this experience, I see every student in the room fully engaged and excited. I notice shy kids speaking up and struggling learners getting a chance to shine. I see kids being inclusive, working with others outside of their friend group, and successfully navigating these new relationships. Breakout EDU kits are a game-changer in our classroom. They've challenged the students to think in new ways, and they've challenged me to become a better educator. Thank you, EIE, for the opportunities you've provided our students!

The Power of Yet: Growth Mindset



Marlea Johnson
6th Grade ELA
Teacher
Monroe Middle School

Here are three statements that I would like you to think about:

**Everyone can learn new things. Some kids are born smarter than others.
We can change how smart we are.**

These are questions that get to the root of your beliefs about mindset. According to Mary Cay Ricci, author of *Mindset in the Classroom*, growth mindset is "a belief system that suggests that one's intelligence and /or talents can be grown or developed with persistence, effort, and a focus on learning." On the other hand fixed mindset is, "a belief system that suggests that a person has a predetermined amount of intelligence, skill, or talents." The first and last statement demonstrate that a person has a growth mindset. Truly we all know that everyone can learn new things. Just look at the development of a new baby or a middle schooler. The growth and development is astronomical.

So what do we do with this growth mindset and how do we help our children? First we need to look at how we give praise. It is important to praise effort rather than outcome. One way that parents & teachers can really help our children is by carefully choosing the words that are used when we praise them. Every word parents and teachers say and action we perform sends a message to the children. These words and actions tell children how to think about themselves. We should always praise the effort instead of praising accomplishments. The following table includes some examples.

Do Not Say	Do Say
You are really athletic!	You really work hard and pay attention when you are on the field!
You are so smart!	You work hard in school and it shows!
Your drawing is wonderful; you are my little artist.	I can see you have been practicing your drawing; what a great improvement!
You always get good grades: that makes me happy.	When you put forth effort, it really shows in your grades. You should be proud of yourself. We are proud of you!

(The Power of Yet... continued on page 10)

The Power of Yet... (continued from page 9)

So the next time you are ready to praise your child, stop and think about how to use that opportunity to praise his or her effort instead of accomplishments.

Research suggests if we encourage our kids' efforts and acknowledge their persistence and hard work, then we will support their development of a growth mindset. Children with a growth mindset believe that with effort and persistence they can learn and achieve in school. A growth mindset will better equip them to persevere and pick themselves up when things do not go their way. Parents should also examine their own belief systems. Do you have a growth mindset? Do you believe that with effort, persistence, and motivation your children can achieve their goals? Dr. Carol Dweck, an educational researcher states,

Parents should not shield their children from challenges, mistakes, and struggles. Instead, parents should teach children to love challenges. They can say things like "This is hard. What fun!" or "This is too easy. It's no fun." They should teach their children to embrace mistakes, "Oooh, here's an interesting mistake. What should we do next?" And they should teach them to love effort: "That was a fantastic struggle. You really stuck to it and made great progress" or "This will take a lot of effort--boy, will it be fun."

We all can work at having a growth mindset. It takes time and practice, but it is well worth it when you see the difference that it makes in our children!

When we change our words we can change our mindset. Instead of saying "I can't" think "I can't YET!" Instead of "I don't understand" ask "What am I missing?" When we think it's good enough ask "Is this really my best work?" When we see challenges and mistakes as a way to learn and grow there is truly no goal we can't achieve.

Morning Meetings



Amy Timmerman
Principal
Northside Elementary

Every morning for nearly ten years Northside students have been gathering together in a large circle in their respective classrooms for what is called Morning Meeting. A visitor may judge this as "fluff" and an unnecessary use of time, but I disagree.

The Morning Meeting is one element to the Responsive Classroom approach, a common model used across the nation promoting the belief that social and academic learning are equally important to a student's success. Creating an environment where students feel safe, comfortable, and connected is some of our most important work in an elementary school, and this model nurtures this culture.

What is a Morning Meeting?

Greeting: This is the first component to every Morning Meeting, and teachers always do this even when short on time. The goal is to set a positive tone for the day by greeting every student by their name and a warm welcome. Skills that are explicitly taught include making eye contact, using a proper handshake, talking in a welcoming tone of voice, and showing positive body language.

Share: Perhaps the most important component to the Morning Meeting is the Share. Students are given the opportunity to share news of their own choosing, and their peers may ask clarifying questions or make comments. This teaches students not only how to have a conversation, but it also establishes trust and a feeling of belonging. There are countless examples of students sharing very personal stories with their teachers and peers, such as a divorce, the loss of a loved one or pet, or moving from their home. Empathy, learning more about others, and speaking in a group are just a few of the skills being developed with the sharing time.

Group Activity: This is frequently the favorite part of the Morning Meeting time for the majority of students. The inclusive, cooperative game is always short, fun, and, at times, builds in academic skills. Skills reinforced during this time include sportsmanship, listening, following directions, and using self-control.

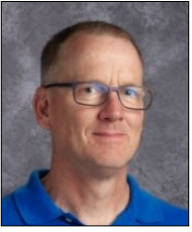
Morning Message: The final component to the meeting time is the Morning Message. This is a short one to two paragraph letter written by the teacher which includes highlights for the day and often reinforces an academic skill such as grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, etc.

Why are Morning Meetings an important practice in our classrooms?

- Prioritizes the importance of educators knowing each child individually, developmentally, and culturally
- Allows the opportunity to establish and maintain strong, positive relationships which are essential to each child's growth socially and academically
- Creates a predictable routine for students that sets a positive tone for the school day
- Includes explicit instruction and practice on how to socially interact with others
- Allows every student the opportunity to share
- Gives students multiple opportunities to learn about their classmates' families and special interests
- Promotes empathy, one of the most important skills to learn
- Creates a positive, collaborative, and fun environment



Clarity About Personal Responsibility for our Students



Brian Boehm
Principal
Monroe Middle School

Monroe Middle School is in its' 5th year of using the Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA), as our positive school climate framework. The Nurtured Heart Approach is a relationship-focused methodology. It was created to help children build their inner wealth and use their youthful intensity in successful ways. It has become a powerful way of awakening the inherent greatness in all children while increasing classroom success.

NHA is built on Three Stands:

1. **Absolutely No** - We refuse to energize negativity. We will not accidentally reward negativity with our energy, connection or relationship.
2. **Absolutely Yes** - We will relentlessly create and energize positivity and success. We are going to energize and nurture first hand, experiences of appreciation, recognition and acknowledgement.
3. **Absolutely Clear** - We will set and enforce clear limits and clear consequences in an unenergized way. We will always provide true consequences. At MMS, absolutely clear starts with the expectations of Mutual Respect and Personal Responsibility.

We use the concepts of Mutual Respect and Personal Responsibility to guide our work. You will hear students throughout the building being recognized for displaying these traits.


Much of our work as a staff this year surrounds Stand 3 "Absolutely Clear":

It is vital to the strong academic and emotional development of adolescents that we provide clear expectations about personal responsibility for them. Ambiguous expectations are confusing especially to middle school students. At an upcoming assembly and in all classrooms starting this month we will be discussing the following two charts to help students understand:

A. How they should be personally responsible for their learning.

I need help. Before I ask the teacher:

- Get the necessary supplies
- Read the directions/problem again
- Try it on my own
- Look at the anchor charts in the classroom
- Skip it and come back
- Check my notes
- Quietly ask a neighbor



B. How they should show their thinking so that it is logical and effective.

How to show your thinking	Answer	Prove	Explain
ELA	CLAIM	EVIDENCE	LINK
HEALTH	CLAIM	EVIDENCE	LINK
SCIENCE	CLAIM	EVIDENCE	REASONING
SOCIAL STUDIES	CLAIM	EVIDENCE	REASONING
BAND	CLAIM	EVIDENCE	REASONING
CHOIR	CLAIM	EVIDENCE	REASONING
TECH-ED/AG	CLAIM	EVIDENCE	REASONING
FOODS	CLAIM	EVIDENCE	REASONING
MATH	DECLARE	DO/DECIDE	DESCRIBE/DEFINE

After we introduce these charts to students, we will be recognizing them for their efforts in meeting the expectations listed. One of the many great things about middle school students is that they can meet goals that are clear, have a purpose that students understand and that don't change.

We wanted to share these with parents and guardians so you too have clarity about this effort.



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE

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MONROE, WI 53566

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SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE CALENDAR

Thursday, March 12, 2020	MMS Parent Teacher Conferences
Thursday, March 26, 2020	Abraham Lincoln, Northside and Parkside Parent Teacher Conferences
Monday, March 30, 2020	Abraham Lincoln, Northside and Parkside Parent Teacher Conferences
Monday, April 6 to Friday, April 10, 2020	No School—Spring Break
Thursday, April 23, 2020	Abraham Lincoln Open House
Monday, April 27, 2020	MHS Parent Teacher Conferences
Thursday, April 30, 2020	Northside Open House
Monday, May 25, 2020	No School—Memorial Day
Sunday, May 31, 2020	MHS Graduation
Monday, June 1, 2020	All Day School—No Early Release



ATTENTION NON-RESIDENTS OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE

This newsletter is provided to all residents of the School District of Monroe. The most affordable process used to circulate this newsletter throughout the district is to use saturation mailing. It is costly to avoid a few non-residents from receiving our newsletter. We apologize for your inconvenience but wish to provide important information to all residents. Thank you.