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709



# Communicator

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MORTON COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709 SERVING THE GROVELAND-MORTON AREA

# Thriving today, ready for tomorrow

A message from your new  
superintendent of schools

First, it is an honor and privilege to serve our community as the next superintendent.

Dr. Jeff Hill has been a phenomenal leader and a wise and humble mentor to me over these past five years, and we have worked closely together in transitioning over the last several months. He steadily moved Morton schools forward, and in the midst of some very difficult challenges. Thanks to him, our district is in excellent financial and academic shape.



DR. CRAIG SMOCK

Now, as I begin to take the reins, I'd like to share just a bit about my background in education. I started my career in 1990 as a high school math teacher and tennis coach in Ottawa. After eight years in that role, I began my nine-year career as a high school principal in Bradford, Peoria Heights, and Pekin. In 2007, I was blessed to become a part of the Morton District 709 administrative team. I have served as assistant superintendent for the past 15 years, overseeing human resources and district operations.

This was my dream job in a dream district. As Tremont High School graduates, my wife, Peggy, and I were always aware of the strong and positive reputation of Morton. That is why, before I ever came to work in the district, we moved our family here 22



**REGISTER  
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In-person  
**Thursday,  
July 28**  
7 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
at all schools

Online  
**Now until  
July 28**

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*Details on Page 10*

Look for more  
information about  
each school on the  
pages inside!

➔



## SMOCK

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years ago. Like many others, we were drawn to Morton for the community values and commitment to excellence that was inherent in the town and its schools.

All three of my children received a phenomenal education in District 709 and look back fondly on the wonderful experiences they had. Cassie, now 27, is a fifth-grade teacher at Rankin Elementary School. Ryan, 25, is an electrical engineer and programmer for J-Tec Industries. And Kayla, 24, is a math teacher at Bloomington High School. Peggy and I could not be prouder of the wonderful people our children have become, and we have the solid foundations of our church, our village and our school district to thank for their successes. Morton is simply a wonderful place to raise children.

### Moving Morton Forward

In Morton, we are always looking for ways to become even better tomorrow than we are today. So, as I begin to serve at the helm of the district, alongside a selfless and caring Board of Education and fantastic leadership team, the questions we ask ourselves are: What do Morton students really need right now? What is next for our district?

We believe these questions can be answered by first acknowledging some of the obstacles that all students in our nation are facing. There are four pervasive challenges that come to mind for any school district in 2022-23:

- The social, emotional, and mental health crisis that has been trending in the wrong direction and worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The negative impact of social media and technology use by our students;
- Preparing our students for the workplaces and careers of tomorrow;
- The battle for local control of our public education systems and parental rights.



Dr. Smock and his family

Although those certainly seem daunting, we prefer to look at them as “opportunities to succeed.” Meanwhile, we must ask ourselves two primary questions: What can we do to help our students thrive today? What can we do to help our students be ready for tomorrow?

We in District 709 feel that the answers to these questions can be articulated in the following initiatives:

#### 1. Promoting Mental Wellness for Students and Staff

How do we address, both reactively and proactively, the social-emotional trends among students that were intensified by the pandemic?

- Address critical, immediate concerns first;
- Implement preventative strategies;
- Increase student engagement in school activities;
- Build a healthy staff culture;
- Offer resources and training for parents.

#### 2. Improving Students’ Communication and Conversational Skills

How do we cultivate logical and civil communication, respect and humility among our students, especially when they disagree, specifically against a backdrop of such poor role modeling in the larger society?

- Have rich and respectful discourse and debate;
- Use reliable sources to construct a coherent viewpoint;
- Effectively navigate conflicts with peers;
- Acquire professional, public speaking skills.

#### 3. Preparing Students for the Future

How do we develop and promote students’ thinking about the future to help guide them in their educational pathways and pursuits?

- Develop a sense of purpose and a specific future focus;
- Facilitate more workplace opportunities, apprenticeships/internships;
- Continue to grow Advanced Placement and dual credit opportunities;
- Teaching 21st century skills, plus “soft” and “people” skills;
- Promote citizenship and community service.

#### 4. Maintaining Rigorous, Standards-Driven Curriculum and Instruction

How do we articulate our academic expectations of students and gauge their success objectively? How do we do our reasonable best for our neediest students?

- Continue our tradition of superior academic instruction;
- Match our curriculum to district standards;
- Clearly communicate our curriculum to the community;
- Improve opportunities for our most at-risk students.

#### 5. Advocating for Local Control and Parental Rights

How do we maintain parental authority and the values and principles of the Morton/Groveland community?

- Resist state and federal legislative overreach into our schools;
- Support parental rights through our policies and practices.

Our theme for the 2022-23 school year is “Thriving Today, Ready for Tomorrow.” I’m excited to get started, and trust that our families share my enthusiasm as full partners in helping us get there on behalf of our children.

**Dr. Craig Smock, Ed.D.**

*Superintendent,  
Morton School District 709*

*Dr. Craig Smock became superintendent of Morton schools, effective July 1.*

## How parents can help us help their children

What can you as parents do to partner with us regarding the district’s initiatives? You can start by instilling a future focus and growth mindset in your children.

Too often, our kids operate in a sort of “perpetual present tense” rather than progressing toward a goal or objective. Many of them view each day in isolation, disconnected from the days that follow.

Of course, we know that a winning chess player makes wise and purposeful moves early in the game to create a more successful endgame. A winning athlete or musician knows that you must put in the practice to be victorious in the contest.

We should instill in our children, even at a young age, the ability to visualize a pathway to where they would like to go. Students also need to be reminded that sometimes they must do what they do not want to do in order to become what they want to become.

Having a future focus has both a practical educational benefit and a mental health component, as maintaining a purpose-driven mentality makes students more likely to view their education as relevant to their future success and happiness. When students start with the end in mind, they see the connections between their schooling and their futures, and naturally become more engaged.

A growth mindset, meanwhile, is one in which children learn to tackle challenges with effort and patience. Children with this mentality are more likely to respond to failure as merely a springboard for growth and improvement. Even if the child does not immediately succeed, he/she does not give up, a quality that ultimately leads to success. Legitimate self-esteem does not come from mere words of affirmation, but rather from the independent performance of a difficult task. A child who owns a growth mindset expects struggle to be a natural and healthy part of his/her development.

Again, we welcome our parents as partners in District 709 in the very important process of developing our children into healthy, happy, productive adults, and the pride of this community!

— By Dr. Craig Smock, Ed.D.

# A Q&A with Morton's superintendent emeritus, Dr. Hill

After a 38-year career in education that took him from suburban Chicago to central Illinois and ultimately to Morton, where he certainly made his mark, Dr. Jeffrey Hill reflects on his experience in classrooms and board rooms and shares those thoughts with the Communicator.

**Morton Communicator (MC):** *What made you decide to pursue education as a career in the first place? What subject did you teach coming out of the gate?*

**Jeff Hill (JH):** A long time ago, my greatest desire was to coach. That got me into teaching. I graduated with a degree to teach P.E. but never taught a day of P.E. in my life. I went back to school to get a Special Education certification, and then taught it for eight years. Meanwhile, I coached three sports at Hinsdale Central High School before getting my Master's Degree in administration and taking the principal position at Tremont High School.

**MC:** *What prompted your move into school administration?*

**JH:** I really felt the desire to impact more students, and felt like school leadership was the best way to do that.

**MC:** *As you look back over the last 40 years, how has the classroom changed? How have*

*students changed?*

**JH:** Students are dealing with so much more information and misinformation now, which has made life more complex. It is the same for teachers. We have more resources going into the classroom and students than ever before, which is necessary as everyone, especially after the last two years, is dealing with more complexity and challenges.

**MC:** *Like a marriage, you kind of take a vow with a career, for better or worse. What will you miss most about your work? Conversely, what can you walk away from without so much as a look over your shoulder?*

**JH:** I will miss the relationships with people I have worked so closely with in trying to improve student success. We have incredibly skilled and passionate people who put students first, and not working with them will be hard. Conversely, I won't miss the politics or mandates that come our way. I know there is a better way for the state



DR. JEFFREY HILL

of Illinois to support K-12 education.

**MC:** *Talk a little bit about your stops along the way. How would your experience in Morton rank with the others? What was it about this job that appealed to you when you decided to take this leap five years ago?*

**JH:** I really thought I would retire from the ISU Lab Schools. Both of our kids went there and we really enjoyed being in that system, but after five years in Morton we couldn't be happier. The

community of Morton is a great place to be an educator because you have the support of the entire town, which has high expectations but also a high level of encouragement and support. I am so happy I was able to retire from Morton 709!

**MC:** *We talk a lot about the importance of student learning, but learning never really ceases, not even for teachers and administrators. What are the most valuable lessons you've picked up along the way?*

**JH:** Leadership means doing hard things. Everyone's perspective matters, even if you don't agree.

People who work hard go farther than people who know a lot. Being unified around a common purpose propels us all.

**MC:** *Career highlights? Most memorable challenges? Proudest of?*

**JH:** Full-day kindergarten, the Morton Junior High addition, having strong relationships with our board, leadership team and staff. The last two years have been a big challenge, but maybe the best highlight of them all. We were

able to provide for the students of Morton something special, and somewhat unique, and I think it will make a world of difference down the road.

**MC:** *As you call it a career, get out your crystal ball. How do you see the future unfolding for District 709?*

**JH:** I think you will see continued focus on the whole child, a fiscally conservative approach, and advocating for local decision-making. The Morton community has high expectations for our education system, so continuous improvement will always be a focus!

**MC:** *Any plans for your own future?*

**JH:** Nothing specific at this point. I do still have a strong interest in helping educators and leaders, and feel like I have learned enough in the past 30-plus years to help others in those areas.

**MC:** *Final question: Fast forward from Jeff Hill, rookie teacher in the mid-1980s, to Jeff Hill, superintendent, 2022. Did things turn out as planned? Was it everything you hoped it would be?*

**JH:** I would never have imagined this ending, and it has far exceeded my expectations. I have been blessed beyond what I deserve!



# Morton School District 709 Directory

**Morton 709 Education and Administration Center: 1050 S. Fourth Ave., Morton, IL 61550 — 263-2581**



**CRAIG SMOCK**

**Superintendent:**  
Craig Smock, Ed.D.  
263-2581  
(ext. 8099)



**JOE SANDER**

**Assistant  
Superintendent:**  
Joe Sander, Ed.D.  
263-2581  
(ext. 8098)



**TROY TEATER**

**Assistant  
Superintendent:**  
Troy Teater, Ed.D.  
263-2581  
(ext. 8045)



**LINDSAY FRANKLIN**

**Director of Student  
Support Services:**  
Lindsay Franklin  
284-8097



**LISA KOWALSKI**

**Chief Financial Officer:**  
Lisa Kowalski  
284-8025



**RODNEY SCHUCK**

**Director of  
Operations:**  
Rodney Schuck  
263-2581  
(ext. 8005)



**JULIE THARP**

**Director of  
Transportation:**  
Julie Tharp  
263-1086

## Morton High School



**DEIDRE RIPKA**

350 N. Illinois, Morton, IL 61550  
**Principal:** Deidre Ripka  
**Administrative Team:** Jamie Adolphson, Todd Herrmann,  
Scott Jones, Josh Prichard  
**Reporting absence:** 263-0611  
**Student Services:** 263-0611  
**Guidance:** 263-8585  
**Food Service:** 263-7451

## Morton Junior High School



**CHRIS CARTER**

225 E. Jackson, Morton, IL 61550  
**Principal:** Chris Carter  
**Assistant Principal:** Scott Hammond  
**Main Office:** 266-6522  
**Reporting absence:** 284-5000

## Morton Academy



**AMANDA  
RICKENBERG**

260 E. Queenwood  
Road, Morton, IL  
61550  
**Principal:** Amanda  
Rickenberg  
**Main Office:** 284-8033

## Lettie Brown School



**FAITH WATERFIELD**

2550 N. Morton Ave.,  
Morton, IL 61550  
**Principal:** Faith  
Waterfield  
**Main Office:** 266-5309  
**Reporting absence:**  
284-1000

## Grundy School



**MICHAEL SAUNDERS**

1100 S. Fourth Ave.  
Morton, IL 61550  
**Principal:** Michael  
Saunders  
**Main Office:** 263-1421  
**Reporting absence:**  
284-2000

## Jefferson School



**KATE WYMAN**

220 E. Jefferson St.,  
Morton, IL 61550  
**Principal:** Kate Wyman  
**Main Office:** 263-2650  
**Reporting absence:**  
284-3025

## Lincoln School



**JULIE HORCHEM**

100 S. Nebraska Ave.,  
Morton, IL 61550  
**Principal:** Julie  
Horchem  
**Assistant Principal:**  
Michelle Peterson  
**Main Office:** 266-6989  
**Reporting absence:**  
284-4000



# District 709 Board of Education

## President: Tim Braker

First Elected: 2019; Term Expires: 2023  
timothy.braker@mcusd709.org

## Vice President: Dr. David Cross

Appointed: 2021; Term Expires: 2023  
david.cross@mcusd709.org

## Secretary: Bart Rinkenberger

First Elected: 2017; Term Expires: 2025  
bart.rinkenberger@mcusd709.org

## Dr. Diane Krall

First Elected: 2021; Term Expires: 2025  
diane.krall@mcusd709.org

## Amanda Leman

Appointed: 2021; Term Expires: 2023  
amanda.leman@mcusd709.org

## Thomas Neeley

First Elected: 1989; Term Expires: 2025  
thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org

## Jerry Rudd

First Elected: 2021; Term Expires: 2025  
jerry.rudd@mcusd709.org

## Contact the board

Stakeholders in District 709 are encouraged to contact school board members at any time with questions, comments and concerns. Board members can be contacted by email through their individual email addresses listed above or as a group at **boardofeducation@mcusd709.org**.

## More information

More information about the Board of Education is available on our website – **www.morton709.org**. Board meetings are streamed live on the Internet and posted on Comcast Channel 20 and iTV3 Channel 21. Click on the MPTV logo on our website for a broadcast schedule and to go to the online streaming feature.



Photo Credit: Jacque Austin

District 709 Board of Education: Standing, left to right: David Cross, Tim Braker, Bart Rinkenberger, Jerry Rudd. Seated, left to right: Diane Krall, Thomas Neeley, Amanda Leman.

## Mission

**T**he Mission of the Morton District 709 Board of Education is to be a provider of and an advocate for the education of all children.

## Goals

**Achievement:** In order to ensure all students have opportunities to achieve their potential, our academic programs will maintain the highest standards and expectations of learning.

**Communication:** We will provide open and meaningful two-way communication with all members of the community.

**Climate:** We will maintain a cohesive organizational system

which facilitates and fosters a productive and trusting climate with a highly qualified staff.

**Facilities:** We will provide facilities conducive to student learning and growth, based on evolving needs, with the support of the community.

**Finance:** We will support student learning in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

## Upcoming meetings

Board of Education meetings are at the District Office, 1050 S. Fourth Ave. The School Board is scheduled to meet on the following dates:

### 2022

Aug. 2 – 7:30 p.m.  
Aug. 16 – 5:30 p.m.  
Sept. 6 – 5:30 p.m.  
Sept. 20 – 7 p.m.  
Oct. 4 – 5:30 p.m.  
Oct. 18 – 7 p.m.  
Nov. 1 – 5:30 p.m.  
Nov. 15 – 7 p.m.  
Dec. 13 – 5:30 p.m.

### 2023

Jan. 17 – 5:30 p.m.  
Jan. 24 – 7 p.m.  
Feb. 7 – 5:30 p.m.  
Feb. 21 – 7 p.m.  
March 7 – 5:30 p.m.  
March 21 – 7 p.m.  
April 18 – 5:30 p.m.  
April 25 – 7 p.m.  
May 9 – 5:30 p.m.  
May 23 – 5:30 p.m.  
June 6 – 5:30 p.m.  
July 11 – 5:30 p.m.



# Parents' Rights and the Role of the Teacher

With many controversial topics creeping into the public school curriculum — politics, race, sexuality, etc. — the Morton School Board recently set out to reassure parents and community members about what their children are being taught. The Board also wanted to provide guidance to staff about how these subjects should be addressed in District 709.

“The central theme of the Board’s statement is to uphold parental rights and authority when it comes to educating their children,” said Superintendent Craig Smock. “With so many worldviews out there, our teachers are challenged, more than ever, to present and discuss topics in a balanced and unbiased way so that students can formulate their own opinions based on factual information, and not merely on someone else’s interpretation. Sometimes, remaining neutral can be difficult for teachers. But they must.”

The challenge is to “teach students that, even though we may fervently disagree on an issue, we can still discuss and debate controversial topics in a respectful and caring manner. Emotions need not be the fuel for dialogue. Unfortunately, our society is bombarding us with bad examples.”

In short, “The board wants to make sure we are teaching students how to think, not what to think,” said School Board President Tim Braker. “The board also believes that students’ worldview should be shaped by their parents, not by the school system.”

To that end, in a unanimous decision, the board’s seven members drafted and adopted the following position statement:

## Morton CUSD 709 Position Statement

*It is a high priority and an important goal of MORTON CUSD 709 to provide our students with the knowledge, tools, and skills needed to successfully navigate our global society as adults, regardless of the worldview they choose to adopt.*

### Commitments of the District

*MORTON CUSD 709 is committed to promoting and maintaining the utmost respect for all of our students and the various ethnicities and ideologies that those in our community possess.*

*MORTON CUSD 709 is committed to supporting the role of the parents in shaping their children’s understanding of politically charged matters, in issues relating to religious beliefs and practices, or in other sensitive or controversial ideologies, such as topics in race relations, gender identity, and sex education. Therefore, Morton CUSD 709 will not subvert nor usurp the authority of the parents to educate their children in areas of ideology such as political or religious beliefs and preferences.*

*MORTON CUSD709 is committed to presenting accurate information, to educate students about how to conduct legitimate research, and to teach the difference between facts and interpretations. The district will present a balanced perspective of the debatable issues so that students can formulate their own opinions on matters of ideology or philosophy.*

### Resolutions of the District

*MORTON CUSD 709 is resolved to ensure that parents have the freedom to make important choices for their children when legislation mandates that District 709 present beliefs contrary to those of our parents, staff, or leadership.*

*MORTON CUSD 709 is resolved to include a parent opt-out policy when the state-required curriculum does not align with the parents’ or community values and the district’s philosophy regarding the parents’ role in their children’s education.*

*MORTON CUSD 709 is resolved to ensure that teachers will make every effort to present a balanced and impartial perspective, giving arguments and evidence of both sides of the debate equally, when political and controversial topics are discussed.*

*MORTON CUSD 709 is resolved to ensure that our teachers do not disparage the virtuous tenets on which the United States of America was founded – Freedom, Democracy, Patriotism, and Individual Rights.*

*MORTON CUSD 709 is resolved to ensure that our teachers will allow and/or present liberal, moderate, and conservative perspectives on all developmentally appropriate topics, while remaining neutral and non-authoritative when characterizing or presenting any viewpoint.*

*MORTON CUSD 709 is resolved to ensure that, in all classrooms, teachers use written and visual materials that unify students of all backgrounds and beliefs, and not those that promote an agenda that could be divisive amongst students.*



# MJHS has a new leader: Mr. Carter

Chris Carter has been named principal at Morton Junior High School for the 2022-23 school year. He succeeds Dr. Lee Hoffman, who has accepted another leadership position outside of education.

Mr. Carter is a familiar face, as he has served as assistant principal and athletic director at MJHS for the past 16 years. If you have been impressed by The Kiln, the new gymnasium, and accompanying renovations at MJHS – as well as Clay the mascot and statue -- Mr. Carter had a direct hand in the planning and design of all of that.

Prior to arriving in Morton, Mr. Carter taught sixth grade and coached basketball at Tri-Valley Middle School in Downs.

Growing up in Bloomington, Mr. Carter graduated from Central Catholic High



CHRIS CARTER

School and matriculated to Eureka College, where at 6 feet, 4 inches tall he played basketball and was a member of the 1994

national title team under Coach Dave Darnell.

And there is no place he'd rather be than MJHS, his work home since 2006.

"The culture in our building has developed over the years," he said. "It's just a top-notch place to be. ... It's a terrific work environment, which turns into a good environment for kids. I'm most proud of that."

Mr. Carter also enjoys the challenge of educating and molding young adolescents.

"Junior high was not an easy time for me," he said. "I

identify with the kids who can't get out of their own way. When you see those kids figure it out, you realize what you're doing is positive and worthwhile."

Perhaps owing to his athletic background, Mr. Carter also appreciates the value of teamwork.

"The people around you are the ones who make things work. I haven't accomplished anything without help," he said. "I get satisfaction when we do well. It's always about 'us,' never about 'me.'"

Mr. Carter counts Dr. Hoffman as a role model and mentor and said he does not anticipate any major changes moving forward.

"I feel like we're going in the right direction," he said. "I'm not interested in changing just for change. Change will happen only with the idea of improvement."

Kids haven't changed much over the years, said Mr. Carter. What's changed is the environment around them.

"We have more kids who struggle in different ways. Social media has a big impact, the time spent on YouTube and Snapchat and TikTok. It can be positive. It also can be completely overwhelming."

Indeed, while social media is a connector of people, it also can make its users feel more isolated than ever.

"It used to be a kid would miss out on something and they wouldn't know they missed out. Now they know," said Mr. Carter. "It's so easy to tell somebody what you think over the phone without realizing the impact." Teaching civil discourse will remain a priority, he said.

"Fortunately, we have real supportive parents," he said. "That makes Morton a special

place."

In terms of an educational philosophy, for Mr. Carter, it's really pretty simple.

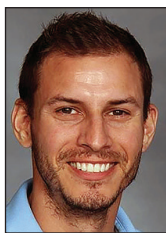
"Do what's best for kids. Keep them at the forefront," he said. "What's best for them is not always going to be what's easiest for me. If we can do something for the better, let's figure that out."

At age 47, Mr. Carter has a family of his own. His wife, Stacy, is a math interventionist at Pekin Grade School District 108. Meanwhile, they are the parents to three children – Abby, 21, who is pursuing a business degree at the University of Missouri; Ben, 18, who just graduated from Morton High and will be attending his parents' alma mater, Eureka College; and Katy, 16, who will be a junior at MHS.

## MJHS welcomes Mr. Hammond as new number 2

Scott Hammond has been hired as assistant principal and athletic director at Morton Junior High School. He succeeds Chris Carter, who recently was elevated to principal.

Mr. Hammond, 30, comes to Morton from Lewistown High School, where he spent the last six years as a science teacher and baseball and basketball coach. He received his teaching degree in biological sciences from Illinois State University in 2016 and his Master's degree in educational leadership



SCOTT HAMMOND

from Western Illinois University in 2021.

A native of Farmington, Mr. Hammond is married to Haley and they have an 8-month-old son, Grady.

"I just know how good of a district"

Morton is, Mr. Hammond said of his interest in the job, which is his first administrative position. "I just wanted

to move into a district that has found success in a whole bunch of areas ... I want to be around a culture and a place that not only strives for excellence but achieves it, and to be a part of that."

In terms of his educational philosophy, successful schools are all about building relationships – between parents and the school, between teachers and kids, between administrators and staff – said Mr. Hammond.

"Getting students to buy into

education, sports, anything ... you're not going to do that if they're not responding or looking up to the adults running the show," he said.

"We look forward to Mr. Hammond's leadership," said Superintendent Craig Smock. "His strong leadership skills, outstanding work ethic, professionalism and ability to form quality relationships set him apart from others."

# The journey is paying off for this MHS junior

It is a very, very, very long way from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam to Morton, Illinois, U.S.A.

Some 8,732 miles, to be exact, about 17 hours by airplane.

Alas, it's a world away, in more ways than one.

Ho Chi Minh City is home to nearly 9 million people (21 million metro), Morton just a tick over 17,000. While about half of the Vietnamese people speak some English, it is not the dominant language there, as it is in Morton.

So, you might say that someone who moved from Ho Chi Minh City to Morton would have quite a formidable, even intimidating transition to make.

Piece of cake for Morton High School junior-to-be Giang Dinh. OK, that may be overstating it a bit, as the cornfields of central Illinois have taken some getting used to for Giang. Still, her acclimation to a wholly different, almost night-and-day set of surroundings has been nothing short of remarkable.

So says Dayrim Sheehan, director of Morton's English Language Learning (ELL) program.

Giang passed her English proficiency test in the spring of her freshman year, about 18 months after arriving in middle America, said Ms. Sheehan. "It typically takes four to seven years to acquire enough English to pass the test, but she has worked very hard."

So hard and so well, in fact, that Giang was inducted into the National Honor Society at MHS this past school year. That requires outstanding scholarship, a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, service, leadership and strong character. That's an accomplishment for any student, even more so for one coping with a foreign language in a foreign land.

"She is an outstanding student," said



Ms. Sheehan. "Although she passed her English proficiency test, she often goes through the trouble of translating information into her native language to make sure she comprehends it completely."

Indeed, Giang is serious about her

**ABOVE: Giang Dinh's family back in Vietnam  
LEFT: Giang Dinh sits outside Morton High School, where she was recently inducted into the National Honor Society**

studies, the very reason her parents, father Dai and mother Chau Tran, uprooted Giang and younger sister, Thao, from everything they had known in 2019.

"My parents thought we'd have a better education," explained Giang, adding that initially the family moved to California before an aunt invited them to central Illinois. "The school here is really good so my parents decided to move here."

The emphasis on academics is in part cultural, said Giang. Beyond that, she just feels like she owes her parents for the sacrifices they have made on her behalf.

"It's one of the reasons that make me keep trying" even when it's a struggle, she said.

In turn, her family is proud of her. Her father appreciates the stresses

facing immigrants in the U.S., as he has contended with them himself. "We are immigrants, so we face plenty of difficulties," he said. "It was rough to communicate with people around America," so he never ceases to encourage his daughters "to learn English everywhere."

He brought his family here because he wanted his children to learn about "brave speech ... justice ... sympathy and forgiveness when they make mistakes," said Dai Dinh. He wanted them "to live in the fresh air."

As his children pay their dues in the classroom, he sees their investments paying off.

Indeed, Giang's days often begin at 7 a.m. and may last to 2 a.m. Math and art are her favorite subjects. She's a fan of the Harry Potter series of books. She likes driver's ed, and notes that "driving is safer here."

Beyond that, one big difference that has proved quite the adjustment for her is that "it's really quiet here. Ho Chi Minh City is ... super noisy."

Meanwhile, the very disciplined Giang also has her future mapped out. She would like to go into the medical field in some capacity – her father is a certified nursing assistant at UnityPoint Health Proctor Hospital -- perhaps as a pharmacist.

Giang describes herself as "shy" and she certainly is soft-spoken, but one thing she is not hesitant about – and the advice she gives others – is to "ask when you need help." That's solid guidance for anyone, even those who don't find themselves strangers in a strange land.

All in all, she is quite the inspiration, said Ms. Sheehan, whose ELL program has grown significantly the past few years, with a dozen different languages spoken among the district's international enrollment.

"We are so proud of this student!"



# Grundy wrestler proves himself a barrier breaker, too

Call him a pioneer, of sorts. When Grundy Elementary School sixth grader Brody Watson qualified for the state wrestling meet back in March, he accomplished something no other Morton sixth grader ever had.

Not only did this barrier breaker make the state finals at Northern Illinois University wrestling at 85 pounds for the Morton Junior High squad, he also medaled, climbing the podium in sixth place.



**BRODY WATSON**

"It still sounds weird to hear you say that out loud," said Brody, the 12-year-old son of Andrea and Adam Watson who has been making his way around the mats for five years. It paid off with a 38-7 record this year.

"It was definitely a fun experience," Brody said of a season that saw steady progression before five very competitive matches at state that had him beating athletes from Antioch, Dixon and Algonquin before falling in close contests to wrestlers from Minooka and Glen Ellyn. "It was definitely overwhelming."

Still, he enjoyed testing his skills against the state's best in a sport he enjoys mostly because "it's all like individual, mano a mano."

There's an element of teamwork, too, said Brody, who was joined in DeKalb by MJHS seventh grader Noah Harris and eighth grader Cash Hill, who also placed sixth.

"Everybody just put it all on the mat," said Brody. "I don't think people realize how hard a

sport it is."

"I could easily talk forever about what Brody and the rest of the team accomplished this season," said Head Coach Dan Gashaw. "Brody was one of six 6th grade wrestlers that we had this season. Just being in that group is pretty special, as they are the first 6th graders that were able to compete with the Morton Junior High wrestling program."

"Brody is an extremely hard-working individual in the practice room. He's easily coached and is willing to work to improve. However, Brody has a lot of other great qualities that just can't be coached. He is fast, explosive and extremely strong for his size. On the mat, he is always working to score, whether he is ahead or behind."

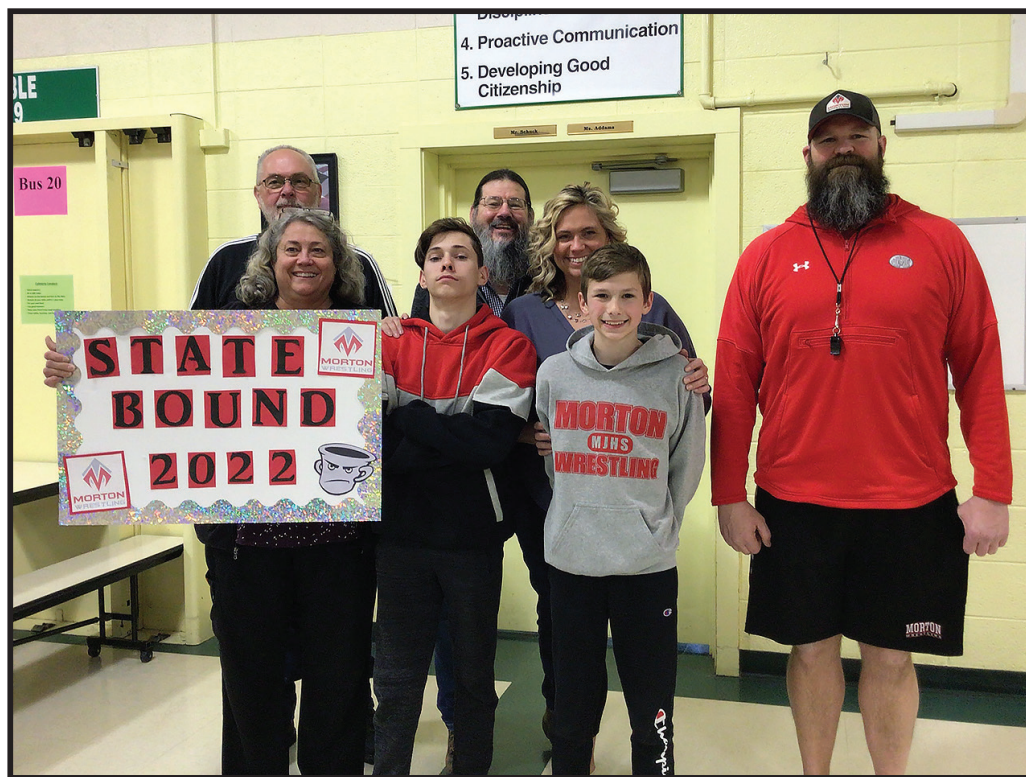
"Brody is committed to being back on that podium again. It's going to be very fun and exciting to see what he will do in the future," said Coach Gashaw.

His goal is a state title, said Brody, for whom soccer also competes for his athletic time and attention. Indeed, this middle child comes from an active sports family – mom and dad met playing volleyball – with a sister and a brother bracketing him. Meanwhile, he makes time for his favorite academic subject – science – and for devouring his go-to, pre-match meal of mac and cheese.

"Brady works hard at just about everything he does," said his father. "He worked his butt off and he reaped the reward."

Being the first ever, "that's an honor they can't ever take away," said Adam Watson. "We're super proud of him."

"Just to see the smile on his face," added Andrea Watson. "It was awesome."



**TOP: Brody Watson poses with his family and Coach Dan Gashaw**

**LEFT: Brody ascends to the top of the podium at state-qualifying meet**

**ABOVE: Brody medals at state**





# Student Registration Protocols

**F**or returning students: Online registration began July 1. For elementary class lists and MJHS/MHS course registration, it is important to be registered before **July 28 at 5 p.m.**

► **For Kindergarten, new students, and returning students who prefer to register in-person:**

In-person registration will be from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. **Thursday, July 28.** Paperwork can be filled out in advance.

The websites below will take you to the online registration for returning students and the pre-registration form for kindergarten and new students. There are also links below for medical forms you may need depending on your student's grade level.

► **New to Illinois schools:** Each student who is new to Illinois must have a physical, dental and eye exam, as well as immunization records **no matter what grade** they are entering. The exams **do not** have to be performed by an Illinois doctor. **The doctor must fill out the Illinois physical, dental and eye exam forms.**

## Registration Process

**Online registration for returning students** is done in the [PowerSchool Parent Portal](https://ps1.morton709.org/public/home.html) (https://ps1.morton709.org/public/home.html) or by using the PowerSchool App. Depending on the student, there will be seven to 10 parts to the registration process and it should take about 30 minutes to complete. In order to register, you will need to have a Parent Account in PowerSchool. Help for setting up a PowerSchool Parent Portal account can be found on the district website, under the Parent tab on the [Registration Support](#)

page (https:// www.morton709.org/parent/registration-support).

**Online registration for new students** begins with filling out the [Pre-Registration form](https://ps1.morton709.org/public/formbuilder/form.html?formid=255044) (https://ps1.morton709.org/public/formbuilder/form.html?formid=255044). That form is then reviewed by building staff, followed by an email that provides directions for setting up a PowerSchool Parent account. Once you have set up that account, you can fill out the registration paperwork in the [PowerSchool Parent Portal](https://ps1.morton709.org/public/home.html) (https:// ps1.morton709.org/public/home.html) or by using the PowerSchool App. Depending on the student, it should take about 45 minutes to complete.

**After filling out the registration forms, you'll need to pay for the registration fees.** This can be done online using eFunds. If you don't have an eFunds account, you will need to set one up on the district website, under the Parent tab on the [Registration Support](https:// www.morton709.org/parent/registration-support) page (https:// www.morton709.org/parent/registration-support).

Many of the required documents such as physicals, dental visits and eye exams can be uploaded through the PowerSchool Parent Portal. These also can be turned into the school's main office. All new students *must* bring in an original birth certificate to the school office. New students are not considered registered until they have verified their address and brought in an original copy of their birth certificate.



## School Fees

for 2022-2023

### MORTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

#### EC-6 textbook

Rental and supply fee..... \$73

#### Technology

K-4 Technology fee..... \$15

5-6 Technology fee..... \$45

### MORTON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

#### Textbook rental & supply fee

All ..... \$115

#### Technology

All ..... \$45

#### General

Padlock lost..... \$6

I.D. card lost ..... \$6

Library fines per day..... 10c

#### Band

Instrument Maintenance Fee (yearly for District-owned Instruments) .. \$50

Percussion Use Fee (per semester) \$50

#### User supply fee

Co-curricular activities ..... \$65

### MORTON HIGH SCHOOL

#### Textbook rental & supply fee

All ..... \$180

#### Technology

All ..... \$45

#### General

I.D. replacement fee ..... \$6

Library fines per day..... 10c

Marching Band Fee\* ..... \$650

Instrument Maintenance Fee (yearly for District-owned Instruments) .. \$50

Percussion Use Fee (per semester) \$50

#### User supply fee

Co-curricular activities ..... \$95

#### Athletic gate receipts

Adults ..... \$4

Students/Seniors..... \$2

Season ticket, adult..... \$30

Season ticket, student..... \$15

#### Parking

Student parking ..... \$75

#### Driver education

1st & 2nd semester ..... \$75

Summer school ..... \$75

### LUNCH PRICES FOR 2022-2023

Adults, staff and visitors..... \$3.50

Grades K-6..... \$2.80

Grades 7-8..... \$2.90

Grades 9-12..... \$3.00

Milk..... 60 cents

\*Marching Band students will also be assessed the User Supply Fee, Co-curricular Activities

Fee of \$95.



## District calendar

# 2022

**August**

10 No school: Teacher Institute Day

11 First day of attendance for students, half day a.m.

### September

5 Labor Day, no school

16 Early dismissal day

### October

5 Early dismissal day

10 Columbus Day, no school

14 In-service half day a.m., no school p.m.

20 No school: Parent/Teacher Conferences

21 No school: Parent/Teacher Conferences

### November

2 Early dismissal day

8 Election Day, no school

11 Veterans Day, no school

23-25 Thanksgiving vacation, no school

### December

7 Early dismissal day

21 In-service half day a.m., no school p.m.

22-30 Christmas vacation, no school



A Grundy student enjoys a cool treat on a hot day.



### January 2023

2-6 Christmas Vacation continues

9 School resumes, early dismissal day

16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day, no school

# 2023

**February**

1 Early dismissal day

20 Presidents Day, no school

### March

1 Early dismissal day

10 In-service half day a.m., no school p.m.

### April

3-7 Spring Break, no school

10 Easter Break, no school

12 Early dismissal day

### May

3 Early dismissal day

20 High School Graduation, 10 a.m.

29 Memorial Day, no school

### June

1 Last day for students, no school p.m.

2 Last day for teachers

*Note: In the event that no emergency days are used, May 24 would be the last student attendance day and May 25 a Teacher Institute Day.*

## Free-lunch-for-all program ends

The federal program that provided free meals the previous school year to all students regardless of need has expired and, at this juncture, is not being renewed.

As a result, District 709 schools will be returning to the pre-pandemic system of charging for meals for families that can afford them. Free and reduced-price meals will again be tied to income eligibility, as determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Documentation for the latter will be collected during the school registration process.

The cost for student lunches this coming year will be \$2.80 at the elementary level, \$2.90 at Morton Junior High, and \$3 at Morton High School. Adults must pay \$3.50. Milk is 60 cents.

## ADULTS CAN HAVE FUN, TOO!



Getting colorful at Lettie Brown School

## Farewell to 'four centuries of experience'

In May we bid a fond "farewell and don't forget us" to 18 District 709 employees who can be justifiably proud of long and fruitful careers in education.

Those 18 retirees were: Carol Balley, Becky Bazzetta, Joe Grant, Kandis Grant, Leslie Gray, Jeff Hill, Heather Hochstetler, Gena Jones, Jami Kaisershot, Carol Main, Patty Munson, Clara Jo Ogden, Kathy Shaw, Michelle Spicer, Rhonda Stalter, Kris Stieglitz, Emily Stubbs, and Laura Zehr.

As Superintendent Craig Smock said at the reception honoring the group, collectively "that's almost four centuries of experience about to walk out the door." We can't replace that, but one of the things we accept in education is that our classrooms are ever-changing, if also that our collective futures are built upon the shoulders of those who came before.

Thank you to all for your contributions, nothing but the best, and you're always welcome back. Once a Potter, always a Potter.





## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

# From restless young spirit to renowned restaurateur

**T**roy Ummel is the first to tell you he was a marginal student while growing up in Morton, not one to apply himself in the classroom if a more entertaining offer came along. He also could be on the “ornery” side.

In many ways, he was the “ultimate middle child” in a family of five kids “and a Gemini to boot. I was a real problem,” said Ummel, who at 53 appears to have turned things around.

Indeed, Ummel is the owner/operator of Peoria’s Connected restaurant, one of the finest, most successful restaurants in central Illinois – and notable beyond it — and a world traveler. His former teachers may have had their doubts about his future, once upon a time, but more than a few now frequent his award-winning business.

The Morton High, Class of 1987 graduate may not have had the most stellar report card or even attendance record, but he did have some things going for him. First, Ummel was likeable and sociable, skills he picked up as he moved around District 709 schools – Jefferson, Lincoln, Grundy – and learned how to be “comfortable in any situation.”

He had a strong work ethic, which may have taken a while to fully emerge but was likely passed down from his father,

Kenneth, a construction worker and longtime District 709 custodian, and mother, Rose, who owned Morton’s Country Classics hair salon, where she was “always in the know with the town gossip.” You don’t have to spend much time with Ummel to realize he inherited her gift of gab.

Meanwhile, Ummel had a sense of what he wanted out of life, a passion and a dream he began to cultivate while working as a teen at Miller’s Cliftwood Restaurant in Morton and Carnegie’s at Peoria’s elegant Pere Marquette Hotel.

“I couldn’t hit a 100 m.p.h. fastball. I was a lousy student. Probably, by today’s standards, I would have been diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) times two,” he said. “But I knew I wanted to be a restaurateur. That was as close to a movie celebrity when I was a kid as you could get.”



“*If the country was more like Morton, what a much better spot we’d be in.*”

**Troy Ummel**, Connected restaurant owner and Class of 1987 graduate

He also knew where he wanted to go to make that happen, and he was in a hurry to get there. Despite his lack of academic enthusiasm, this kid from little Morton wanted to go big-time, to New York’s famed Culinary Institute of America (CIA), and managed to complete his studies and get a diploma from MHS early, in the middle of his senior year.

Ummel always had street smarts, and chutzpah to spare. Meanwhile, he was entrepreneurial, a risk-taker with an insatiable curiosity.

“I was that guy who wanted to go see everything I saw on TV,” said Ummel. “I wanted to see the Grand Canyon ... the letters on the Hollywood hill ... Manhattan and the Eiffel Tower.”

What made him think it was possible from middle America? At the time, he wasn’t so sure, but “you fake it until you make it. I faked it a lot.”

## A strong foundation

Of course, Ummel had something else going for him: Morton itself, his foundation.

“Morton was a great community, still is,” he said. “I couldn’t think of a better place to raise a family. I mean, if you really wanted to put out strong-rooted, values-based human beings ...”

His childhood experiences shaped him: growing up in an old farmhouse off Queenwood Road, then at another on Nelson Street, with siblings Todd, Kirk, Kyle and



Amanda.

“We’d play in the creeks. My brothers were excellent athletes,” especially in baseball, with Todd and Kirk starring on Morton High’s 1984 state championship squad. Their sandlot games were family affairs: “If you hit the ball over Queenwood, you’d measure the home



**LEFT: Troy Ummel is very hands-on in his kitchen**

**TOP CENTER: Troy and wife Monet**

**BOTTOM CENTER: Connected is ready to welcome diners**  
**RIGHT: Ummel, top row, number 58**

runs by how many cornstalks.”

Today, Kyle is president of Mathis-Kelley Construction Supply Co. in Morton. Kirk is a union electrician in Bloomington, Todd a retired police officer from Clinton. Amanda works with an urban farm school in Kansas City.

Ummel rattles off the names of those Morton educators who were influential in his life – Betty Nelson, Allan Larocco, Ted Witzig, Keydol Hoffmire, Sherry Hughbanks, Gary Parmelee, Ron Patterson, etc.

“You’ve heard the phrase ... ‘Give them a fish and they’ll eat for a day, teach them to fish and they’ll eat for a lifetime.’ Morton embodies that, in my opinion,” said Ummel. “Morton takes on the philosophy, ‘It takes a village to raise a child ... If my neighbor saw me acting up, I was in hot water ... If you got in trouble at school, you were going to be in double trouble at home.’”

That realization comes with the benefit of hindsight, of course, because at 18, Ummel was ready to put some distance between himself and his hometown. The Culinary Institute would turn out to be a life-changing experience. Not only would it prove a launching pad for his career in the kitchen, it was there that he would begin making friendships in all the right places.

Few were as instrumental as the late Joseph Amendola, the legendary CIA ambassador, hospitality

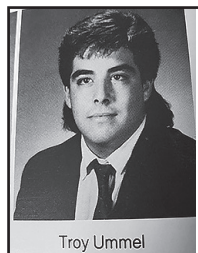
consultant and businessman. He would take Ummel to Orlando, Fla., with him, opening the door to a job at the landmark Christini’s, among other renowned eateries.

In 2009, Ummel returned to central Illinois to help care for his ailing father. He then opened a restaurant at “the worst location” in the “worst economic time” and turned it into what Connected is today – an everything-made-from-scratch throwback, a five-time winner of the DiRoNA award – among North America’s most prestigious restaurant prizes -- two-time Wine Spectator honoree, and one of the most high-quality, consistently popular restaurants in central Illinois.

Today, Ummel lives in Peoria with wife, Monet, an airplane pilot, and stepdaughter Merlot. He’s learned many valuable lessons over the years, some the hard way, which he shares with those Morton students who may find themselves at the stage in their lives he once was:

“Early bird gets the worm. Never rush a big decision, always sleep on it. In life, until you are 99, play the long game.”

And along with his current success, he cherishes the Morton memories in part responsible for it. “If the country was more like Morton, what a much better spot we’d be in.”



Senior Picture





# MORTON HIGH SCHOOL

350 N. Illinois Ave. | Morton, IL 61550 | Phone: 309-266-7182

Facebook: Morton High School:  
@MortonHighSchoolPotters

Facebook: Morton Athletics:  
@PotterPride

Facebook: Morton School Counseling Office:  
@MortonHighSchoolCounseling

Twitter: Morton High School Counseling/Student Services:  
@MHSStudentServe

## Our vision

Morton High School students are independent, critical thinkers of strong character who are prepared to succeed in society through rigorous curriculum and extracurricular opportunities.

## Our mission

The mission of Morton High School is to prepare all students for life as productive citizens. This necessitates that the MHS community be dedicated to maintaining high standards, offering relevant courses, providing a rigorous and responsive curriculum, being technologically progressive, providing opportunities for extracurricular activities, and meeting the needs of students.

## School Day

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Main office: 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

## Daily Schedule

1st hour - 8 to 8:46 a.m.

2nd hour - 8:51 to 9:37 a.m.

3rd hour - 9:42 to 10:28 a.m.

4th hour - 10:33 to 11:19 a.m.

5th hour\* - 11:24 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

6th hour - 12:50 to 1:36 p.m.

7th hour - 1:41 to 2:27 p.m.

Potter Hour\*\* - 2:32 to 3 p.m.

Teacher Assistance - 3 to 3:40 p.m.

\*Juniors and seniors have open campus for lunch.

\*\*Potter Hour is a time for students and teachers to connect, build trust and rapport, create community within our school, provide academic and social/emotional interventions, and improve culture. Freshmen through juniors will be assigned a Potter Hour and will stay with that group for their entire high school



career. Seniors will have an early dismissal.

**Counseling office:** 309-263-8585. Counselors will be in the office starting July 28. Office hours are 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. through Aug. 9. Beginning Aug. 10, the counselors will be available from 7:50 a.m. to 3:40 p.m. daily. Appointments should be scheduled in advance.

**Textbooks:** Textbooks will be distributed during the first week of school. Teachers will make arrangements during each class. Textbooks will not be distributed to individual students before Aug. 11.

**iPad Checkout:** Incoming freshmen and students new to the district will receive their iPads during orientation on Thursday, Aug. 4. Sophomores through seniors will receive their iPads on Friday, Aug. 5. Information will be emailed by late July.

## Policies

**Handbook:** Parents and students can view the student handbook online at [www.morton709.org](http://www.morton709.org). Click on the MHS icon on the top right. The district student handbook is under the "Our School" tab.

**Absence:** Call 263-0611. All absences, including appointments, should be called into the attendance secretary, Courtney Hess. Notes from parents will not be accepted. Parents can leave messages for Mrs. Hess 24 hours a day. Attendance is taken at MHS each class period during the day. If students are leaving MHS during the school day for any reason, they must sign out in Student Services. They also need to go to Student Services to sign in when arriving any time after 8:05 a.m.

**Parking, drop-off, pick-up:** Students who do not drive can be dropped off at the canopy doors off Jackson Street in the student parking lot or the Main

Office doors on Illinois Avenue. School buses also use the canopy entrance.

**Parking passes:** Parking spaces at MHS are assigned and the passes are available at registration or during iPad distribution. Students apply for a parking pass in the spring and pay by July 28. Information about the application and fee will be announced at school, emailed to students and will also be on the MHS website in the spring. New students may apply for a parking pass at registration or through the Student Services office starting July 28.

**Lunch:** There are three lunch periods at MHS that take place during 5th hour. Some courtyard seating is available for students so they can eat outside during warmer weather. Juniors and seniors may leave campus for lunch but must scan their student ID at the canopy doors as they leave and when they return.

## Mark your calendar

**July 28** – Registration, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Aug. 4** – Freshmen/new student orientation and iPad distribution

**Aug. 5** – iPad distribution for sophomores through seniors, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Aug. 11** – First day of school, 8 to 11 a.m.

**Aug. 19** – Cherry and Gray Night, 5:30 p.m.

**Aug. 25** – Meet the Teacher Night, 6:30 p.m.

**Aug. 25** – Senior College Planning Night, 8:15 to 9 p.m. \*Opportunity for 12th-grade families to learn more about what your college-bound senior should be doing now. Topics include financial aid (FAFSA), the college application process, and scholarships.

**Sept. 23** – Homecoming Game vs. Pekin H.S.

**Sept. 24** – Homecoming Dance, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., East Gym



**Pictured are the officers for the PTO at Morton High School. From left: Vice President Jill Akers, Treasurer Jessica Belsly, Secretary Dana Weber, and President Amy Retherford.**

## Parent Organization

Information regarding the PTO can be found on the District 709 website and will be available at registration. PTO sponsors Teacher Appreciation Week, provides breakfast to students taking college and career testing, and provides funds to teachers for additional classroom items. These are just a few of the ways PTO supports education at MHS. PTO has one fundraiser, Potter Card sales. Morton Potter Cards offer discounts at local businesses and are sold for \$10 each. Potter Cards are always available at the MHS office. The PTO usually meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m. at the high school.

## Athletic Passes

MHS offers athletic passes that are available for purchase on eFunds, with Mrs. Dardanes in the Athletic Office, or at the Fall/Winter Cherry & Gray nights. Admission prices are as follows: adults \$5; students \$3; senior citizens free. Season tickets are \$35 per adult and \$20 per student in grades K-12. For more information about passes, please contact Mrs. Dardanes at MHS, 309-266-7182.



## Morton High School continued



Members of the MHS cookery class shows off their tasty creations.

### Registration information

Registration information including a fee statement was emailed to MHS families in early July. If you have questions, please feel free to call the MHS office at 309-266-7182. Fee waiver/free and reduced lunch applications are available upon request from the main office.

### Meet the 2022-2023 Staff

**Principal** – Deidre Ripka

**Assistant principal/Athletic director** – Scott Jones

**Associate principal/Activities director** – Jamie Adolphson

**Assistant principals** – Todd Herrmann, Josh Prichard

**Principal's secretary** – Katie Bolkema

**Athletic secretary** – Samantha Dardanes

**Attendance secretary** – Courtney Hess

**Student Services secretary** – Nicole Friend

**Receptionist** – Cathy Parungao

**Counseling** – Chase Bushman, Travis Grant, Christina Kienitz, Taylor King

**Counseling secretary/registrar** – Sara Hornsby

**Social worker** – Peter Klinkner

**Speech therapist** – Chelsea Heitz

**Psychologist** – Katharine Zwolinski

**Resource officer** – Aaron Rowe

**Instructional coach** – Courtney Eddleman



DEIDRE RIPKA

**Language Arts** – Tony Feleccia, Jodi Gordon, Krista Kolls, Ryan Lindley, Lauralee Moss, Helen Plevka, Courtney Sheets, Sydney Young, Liliana Zamora

#### Mathematics

– Tim Bradford, Kelly Ciocca, Rose Durand, Sarah Knapp, Kristin Lucas, Joi Monferdini, Josh Smith, Joel Zehr, Joe Zeller

**Science** – Kate Fritts, Ben Ginzel, Mary Holmgren, Clark Ingwersen, Shannon McClure, Krys Malin, Jacob Rutan, Nathan Young

**Social Studies** – Ashley Beyer, Tory Delong, Brian Deters, Matt Franks, Robert Hornsby, Jaclyn Hoskins

**Modern Language** – Cassie Bilyeu, Jay Mahannah, Vonda Zehr, Ben Zoss

**Business** – Eric Myers, Dakota Neisen, Corban Williams

**Library media specialist** – Stacy Osborne

Technology Education and Engineering – Tiffany Beard, Christopher

Garner, Chad McFarland

**Agriculture** – Johnathon Hendricks

**Family and Consumer Science** – Karen Gardner, Amy Kelly, Kait Lienhop

**Art** – Amy Woods

**Band** – Tim Gray, Craig Hatter

**Orchestra** – Dave Getz, Pete Martin

**Vocal Music** – Heather Berger

**Physical Education/Health** – Tim Brilley, Justin Dehm, Darren Hurst, Jessica Kerby, Zach Finney

**Driver's Education** – Edward Henderson, Marshall Tucker

**Special Education** – Dawn Block, Denise Fountain, Megan James, Jamie King, Alison Eckart, Caitlin Gschwend, Kara Powers, Cody Pullium, Christopher Roberts, Michelle Towner, Lisa Schock

**MPTV** – Noah Lewellen, Dawn Rademaker

**Technology specialist** – Becky Christianson

**Custodians** – Bobby Barker, Rodney Duneheew, Daniel Epkins, Brandon Jacob, Deb Lane, Millicent Sanders, Clint Keefauver

## 2022 MHS Honors Night Winners

*Congratulations to all of our high school high achievers!*

### Department and Extracurricular Awards

**Business Student of the Year:** Bailey Strode

**Family and Consumer Science Student of the Year:** Britt Gardner

**English Laureate Award:** Ava Johnson

**Drama Student of the Year:** Hannah Brummel

**Kathy Johnson Commitment to Community Service Award:** Lena Oswald

**Modern Language, Outstanding Spanish Students:** Anna Berg, Braden Damotte

**Modern Language Outstanding French Students:** Aubrey Mattson, Jackson Weber

**Mathematics Department Distinguished Senior Awards:** Benjamin Darcy, Emma Fonseca, Benjamin Himmel, Savannah Saxsma, Jackson Weber

**Physical Education Outstanding Students:** Josilyn Ballor, Sean Zimmerman

**Science Student of the Year:** Savannah Saxsma

**Social Studies Student of the Year:** Tyler Newman

**Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Good Citizen Award:** Jeffrey "Layne" Kaufman

### Scholarships

**American Legion Auxiliary Post 318 Agnes B. Reilly Nursing Memorial Scholarship (\$500):** Maria Lopko

**MEA Joe Witzig Scholarship (\$1,000):** Katelyn Mason, Adeline Kennell

**Morton Athletic Booster Club Scholarship (\$1,000):** Danielle Lee, Tristan Sturhahn

**Arnett Community Service Scholarship, Heartland Bank (\$500):** Benjamin Himmel

**Parent Organization Scholarship (\$1,000):** Ilyse Knepp, Caroline Potts

**Linda L. Callan Memorial Scholarship (\$1,000):** Savannah Saxsma  
**Gina Jeffries State Farm Public Service Scholarship (\$2,250):** Sarah Wefer, Emma Whitaker

### Morton Community Foundation Scholarships

**Renee Mahrt Memorial Scholarship (\$2,000):** Emma Skinner

**Kay Beth Jibben Bane Memorial Scholarship (\$1,000):** Tyler Newman

**Drew Cousins Memorial Scholarship (\$2,000):** Tyson Hart

**William E. and Betty L. McCormick Memorial Scholarship (\$1,000):** Mason Dexheimer

**Wayne L. Sampson Memorial Educator's Scholarship (\$3,000):** Adeline Kennell

**Morton Soccer Scholarship (\$1,000):** Jenna Samp

Ethel Gerber Memorial Scholarship (\$1,600): Abigail Towell

**Kelli Hendryx Memorial Scholarship (\$5,000):** Ilyse Knepp, Jillian Cordoba

**Ilse Droell Memorial Scholarship (\$1,000):** Emma Whitaker, Sarah Wefer

**Rewarding Resilience Dyslexia Scholarship (\$1,000):** Zachary Camacho

**Rewarding Resilience Dyslexia Scholarship (\$500):** Nicholas Brock

**Kent Geiger Memorial Coaches' Impact Scholarship (\$500):** Zane Ely

**Morton Rotary Scholarship #1 (\$2,000):** Lena Oswald

**Morton Rotary Scholarship #2 (\$1,000):** Paige Chapin





# MORTON JUNIOR HIGH

225 E. Jackson St. | Morton, IL 61550 | Phone: 309-266-6522

## School day

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### MJHS Daily Schedule

1st Hour – 8 a.m.-8:49 a.m.  
 2nd Hour – 8:53 a.m.-9:37 a.m.  
 3rd Hour – 9:41 a.m.-10:25 a.m.  
 4th Hour – 10:29 a.m.-11:13 a.m.  
 5th Hour – 11:17 a.m.-12:01 p.m. (B & C lunches)  
 5th Hour – 11:51 a.m.-12:35 p.m. (A lunch)  
 6th Hour – 12:05 -12:49 p.m. (C lunch)  
 6th Hour – 12:39 -1:23 p.m. (A & B lunches)  
 7th hour – 1:27 -2:11 p.m.  
 8th Hour – 2:15-3 p.m.  
 Lunches: A Lunch - 11:17 -11:47 a.m.; B Lunch - 12:05 -12:35 p.m.; C Lunch – 12:53 -1:23 p.m.

## Info & Policies

**Absence reporting:** Call 284-5000 and use the automated system, open 24 hours a day.

**Morning arrival:** Students may arrive starting at 7 a.m. All students are to enter the main entrance and sit in the bleachers in the practice gym until 7:50 a.m. Parents should drop off students in the drop-off lanes at the main entrance.

**Orientation:** Orientation for new students and incoming 7th-grade students will be from 2 - 3 p.m. Aug. 9. Students can stay until 3:30 p.m. to practice their locker combinations and tour the school. The school is open beginning Aug. 1 if students want to practice their locker combination or review their schedule and location of classes.

**Lunch:** Students can purchase a lunch for \$2.90 a day and/or they can buy a la carte items. Money can be added to your child's lunch account through

eFunds. Your child's charging habits can be tracked on My Lunch Account. Both of these websites can be accessed under the Parent tab on our school's website ([www.morton709.org](http://www.morton709.org)).

**Website:** Parents and students can find a lot of information on the MJHS website, [www.morton709.org](http://www.morton709.org). Click on the MJHS icon for detailed information and the daily announcements that students hear at school. All athletic information can be found online at <https://il.8to18.com/mortonjhs/home>.

**Facebook and Twitter:** Follow what is going on at MJHS at ([www.twitter.com/MJHSJrPtrs](https://www.twitter.com/MJHSJrPtrs) and at [www.facebook.com/MortonJuniorHighSchool](https://www.facebook.com/MortonJuniorHighSchool))

**Cell phones:** The MJHS cell phone policy states that students are allowed to bring cell phones to school. However, students must leave phones turned off and in their lockers during the school day.

**Identification:** MJHS students are issued ID cards. IDs are needed during the day in the Library Media Center (LMC) to check out books and use the computer. IDs are also needed at lunch. ID pictures can be taken during registration, orientation, and the first week of school.

**Team concept:** MJHS has a team-teaching concept. Seventh grade students are divided into two teams, Green and White. Eighth grade students are divided into two teams, Red and Gray. Each team has a group of teachers and the curriculum for each team is the same. The team teachers meet to plan and discuss upcoming tests, interdisciplinary units, and the progress of all students.

## Meet the MJHS 2022-23 faculty & staff:

**Principal** – Chris Carter  
**Assistant Principal/Athletic Director** – Scott Hammond\*  
**Counselors** – Beth Spaniol, Danielle VanMeenen, Hannah Patton\*  
**Administrative Assistants** – Holli Pfeifer, Tammy Presley\*, Kelsey Cirilli\*  
**English/Language Arts** – Rachel Shore, Cady Nosbisch, Megan Hasler, Sarah Gorshe, Laura Wurtz, Molly Loudermilk\*  
**Math** – Kirk Schick, Ashley Geil, Katie Robinson, Jamie Getz\*  
**Physical Education** – Dan Gashaw, Jesse Crawford, Tatum Dowell  
**Science** – Brandon Parrott,



CHRIS CARTER

Jordan Williams, Melissa Tortorella, Kelsey Ewing  
**Social Studies** – Don Swearingen, Adam Sheley, Alex Bishop, Jennifer Rabe  
**Project Lead the Way** – Tim Finney  
**CareerMaker** – Josh Ames  
**Foreign Language** – Mindy Hartzler  
**Music** – Tim Beutel, Pete Martin, Katrina Fitzpatrick, Jeff Arbisi, Joel Harper  
**Art** – Brittany DuPont  
**Resource/Collaboration** – Jaclyn Herr, Elise Hobbs\*, Maggie Lytle\*, Courtney Erickson  
**Instructional/RISE** – Greg

McAndrew, Megan Bolliger  
**Speech therapist** – Chelsea Heitz  
**Health** – Toni Trilikis  
**Library** – Jacqueline Akers  
**Social work** – Paul Thompson  
**Psychologist** – Madison Reiman  
**Interventionist** – Katie Miller  
**Instructional coach** – Melissa Kruse  
**Study Hall** – Andy Zuck, Robin Sizemore\*  
**Custodians** – Steve Culbertson, Val Hoehn, Mary Blair, Dana Garcia, Daniel Spitz  
**Crossing guard** – TBD\*  
**Resource Aides** – Kim Serrurier, Tami Schaff, Richard Cox  
**Instructional Aides** – Wendy Wright, Kenzi Dorn, Nicole Corey  
 \*New to MJHS

**Dress code:** MJHS does have a dress code and it can be found in the student handbook. In short, students are to be covered from shoulder to mid-thigh.

## Traditions

MJHS has a tradition of hosting Grandparents' Day each spring. Grandparents attend two class periods and have lunch or breakfast with their grandchildren. More than 350 grandparents attended in 2022.

## Supply List

Pens (blue/black and red), pencils and pouch, colored pencils, highlighters, loose leaf paper, protractor, box of tissues, 5 pocket folders, 3 spiral notebooks, index cards (3x5), earbuds for iPad, TI-NSpire CX graphing calculator (8th grade students), Optional: 3-ring zippered binder, Morton Public Library Card (not required but available at no cost to all Morton students). *Teachers may*

*have additional supply expectations depending on the Team.*

Physical Education: uniform t-shirt (\$10), shorts, and athletic shoes. T-shirts can be ordered through EFunds or purchased on Registration Day and will be passed out during the first week of school during PE class.

## Athletics

**Athletic passes:** MJHS offers athletic passes for students and families. These passes are valid for all home, indoor events. The events include boys' and girls' basketball, volleyball and wrestling. Passes are available at registration and the MJHS office at \$8 for students, \$10 for adults, and \$30 for a family. Passes are valid for regular season events only. Regional and sectional events hosted at MJHS are required to charge an admission fee. Admission fees to regular season MJHS athletic events are \$1 for students and \$2 for adults. Seniors 60 and older are admitted free.

**Sports participation:** Athletes must be registered online. Visit Morton Junior High's athletic website, [il.8to18.com/mortonjhs](http://il.8to18.com/mortonjhs), to complete the online registration process. The only document students need to turn into the office is the sports physical. Athletes will not be allowed to try out, practice, or participate without registering and turning in their physical.

**Sports website:** The athletic website is especially helpful with MJHS sporting events because last-minute changes can be posted immediately. All contest schedules and other information can be found at <http://il.8to18.com/mortonjhs/>. For questions regarding athletics at MJHS, contact the athletic director at 284-5060.

## Red and White PTO

The MJHS Red and White PTO does many things for the students and staff, including:

► **Help-a-thon fundraiser** – The main fundraiser at MJHS.

## Mark your calendar

**July 25** – MJHS office opens

**July 28** – Registration, 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

**Aug. 9** – 7th-grade and new student orientation, 2 - 3 p.m.

**Aug. 12** – First day of school, 8 - 11 a.m.

**Aug. 12** – Meet the Teacher Night, 6 - 8 p.m.

Students complete a service project in the community.

► **Teacher Appreciation** – Provide food for staff on the first Monday of the month.

► **Potter Pride Night with Spaghetti Supper** – This is a fun event during basketball season for students, staff and families. All music groups perform as well as all four basketball teams and the spirit squad (cheer and dance). If you are interested in either chairing an activity or simply helping out, please sign up at registration or contact the office. All parents are encouraged to consider an opportunity to get involved with MJHS. Monthly meetings are typically held on the third Thursday evening of the month. The new calendar will be available at registration.

**MJHS PTO Board 2022-23:** President: Allison Vershaw; Vice President: Dawn Tuley; Treasurer: Julie Fauber; Secretary: RuthAnn Petrov.





# LETTIE BROWN ELEMENTARY

2550 N. Morton Ave. | Phone: 309-266-5309 | Fax: 309-284-1015

## School day

### Grades K-6

8:10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

### Policies

**Absence reporting:** 284-1000, open 24 hours a day. Please call prior to 9 a.m. on the day of the absence.

**School supplies:** Lists of needed supplies are available at local retailers and on the district website, [www.morton709.org](http://www.morton709.org). Click on the Lettie Brown Virtual Backpack for information about supply lists and other information about the school.

**Parking/Drop-off Information:** In the morning, parents should drop off

students in the north parking lot, entering by the pool. There also is a drop-off area near the building.

After school, parents are asked to park in the north parking lot and come to the front doors to meet their children at 2:30 p.m. Please do not park in front of the school on Morton Avenue, as it blocks the view of motorists who are exiting the parking lot. This is a Village of Morton "no parking" area during the school day. If your child will be riding the bus home with another student or walking home with another student, the school must have a note from both families.



Lettie Brown students work together to build a tower taller than them.

### Lunch Schedule:

**Kindergarten** - 10:50 to 11:35 a.m.

**5th & 6th grades** - 11:15 a.m. to noon

**3rd & 4th grades** - 11:37 a.m. to 12:22 p.m.

**1st & 2nd grades** - Noon to 12:45 p.m.

## Traditions:

Prior to starting the school day, Lettie Brown students and staff have announcements in the multipurpose room at 8:05 a.m. Lettie Brown has a student council for fourth, fifth and sixth grades, and we enjoy our monthly spirit days. On Fridays, students and staff show their school spirit by wearing Lettie Brown blue and orange spirit wear. Lettie Brown has a strong tradition of a supportive PTO. We encourage all parents to become active in our school and to be involved in the PTO.

## Community Service:

Lettie Brown staff and students participate in community service projects throughout the year. Our service projects have included making cards for Apostolic Christian Restmor, hosting a Red Cross Blood Drive, collecting toys for Toys for Tots, and raising funds for Children's Hospital of Illinois.

## Meet the 2022-2023 staff

**Principal** – Faith Waterfield

**Secretary** – Abbey Carpenter

**Kindergarten** – Kelley Bradford, Jenny Bushman

**First grade** – Brenna Stork, Kate Wettstein

**Second grade** – Kristy Boecker, Sara Thomas

**Third grade** – Kim Knox, Kelsey Kirk

**Fourth grade** – Taylor George, Stephanie Bishop

**Fifth grade** – Katy Gingerich, Michael Finck



FAITH WATERFIELD

**P.E.** – Chelsea Tennell, Clint Baldwin

**Music** – Melissa Risner

**Technology Aide** – Sondra Dole

**Library Aide** – Laurie Zehr

**Library Assistant** – Katy Riddle

**Rtl Aide** – Heidi Robbins

**Instructional Aides** – Tracey Vickerman, Brandi Edwards,

## Mark your calendar

**July 28** – Registration, 7 a.m.-5 p.m.

**Aug. 4** – Kindergarten Round-Up

**Aug. 6** – PTO Back to School Pool Party 7-8:30pm

**Aug. 10** – "Unpack Your Backpack" (first, second

grades only)

**Aug. 8** – Class assignments available in Powerschool after 4 p.m.

**Aug. 11** – First day for students, dismissal at 11:45 a.m.

**Aug. 15** – Meet the Teacher, 6-7:30 p.m.

**Aug. 29** – PTO meeting, 7 p.m.

## PTO



**2022-2023 Parent-Teacher Organization Officers:**  
Stephanie Autry, Treasurer; Bethany Wyss, Secretary; Amy Kominkiewicz, Vice President; and Holly Bones, President

Stephanie Autry, Laura Hoots, Lisa Tillison, Heidi Hartter, Rachel Geiger, Natalie Thompson

**Challenge teachers** – Shane Weyland, Laurie Zehr

**Social Work** – Laura Steiner

**Psychologist** – Alyson Baker

**Speech** – Rachel Meier

**Office Clerical Aides** – Sue Schrock, Liz Cigelnik

**CMA** – Monica Pitzer

**COTA** – Keri Gillette

**Custodians** – Allen Fort, Dominique Mackey

**Food Service** – Jen Landrith, Linda Fanning, Kristen Witzig



# WARD GRUNDY ELEMENTARY

1100 S. Fourth Ave. | Phone: 309-263-1421 | Fax: 309-284-2015



## School day

### Early Childhood

A.M. 8:20 to 10:55 a.m.

P.M. 12:05 to 2:40 p.m.

### Grades K-6

8:20 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.

## Policies

**Absence reporting:** The absence line (284-2000) is open 24 hours a day. Please call prior to 9 a.m. on the day of the absence.

**The school supply list** is posted on the Grundy website: <https://grundy.morton709.org/virtual-backpack>.

**Morning drop-off:** Please use the driveway on the west side of the building. Students must exit from the passenger side of the vehicle. Please remain in your vehicle to keep the line moving. If you need to walk your child inside, please park in the District Office parking lot.

**Afternoon pick-up:** Please park in the right lane of the driveway on the west side of the building or in the District Office parking lot. If you park in the driveway, please remain in your vehicle to keep the line moving.

## Meet the 2022-2023 staff:

**Principal** – Michael Saunders  
**Administrative assistant** – Jennifer Sadler

**Clerical aides** – Ashley Feilner, Margie Henderson, Pam Owen, Bree Rassi

**Kindergarten** – Olivia Gabbert, Janine Weyland

**First grade** – Emily Anderson, Baylie Craig

**Second grade** – Jeanette Grant, Ashlie Reinert

**Third grade** – Jessica Gunn, Mindy Wendling

**Fourth grade** – Molly Karpowicz, Jon Wheat

**Fifth grade** – Holly Manthey, Julie Matlock

**Sixth grade** – Kelley Friedrich, Emma Owdom

**Building technologist** – Beth Shook



MICHAEL SAUNDERS

Pam Addams, Dwight Schuck

**Daily substitute** – Tara Meester

**ECE teachers** – Ryan Gillhouse, Heather Green, Cassidy Johnson

**ECE aides** – Regina Bakirdan, Rachel Herrmann, Lorrie Kaiser, Jaime Maynard

**Food service** – Theresa Hermacinski, Kaitlyn Oliver

**Grade level aides** – Sarah Butler, Leslie Householter, Lisa Kaufman, Leanne Sommer, Anita Stidman

**Librarian** – Angel Fisher

**Challenge teachers** – Kelley Friedrich, Holly Manthey  
**Crossing guard** – Craig Carroll

**Custodians** –

**Literacy coaches** – Jennifer Auxier, Eleanor Higus

**Music teacher** – Tim Beutel

**Nurse** – Lindsay Phillips

**Occupational therapy assistant** – Molly Sullentrop

**Physical education teachers** – Clint Baldwin, Jayne Eisenmann

**Psychologist** – Madison Reiman

**Resource teachers** – Emma Sherbeyn, Holly Toraason, Sarah Williams, Jennifer Wilson

**Resource aides** – Olgajean Atteberry, Jeanie Dennis, Michelle Paulson, Pam Riddle, Lisa Smith, Valerie Tongate, Craig Wiegardt

**RTI aide** – Amanda Derrick

**Social worker** – Elizabeth Knapp

**Speech and language pathologists** – Brooke Behm, Kelly Webb

## Athletics/ Extracurricular activities:

- ▶ Fifth- and sixth-grade choir
- ▶ Sixth-grade band
- ▶ Sixth-grade orchestra
- ▶ Sixth grade wrestling (at MJHS)
- ▶ Book Club
- ▶ Cheerleading Club
- ▶ Chess Club
- ▶ Dance Club
- ▶ Lego Club
- ▶ Running Club
- ▶ Sports Club
- ▶ Theatre/Drama Club
- ▶ Volleyball Club

## Daily schedule:

- 7:45 a.m. — Office opens
- 8:10 a.m. — First bell (students go to class)
- 8:20 a.m. — Second bell (classes begin)
- 10:45-11:30 a.m. — Kindergarten lunch/recess
- 11:15 a.m.-12 noon — First, second grade lunch/recess
- 11:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. — Third, fourth grade lunch/recess
- 12:15 -1 p.m. — Fifth, sixth grade lunch/recess
- 2:40 p.m. — Dismissal
- 3:45 p.m. — Office closes

## Registration information:

In-person registration is on July 28 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## PTO Officers

**Parent-Teacher Organization Officers:**  
**President** Besa Basha; **Vice President** Anna Bennett;  
**Secretary** Toni Martiens; **Co-Treasurer** Tara Meester;  
**Co-Treasurer** Elise Pate

## Mark your calendar

**July 28** – Registration, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Aug. 4** – Kindergarten Round-up

**Aug. 8** – Powerschool opens to K-6 parents

**Aug. 10** – Unpack Your Backpack (K-1), 6 p.m.

**Aug. 11** – First day of school, 8:20 to 11:55 a.m.

**Aug. 18** – Meet the Teacher, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

**Aug. 22** – PTO meeting, 6:30 p.m., Grundy cafeteria

## Traditions:

▶ **Educational excellence:** Grundy is ranked among the top 10 percent of all schools in the state of Illinois and has earned the Academic Excellence Award from the Illinois State Board of Education and the School Search Bright A+ Award. Grundy is also among the few public elementary schools in Illinois to have received a distinguished Great-schools.org rating of 10 out of 10. In 2022, 18 percent of our sixth-graders earned the President's Award for Educational Excellence and 49 percent of our third- through sixth-graders earned the Principal's Honor Roll Award.

▶ **Community service:** Grundy staff members and students participate in several community service projects including a Thanksgiving Food Drive, a Christmas Clothing Drive, Gameball Run and various other fundraisers for charitable organizations throughout the year.

▶ **Patriotism:** We teach students to understand the importance of patriotism through the study of American history including important people, places, events, holidays, documents, music and literature. We hold a Patriot Day ceremony and a Veterans Day ceremony to honor those who have served our country.





# JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY

220 E. Jefferson St. | Phone: 309-263-2650 | Fax: 309-284-3031

## School day

8:20 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.

## Policies

**Absence reporting:** 284-3025, open 24 hours a day. Please call prior to 8:30 a.m. on the day of absence.

**Supply Lists:** Lists are available at local retailers and on the district website, [www.morton709.org](http://www.morton709.org). To access the lists online, click on Schools, Jefferson, Virtual Backpack.

## Parking/Drop-off & Dismissal:

Jefferson School is located in downtown Morton. We ask you to adhere to these guidelines to ensure the safety of all children. Morning drop-off is behind the school, past the sign, on Adams Street. Students should exit on the sidewalk/passenger side of the vehicle. Please use Clifton and turn left onto Adams to avoid the bus traffic lane. Students enter the building by the cafeteria door. Dismissal for K-1 students is by the primary wing doors on Third Street, while second through sixth grade students exit the front of the building on Jefferson Street. Parents may park in the lot across from school to wait for their students. Students must cross Jefferson Street with the crossing guard.

## PTO Officers



**Jefferson School PTO officers 2022-2023:** (left to right): Beverly Carr, treasurer; Lauren Johnson, secretary; Sarah Fore, vice president; Lindsay Majors, president; Josh Majors, co-treasurer.



## Mark your calendar

**July 28** — Registration

**Aug. 4** — Kindergarten Round-up

**Aug. 4** — Back to School Family Pool Party

**Aug. 8** — Class assignments available in PowerSchool

**Aug. 10** — Kindergarten Unpack the Backpack Night, 4-5 p.m.

**Aug. 11** — First day of school, 8:20 a.m. to 11:55 a.m.

**Aug. 16** — Meet Your Teacher Night, 6-7:30 p.m.

## Daily Lunch/Recess schedule:

	Kindergarten	5-6	3-4	1-2
Lunch	11 a.m.-11:20 a.m.	11:25-11:45 a.m.	11:50 a.m.-12:10 p.m.	12:15-12:35 p.m.
Recess	11:20 a.m.-11:45 a.m.	11:45 a.m.-12:10 p.m.	12:10-12:35 p.m.	12:35-1:00 p.m.

## Meet the 2022-2023 staff

**Principal** — Kate Wyman  
**Secretary** — Keshia Wenninger

**Kindergarten** — Allison Bohnhoff, Emily Cline

**First grade** — Nicole Herren, Melissa Ralson

**Second grade** — Katie Birkey, Teresa Oaks

**Third grade** — Ashley Sarver, Esther Hofstetter

**Fourth grade** — Steve Brenkman, Lindsey Pierz

**Fifth grade** — Sara Dirks, Kira Schoen

**Sixth grade** — Summer Geist, Faith Kruzick

**Resource teachers** — Cassandra Little, Bridg-



KATE WYMAN

et Quinn, Christine Seneca, Kristin Muzzarelli

**Title 1 Intervention Teacher** — TBD

**Rtl coordinator** — Randi McKinley

**Rtl aides** — Christy Powers, Sarah Webb

**Multilingual coordinator** — Dayrim Sheehan

**Speech/Language Pathologist** — Chelsie Chaney

**Psychologist** — Alyson Baker

**Social worker** — Kelly Hobson

**Occupational therapy assistant** — Keri Gillette

**Physical education teachers** — Brittany Emmons, Dan Gashaw

**Music teacher** — Heather Berger

**Building technologist** — LaVette Brown

**Librarian** — Jackie Seaton

**Challenge teachers** — Sara Dirks, Ashley

## Registration information:

**Online Registration** — July 1 to July 28

**In-person registration** — Thursday, July 28, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Vision/Mission

Educating Patriots today to be leaders tomorrow. Our students will be respectful, responsible, and ready to excel in learning and serving.

## Traditions

Jefferson School, established in 1928, is the proud home of the Patriots. On Fridays, our students and staff show their school spirit by wearing red, white and blue.

Jefferson has a strong, supportive and generous Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Our PTO organizes our annual Read-a-thon, coordinates Christmas Basket distribution, and hosts a carnival and fun day. With the help of our PTO and community partnerships, many projects have been completed in recent years including the primary wing playground, outdoor benches, basketball hoops, and more.

Jefferson participates in several community service projects including a Food Drive, Children's Hospital of Illinois/Gameball Run and St. Jude. Our school is proud to be the home of the annual Morton Pumpkin Festival.

Sarver

**Resource aides** — Brittni Austin, Amanda Blakely, Carrie Claassen, Amy Glass, Nicole Gold, Jeany Righi, Kathleen Wunder

**Classroom support aides** — Mandy Collins, Tiffani Hunsinger, Lindsey O'Donnell, Monica Taylor, Zoe Troxell

**Clerical aides** — Sarah Fore, Jennifer McMillan, Lisa Raisor

**Daily sub aide** — Tiffany Parrott

**Custodians** — Dave Keen, Doug Hutchison, Dante Williams

**Crossing guard** — Stacy Krantz

**Food service** — Teri Goodspeed, Val Messer, Janette Huetten

**Nurse** — Kristin Labriola





# LINCOLN ELEMENTARY

100 S. Nebraska Ave. | Phone: 309-266-6989 | Fax: 309-291-0439

## School day

8:20 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.

**First bell:** 8:10 a.m.

**Morning assembly/announcements in gym:** 8:10 a.m.

**Tardy Bell:** 8:20 a.m.

**Daily schedule:** All students will report to the gym upon arrival. Students and teachers will be dismissed from the gym to classrooms at the end of the announcements at approximately 8:20 a.m. to begin the day!

## Lunch schedule:

3rd & 4th grades: 11-11:25 a.m.

5th & 6th grades: 11:30-11:55 a.m.

Kindergarten: 12-12:25 p.m.

1st & 2nd grades: 12:30-12:55 p.m.

## Policies

**Absence reporting:** 284-4000, open 24 hours a day. Please call prior to 9 a.m. on the day of absence.

**Proof of residency:** Families enrolling in the district for the first time (including all kindergarten students) must provide proof of residency. In addition, families who may have moved during the previous school year or during the summer need to provide proof of residency for their new address. Proof of residency includes a copy of one document from the following group: property tax bill, mortgage paperwork, rental agreement and previous month's payment, or letter from landlord in lieu of lease. In addition, copies of two documents must be provided from this group: driver's license, voter registration card, public aid card, homeowner/renter insurance policy, gas/electric/water bill, library card, cable bill.

**Supply lists:** School supply lists will be distributed at registration. Lists also were included with student report cards when distributed in May 2022. The lists also are available at local retailers and can be found on the district website, [www.morton709.org](http://www.morton709.org). Click on the Lincoln icon, then go to the Virtual Backpack on the Lincoln page. The school supply list can also be found under the Parent tab.

## Parking/drop-off:

Please help follow these guidelines in the morning and after school to ensure the safety of all children.

► Students who arrive at school by car should be dropped off in the circle drive on the west side of the school. Please do not drop off your child on Nebraska Avenue, as Nebraska is very busy. It is not safe for students to cross traffic on Nebraska or in the circle drive.

► The north parking lot is for bus drop-off and pick-up. Please do not drop off or pick up children in this parking lot.

► Cars should pull up in the drive as far as possible to allow for multiple cars to drop off their children. After your child exits the passenger side, proceed out the drive to allow for more cars to pull through. It is important for children to exit the vehicle on the passenger side so they do not cross in front of other vehicles. Please help keep the traffic flow moving smoothly by having your child ready to exit the car once it is stopped.

► Walkers and bicycle riders should walk on the sidewalk that goes up to the building. Do not cross the driveway to park a bicycle or to walk to the building.

## Traditions:

► On Fridays, students and staff are encouraged to show their school spirit by wearing Lincoln Lions green and white or Morton cherry and gray/red and white colors. Families will have an opportunity during the school year to purchase Lincoln spirit wear.

► At the end of the year, one sixth-grade girl and one sixth-grade boy are recognized with the Ruth Myers Citizenship Award. This award has been given annually to outstanding students at Lincoln School since 1989. The names of the winners from 1989 until present are located on a plaque inside the front door of Lincoln School.

► Lincoln has a strong tradition of a supportive and active Parent Teacher Organization and families who are regularly involved in our school activities. Each year, the Lincoln Elementary PTO coordinates fundraising activities in order to provide supplies, materials and experiences for teachers and students, including last year's Step It Up Fundraiser. The funds raised support activities such as Artistic Adventures, student birthday books, the 6th-grade field trip to St. Louis, technology needs, new library books, hands-on science supplies, and our 5th-grade Etiquette Luncheon. The PTO also organizes our quarterly Family Fun Nights and coordinates

our annual School Carnival. We encourage all parents and guardians to become involved with our PTO and to be active in our classrooms and school activities.



## PTO Officers:

Meet the 2022-2023 Lincoln Elementary PTO officers (left to right): Jennifer Weaver (Treasurer), Natalie Friend (President), Anna Hopkins (Vice President), Lyndsey Parnham (Secretary).

## Meet the 2022-2023 staff:

**Principal** – Julie Horchem

**Assistant Principal** – Michelle Peterson

**Secretaries** – Jennifer Bakirdan, Sueann Spinder

**Office Clerical Aide** - TBD

**Nurse** – Jennifer Cook

**Kindergarten** – Tammy Anderson, Jodi Hoelscher, Emily Miller

**First grade** – Kara Brooks, Madison Kumpf, Wendy Vastine

**Second grade** – Abbey Denney, Abby Miller, Erika Turbett

**Third grade** – Janelle Guetschow, Jacey Johnson, Kayla Wold

**Fourth grade** – Catie El-



JULIE HORCHEM

ward, Kylie Guyon, Emily Turner  
**Fifth grade** – Meghan Dalberg, Samantha McKee, Stuart Smith

**Sixth grade** – Danielle Estes, Jaime Farrell, Andrea Knepp, Ruth Westbrook

**P.E.** – Bob Becker, Clint Baldwin, Claire Schmitt

**Music** – Shane Rocke

**Special Education** – Erin Chan, Joy Gronewold, Linda Hancin, Megan Levitt, Bethany Scroggs, Molly Stephens

**Speech** – Sherry Robinson, Lauren Thacker

**School Social Worker** – Molly Winkler

**School Psychologist** – Melissa Kerber-Long  
**Occupational Therapy Assistant** – Amanda Bunting  
**District Instructional Coaches** – Jenny Auxier, El Higus

**District Technologists** – Keri Dodson, Diana Schauer

**Building Technology Aide** – Jennnifer Wright

**Library Aide** – Denise Poshard

**Custodians** – Dwight Hamilton, Bob Harkless, Dante Williams

**Crossing Guards** – Laura Hardman, Rhonda Konieczny

**Arbor Food Service Staff** – Lisa Horn, Ronae Fender, Mary Dralle

## Mark your calendar

*(Dates and times are tentative and subject to change.)*

**July 1-27** - 2022-2023

School Year Registration opens online for returning families. Details for this can be found under the Parent Tab on the Lincoln School website.

**July 28** - 2022-2023 School Year Registration in person for new families and incoming kindergarten students 7 a.m.-5 p.m. at the south entrance. New students and kindergarten students can fill out the paperwork online in advance by going to the Registration page under the Parent tab on our websites and selecting Pre-Registration.

**Aug. 4** - Kindergarten Round-up for all incoming kindergarten students (time TBD)

**Aug. 5** - Back to School Pool Party at Morton Pool, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

**Aug. 8** - Class assignments announced in Power-School, 4 p.m.

**Aug. 10** - "Unpack Your Backpack" for all K-6 students, 4-5 p.m.

**Aug. 11** - First Day of School; 11:55 a.m. dismissal

**Aug. 15** - PTO Meeting in gym vestibule, 7 p.m.

**Aug. 22** - Meet the Teacher Night, 6-7:30 p.m.

**Sept. 19** - PTO New Family Dinner in cafeteria 6 p.m.

**Feb. 16, 2023** - Lincoln School Open House, 6-7:30 p.m.

**March 10** - PTO School Carnival

**May 19** - School Picnic Day

**May 23** - Laugh Olympics





# MORTON ACADEMY

260 E. Queenwood Ave. | Phone: 309-284-8033 Fax: 309-284-8015

## School day

8:15 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.

Half-day/early release dismissal: 11:10 a.m.

## Traditions

Although a small school setting by numbers, Morton Academy is no stranger to established school traditions. Most notably, the fall harvest cookout is a student and staff favorite. Other traditions include a family-style meal for Thanksgiving, Co-coa for Christmas and a myriad of spring activities. Special events at Morton Academy are aimed at providing positive life experiences for its students and allowing opportunities for students, staff, guardians and families to connect. Throughout the year, students also attend events and assemblies at the other local elementary schools in Morton 709.

## Mission

The mission of Morton Academy is to provide an intentionally structured small school environment designed to intensively meet the social emotional needs of students as its first and primary goal. Morton Academy believes that by creating and fostering positive relationships, students are able to develop as individuals and gain skills that will positively impact one's self. Morton Academy has a highly structured student-to-staff ratio that allows students to be supported both socially/emotionally and academically. Instructional diversity in the school climate allows Morton Academy to support the mission of Morton School District by being a provider and an advocate for the education of all children. It is always the goal of Morton Academy for its students to return to their neighborhood school when they are ready.

## About Morton Academy

In Fall, 2022, Morton Academy will be starting its seventh year in Morton, serving a diverse age range of students. Morton Academy will be structured as a K-6 building for the 2022-23 school year, specifically organized for students with so-

## Meet the 2022-23 staff

**Teachers** – Rhonda Howard, Deborah Moore and Shay Nelson

**Paraprofessionals** – Laura Donley, Krista Naab, Shelby Zbinden

**Behavioral Support Paraprofessionals** – Mark Moore, Darci Slocum

**Physical Education** – Bob Becker

**Music** – Melissa Risner

**Social Worker** – Paul Thompson

**School Psychologist** – Katie Buzzell

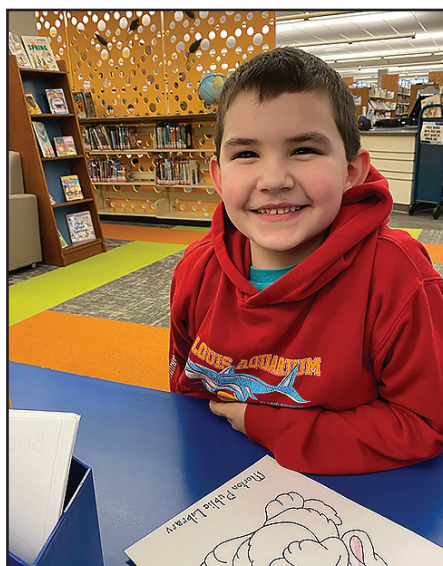
**Speech/Language Pathologist** – Lauren



AMANDA  
RICKENBERG

Thacker  
**Certified Occupational  
Therapy Assistant** –  
Keri Gillette  
**Secretary** – Julie Miller  
**Principal** – Amanda  
Rickenberg

*Morton Academy is comprised of a diverse team of professionals. Ten of the 18 staff members work across buildings in the district with Morton Academy being only a part of their professional responsibilities.*



cial and emotional learning needs. Within this learning environment, there will be three classrooms with age bands that will be flexible to meet the needs of the students enrolled in the program including a lower, middle and upper elementary classroom, each with a certified teacher and an aide as the foundational classroom instructional support.

Opening its doors originally in 2016 to meet the needs of students who resided at Guardian Angel Home, Morton Academy will now serve students from within the Morton School District boundaries and will enroll more students who live

throughout the community than reside at Guardian Angel Home. Criteria for placement is determined by a child's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) team. This structure change is in part due to Guardian Angel Home closing one wing of its residential programming, as well as the school district's desire to support students within District 709 whenever possible. The design of this program for the 2022-23 school year promotes new opportunities for students with the school district that previously were not available.

Within the school environment, the facility has two stand-alone classrooms and a third, open-ceiling classroom within the gymnasium/cafeteria space. There is one shared space, which includes the school office, meeting area, teacher work space, lunch area and copier. Staff work collaboratively to move between spaces so areas can be utilized throughout the school day. Academic and social emotional learning features of Morton Academy include a school-wide focus on social and emotional learning. Classrooms have daily social and emotional curricular lessons with embedded support from the school social worker throughout the week. Additional interventions are planned specifically for each child. A structured school-wide schedule provides students with an opportunity to practice routines, transition and foster independence.

The success of the programming at Morton Academy can be attributed to the hard work of students and the dedication and commitment of teaching staff, related service staff and support staff in Morton 709, as well as the collaborative and supportive partnership with Guardian Angel Home and parents of students. This small setting provides opportunity for the school to work closely with parents and guardians of enrolled children and is a testament to the power of positive school outcomes for children.

Staff at Morton Academy approach teaching and learning through a trauma-informed lens and recognize the power of positive relationships in supporting students in the school environment. The Morton Academy school climate is sensitive to the diverse needs and backgrounds of students and places value in the great abilities of children while supporting them to gain skills in areas of need. This is accomplished through a strong emphasis on social emotional learning.

Morton Academy strives to provide its students with the same access to opportunities that all students of Morton District 709 receive. Support from district administration, the Board of Education, community businesses and organizations and Guardian Angel Home and parents have been instrumental in achieving this goal.

## Community Partnerships

Morton Academy continues to be involved in the Morton community with partnerships for educational experiences for students and was able to continue these partnerships through the 2022-23 school year: Those partnerships include:

- **The Cookery:** Students engage in monthly hands-on, in-the-kitchen, vocational educational experiences differentiated to meet the needs of a wide range of learners.
- **Morton Public Library:** Students visit the library weekly to check out books and have bi-weekly lessons with the MPL Educational Liaison.



## Student Support Services Programs

Student Support Services covers any accommodated need students may have through Individual Education Plans (IEP), 504, Multilingual Plan, and medical needs in all school buildings throughout the district. Any questions about support services for your student can be directed to the Student Support Services office at 263-0522.

### ► District Office Staff

Lindsay Franklin - Director of Student Support Services  
Amanda Rickenberg - Assistant Director of Student Support Services, Principal of MA, & ECE Coordinator  
Denise Fountain - Secondary Coordinator for MJHS & MHS  
Randi McKinley - MTSS Coordinator  
Dayrim Sheehan - Multilingual

Coordinator  
Marcia Wallace - Administrative Assistant for SSS

Julie Miller - Administrative Assistant for MA and ECE

### ► Related Services

#### Speech & Language Therapists

Brooke Behm - ECE

Chelsie Chaney - Grundy & preschool

Chelsea Heitz - MJHS & MHS

Rachel Meier - Lettie Brown

Sherry Robinson - Lincoln

Lauren Thacker - Lincoln RISE, MA, & preschool

Kelly Webb - Jefferson & preschool

### Social Workers

Elizabeth Antonacci - Grundy

Kelly Hobson - Jefferson

Peter Klinkner - MHS

Laura Steiner - Lettie Brown

Paul Thompson - MJHS & MA

Molly Winkler - Lincoln

### School Psychologists

Alyson Baker - Lettie Brown & Jefferson

Katie Buzzell - MHS & MA

Melissa Kerber-Long - Lincoln & ECE

Madison Reiman - MJHS & Grundy

### Occupational Therapist

Mary Zumwalt - TMCSEA

### Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant (COTA)

Amanda Bunting - Lincoln & Grundy

Keri Gillette - Lettie Brown, Jefferson, MHS, MJHS, & MA

Molly Suellentrop - ECE

### Physical Therapist

Erica Gleason - TMCSEA

Physical Therapist Assistant

Stefanie Straw - TMCSEA

### Nurses

Jen Cook - Lincoln

Kelly James - MHS

Kristin Labriola - Jefferson

Maria Miranda - MJHS

Lindsay Phillips - Grundy

Monica Scheerer - Lettie Brown

► **RISE (Reaching Independence through Support and Education):** RISE is the district's functional/life skills program that supports students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

**Staff:** Lincoln Elementary, Megan Livitt (K-3) and Joy Grone-wald (4-6); Morton Junior High, Greg McAndrew and Megan Bolliger; Morton High, Michelle Townner

► **Morton Academy:** Morton Academy is a K-6 building, specifically organized for students with social and emotional learning needs

**Staff:** Rhonda Howard (K-2), Shay Nelson (3-4), and Deb Moore (5-6)

► **LIFE Academy (Living Independently for Everyone):** The Academy serves students 18-22

years old as they are developing vocational and independent living skills.

**Staff:** Alison Eckart, Kristi Ruxlow

► **ACES (Academic Connections Emotional Support):** The program serves the social-emotional needs of students at the junior high and high school level.

**Staff:** Patti Massaglia (MJHS), Meghan James (MHS)

► **Early Childhood Education (ECE):** The program serves students with developmental delays, age 3 to 5.

**Staff:** Ryan Gillhouse, Heather Green, Cassidy Johnson

► **Multilingual Program:** The program serves students throughout the district who speak two or more languages. **Staff:** Dayrim Sheehan (coordinator and teacher), Amy Kuras (Jefferson and MJHS), MaryBeth Stewart (MHS)

# 'I never wanted to do anything else but teach'

Three local educators have been recognized as the cream of the District 709 crop for their ongoing contributions to schoolchildren and their profession.

Each year, District 709 takes nominations and distributes awards in three categories – the Dana Ashby Award for outstanding work with special needs children, the Potter's Hand Award for exceptional service by a non-certified employee, and the Master Potter Award for excellence in education.

This year's winners:

► **The Potter's Hand Award** for excellence in a non-certified position went to Morton High School special education job developer/coach Kristi Ruxlow.

Ms. Ruxlow's students and



Left to right: Rhonda Howard, Laura Zehr, Kristi Ruxlow

colleagues had high praise for her. She "has worn many hats ... built relationships to last a lifetime, and has gone above and beyond to help the needs of students with disabilities," said one. She "interacts with

all of the students and gets to know them ... both as students and individuals," said another. "Everything she does ... is done with compassion and the utmost respect for each student."

► **The Dana Ashby Memorial**

**Service Award** for exemplary work with special needs students went to Morton Academy's Rhonda Howard.

Ms. Howard "meets students where they are" with "empathy, compassion, trust and love," said her peers. An "advocate," she "creates an atmosphere of stability and family," said another. "I feel loved here," said one of her students. For her part, Ms. Howard credited "some of the most amazing ... survivors" among her students, who inspire her to do what she does so well.

► **The Master Potter Excellence in Education Award,** the top honor given a teacher in District 709, went to Lettie Brown 4th grade instructor Laura Zehr.

An employee of the district

since 2005, Ms. Zehr "goes above and beyond to spark curiosity and excitement when she teaches her students science," said former Superintendent Jeff Hill. "She has a passion and love for literature that has led her to host a book club at lunchtime in which her students join her. While her academic preparation of her students is exemplary, her ability to create a community of learners who respect one another and are motivated to learn are unparalleled."

"I never wanted to do anything else but teach school," Ms. Zehr said after receiving her award, giving voice to what so many educators feel is a true calling.

Congratulations to all for raising the bar in District 709!



## SCHOOL FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUE



A heavy equipment operator works on the parking lot at Lincoln Elementary School, which is part of \$2.6 million in summer construction work around District 709. Meanwhile, various contractors are working on the STEM labs at Morton High, on roof replacements and other site improvements at all the schools, and some asbestos abatement as the School Board continues its commitment to providing top-notch facilities for students and staff.

## A GLIMPSE OF GRADUATION



## Mid-Illini Conference Champions



2022



CLASS OF 2022



## MEMORIES OF A GREAT SCHOOL YEAR

