

HOOFBEAT

MERIDIAN MUSTANG

Winter 2025

ISSUE 2



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READY



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SCHOOLS



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holidays

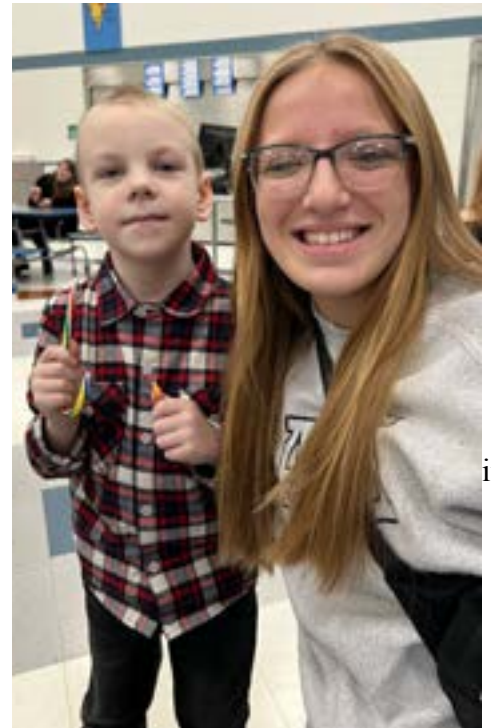


SARAH GLANN
Superintendent

Season's Greetings!

As the holiday season arrives and families settle into a well-deserved break, I'm delighted to share this winter issue of The Hoofbeat. This edition shines a light on what makes Meridian Public Schools so exceptional: dedicated staff, inspired students, and a community that supports learning all year long.

You'll read about our ongoing work within the Marzano High Reliability Schools framework and the ways our staff is strengthening instruction for every learner. You'll also see students in action—on stage, outdoors, classrooms, and throughout the community—making this a vibrant season of learning.



in



We also share updates on funding and facility planning as we prepare for the future needs of our district. Your partnership remains essential as we work to provide safe, modern spaces where students can thrive.

May this season bring rest, gratitude, and time with those you love.



ON THE COVER: ALTHEA HALAZON, MEGHAN MOCK, RYLEE CAY



HIGH RELIABILITY SCHOOLS



KENT BOXEY

Teaching & Learning Director

Deepening Our High Reliability Schools Work

At Meridian Public Schools, our commitment to continuous improvement is guided by the Marzano High Reliability Schools (HRS) framework. Last year, all three of our schools earned Level 1 certification, confirming that we provide safe, supportive, and collaborative cultures—an important milestone and the foundation for our next steps.

This year, we are moving deeper into Level 2: Effective Teaching in Every Classroom and Level 3: Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum. These levels ensure that students experience consistently high-quality learning opportunities, no matter the classroom or subject.

Strengthening Instruction with Proficiency Scales

A major focus is the continued development of proficiency scales. These scales clarify learning expectations, outline progress toward mastery, and support aligned instruction and assessment. They help teachers give clearer feedback and help students understand and track their growth.

Growing Professional Learning Communities

We are also strengthening our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Through structured collaboration, teachers share practices, analyze student learning, and take collective responsibility for student success, ensuring consistent instruction across classrooms.

Investing in Teacher Learning

To support high-quality teaching, we expanded onboarding for new staff. Teachers began the year with three days of training on our instructional vision, proficiency scales, and project-based learning, followed by monthly professional learning aligned to our district model.

Instructional Rounds for Continuous Growth

In October, we launched Instructional Rounds—a district-wide process for observing classrooms to identify trends, strengths, and areas for improvement. This is not an evaluation tool but a way to monitor progress toward effective instruction in every classroom.

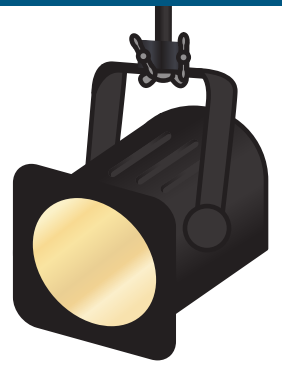
Looking Ahead

Becoming a High Reliability School is a step-by-step journey. By focusing on Levels 2 and 3 this year, we are strengthening instruction and ensuring every student benefits from a guaranteed, viable curriculum. We are grateful for the continued support of our community, families, and staff as we work to provide schools where students are safe, supported, challenged, and inspired.

For more information, visit the HRS page on our district website at www.merps.org/page/hrs



READY FOR THE SPOTLIGHT



ANTHONY MOREY
Teacher/Theatre Director

ranging from actors on the stage to set builders, spot light operators, props and run crew. “By show week, the students run every element

The **Meridian Theatre Program** re - established its program under a new director, Anthony Morey, in August of 2024. Morey, drama and music teacher at the Elementary building, had a desire for the fine art focus of live theatre to continue once students graduated out of the program at the elementary building. This led to the restarting and rebranding of the program to now include 5th - 8th grade students in addition to 9th - 12th grade students in its after school program.

Since restarting in August 2024, the Meridian Theatre Program has performed two plays, **Charlotte’s Web** and **The Mousetrap**. The first year of the new program had nearly 50 student participants



of the show: ticket sales, sound board operators, stage managers directing every scene of the show, costumes, hair and makeup, and the list goes on. This is a completely student - run operation at show time” Morey stated.

This year, the drama club has been hard at work on their Fall production, **10 Ways to Survive the Holidays** which is a comedy highlighting all the highs and lows of the holiday season. With 55 actors and crew, the program has grown exponentially in its 2nd year. Morey expects the program to grow even more as this spring will feature its first musical the last weekend in April 2026.

Morey believes it is important to provide ample opportunities for students to experience a wide - range of play and musical types. “If a student is in this program for four or more consecutive years, he or she should experience a multitude of different play types so that if a student should pursue theatre outside of high school, he or she would be able to say that they have experience in several different forms of acting” explained Morey.

PHOTOS BY AMY GRUBAUGH



“Being part of Drama Club is very rewarding because I get to hang out with great kids and work together to put on a performance that makes people laugh”

-Mason Clark

Morey explained that his plan is to incorporate many types of plays into the theatre program, including:

Comedy

Shakespearan Tragedy

Musical Theatre,

Children’s Theatre

American Classics

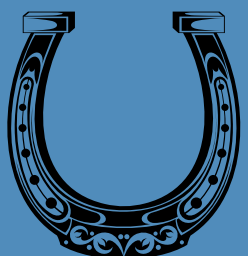
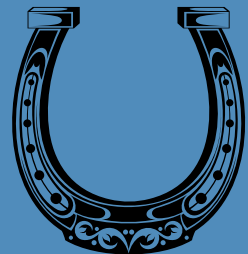
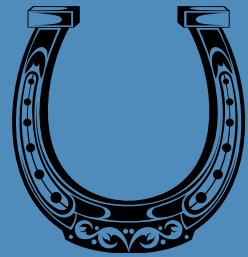
Radio Theatre

His decisions in choosing future plays happens around 6 months prior to the show taking the stage. A variety of factors determine the decision: past play types, student interest, availability, and student strengths to name just a few.

The life - long benefits of being a part of a theatre program are numerous. Students learn how to use and implement time management skills, intrapersonal and interpersonal communication skills, emotional regulation, diction and enunciation speech techniques, vocal projection, gross and fine motor skills, and communication through body language, facial expressions, and vocal technique. Additionally, students



learn stage skills such as theatre makeup techniques, proper stage lighting to add to the storyline, sound board operation, measurements and selections of properly fitting costumes, and how to run the backstage area during theatre productions.



EDUCATION



STEPHANIE GOFF
Special Education Teacher

Bringing Learning Outdoors: Our Nature Education Program

For over three years, our schools have been working hard to connect students with the natural world through a growing Nature Education program. We believe that learning doesn't have to stay inside a classroom—and that students learn best when they can explore, ask questions, and experience the world around them.

Thanks to a wonderful partnership with the Chippewa Nature Center (CNC), every elementary class gets to work with a naturalist three times a year. These naturalists are trained educators who lead outdoor lessons that often match what students are already learning in class—like science, social studies, or reading. Students also take a field trip to CNC, where they get hands-on experience with nature and learning in action.

But the learning doesn't stop there. Our teachers are encouraged to bring their students outside regularly to teach all kinds of subjects. Students might:

Read or write in journals under a tree

Study bugs and animals they see around them

Explore math by measuring with sticks or counting rocks

Track weather changes

Make art using leaves, twigs, and flowers

Practice calming activities using their five senses

We are proud of the special outdoor spaces we've created at our schools:

Two pollinator gardens help students learn about plant growth and how bees and butterflies help our environment. These were made possible by support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and CNC.

Two outdoor pavilions, built through generous grants, give classes a comfortable place to gather and learn outside.

A fun music wall, donated by a local Girl Scout troop, lets students explore sound and rhythm using outdoor tools.





A mud kitchen, built by Dave Haag and supported by the MEA Retired Teachers group, encourages creativity and sensory play.

Our middle school students also take part in outdoor learning. Mrs. Kyro's art classes have created outdoor art exhibits for several years. Mrs. Pashak's science students use the outdoor areas to study nature topics like native bees. In younger grades, teachers do math outside, helping their students learn counting, graphing, measuring, and even map-making—all through outdoor exploration. Some classes get outside everyday while other classes set aside time each month. To support teachers, we are building a Nature Education Library filled with books and resources that connect to outdoor learning. Each month, we send out a Nature Newsletter that shares what teachers are doing outside, gives new ideas for lessons, and lists upcoming visits from the CNC naturalists.

We've also held Lunch and Learn events to help teachers feel more confident and supported in teaching outside the classroom.

Why is learning outside so important?

It helps kids connect with nature and care more about the environment.

It's a great way to use all of their senses while learning.

Nature is calming, and can help students feel more relaxed and focused.

Some students who have a hard time learning indoors do much better outside.

Outdoor learning helps kids be curious, ask questions, and think in creative ways.

Our Nature Education program is more than just taking a walk outside. It's a powerful way to bring lessons to life. Whether students are reading, drawing, solving math problems, or studying science, learning outside makes education more meaningful and memorable.

We're excited to keep growing this program and finding new ways to help our students learn through nature. With continued support from our community, staff, and partners like Chippewa Nature Center, we know this program will keep blooming for years to come.





FUNDING &



SARAH GLANN
Superintendent

SCHOOL AID FUNDING & FACILITY NEEDS

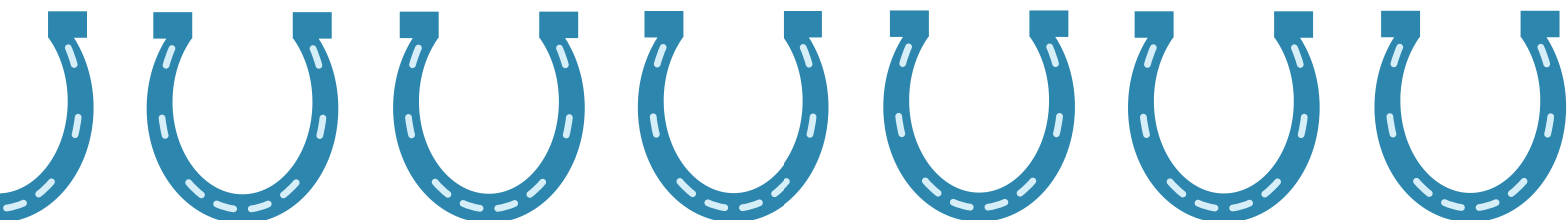
Public schools in Michigan are supported through a blend of state, local, and federal revenue sources. For Meridian Public Schools, most of our day-to-day operating dollars flow through the General Fund, with the majority coming from State School Aid. These funds are what keep our schools running — they support the teachers and staff who care for our students each day, classroom supplies and curriculum, utilities, technology, transportation, extracurricular programs, and so much more that contributes to a well-rounded, engaging educational experience.

Our annual General Fund budget totals approximately \$21 million. However, not all of these dollars can be used interchangeably. Today, **only about 72% of our funding is unrestricted**, meaning those dollars can be directed toward meeting the needs of **all** students and programs. The remaining **28% is restricted** for very specific purposes determined by the State or Federal Government. Over the past decade, we have seen a

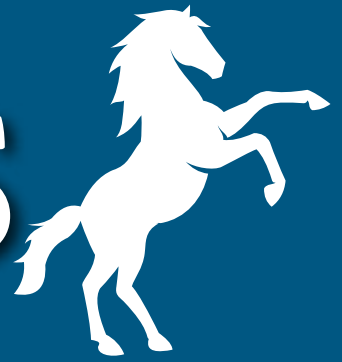
growing share of funding become restricted, which limits local flexibility and makes it harder to respond quickly to changing needs in our district.

Our independent **2024–2025 financial audit** confirms that Meridian continues to operate from a position of strength. Revenues and expenditures remained very close to budgeted expectations, showing responsible, proactive planning. In addition, our **unrestricted fund balance** — currently \$3,047,698, or **14% of annual spending**, reflects strong financial health, appropriate reserves, and careful stewardship of taxpayer resources.

Local support also plays a vital role in maintaining our school facilities. Meridian currently levies **7 mills to repay the debts**, which are scheduled to expire in 2028, 2031, and 2042. Thanks to the trust and partnership of our community, previous bond approvals in **2014** and **2018** have resulted in significant improvements across the district including expanded learning spaces, the auditorium, auxiliary gym, MJHS band room, enhanced safety and security features, and major upgrades to athletics and outdoor learning. It is especially important to recognize that the **turf football field was not funded with tax dollars**, but entirely through the tremendous dedication and generosity of The Victor's Club and community donors.



FACILITIES



As our community continues to grow, so do the facility needs of our district. Many of our buildings are approaching the end of their useful life cycle for major systems such as roofing and HVAC. We are also experiencing increasing space constraints, particularly at Meridian Elementary.

Over the past year, we have taken a thoughtful and collaborative approach to planning for these needs. We reviewed the results of the 2022 Community Survey, participated in the Statewide Facility Study, completed a detailed internal assessment, and formed a District Advisory Committee made up of families, community members, and local professionals. Through this collective work, we identified approximately \$25 million in facility needs over the next five years. From that, we prioritized \$19 million in projects that focus on:

- **Roof replacements**
- **HVAC updates to improve air quality and efficiency**
- **Additional classroom space to support student growth**
- **Expanded parking and site upgrades for safer access**



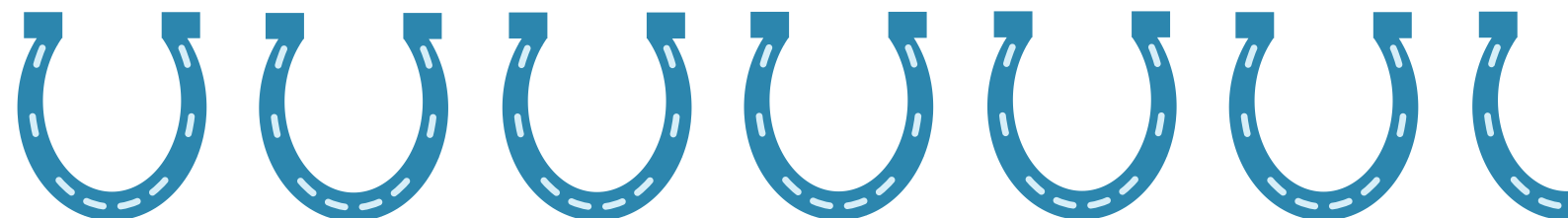
BROOKE COLLEY
Business Services Director

In Michigan, districts are limited to **two options** for funding major facility improvements: **Sinking Funds or Bonds**. State funding simply is not designed to keep up with infrastructure needs of schools which means that maintaining safe, functional, modern learning environments requires community partnership and local investment.

Meridian Public Schools has always been strengthened by the support of our community and that partnership remains essential as we plan for the future. Preserving high-quality instruction requires that we also maintain the spaces where learning happens. By managing our resources carefully today, we are preparing to make sustainable, student-centered investments for tomorrow.

As both your Superintendent and a long-time school finance professional, I remain fully committed to **transparency, advocacy, and responsible planning**. Any future recommendation will be based on what is best for students and what honors the ongoing trust of our taxpayers.

Together, we can continue to build the future our Mustang students deserve, one strong decision at a time.





Hello again Meridian Mustang families!



OFFICER STREETER
School Resource Deputy

I feel very fortunate for the opportunity to share some good information with you. Over the last 6 years serving this position, I have come to recognize where additional focus and support opportunities are having a positive impact. I hold a unique position at Meridian in that I am able to use my law enforcement background to help promote and reinforce safer school community and family connections with the objective to build a stronger and more informed district.

I have the benefit of seeing firsthand how our students accept and appreciate these efforts by witnessing their accomplishments and successes both on and off our campus. This strengthens my motivation, knowing that it is a critical component to our success.

I believe that building solid educational foundations for our students comes from family support. In my SRD role, I have gained a better appreciation and understanding of this as it directly relates to the students overall learning experience. I feel that making a strong

commitment to work together as a team will help ensure a more meaningful and successful educational experience as a whole for students, families and staff alike.

When I think about keeping our kids safe many things come to mind, and I have a wonderful opportunity to help teach them how to be safer. This is significant because, by getting into dozens of classrooms throughout the district, I can strengthen relationships between myself, staff and students. Having people that students can trust and rely on fosters good decision making skills, and encourages others who may need reminders of this. Understanding that our youth make mistakes, just as we all do, is part of growing. Learning from the mistakes we make is where the most growth occurs.

You all know that I am a husband and father as well. Keeping my own family safe every day is something that I take very seriously and with great pride. We here at Meridian are also a family and I appreciate what each and every one of us in our community bring to this school district in our mission to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all. I appreciate your continued support as I feel this role is such an important component to our students' overall well-being as they navigate their incredible futures.

Keep up the great work!



MERIDIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Growing, Learning, Connecting.

Meridian Early Childhood Center (MECC), located on West River Road, serves children from 6 weeks to 12 years old through five programs—Childcare, Three Year Old Preschool, the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), Head Start, and Early Childhood Special Education. Together, these programs create a warm, educational environment where children can learn and grow.

Enrollment is now open for both GSRP and Three Year Old Preschool. Families can apply online at:

www.preschoolpartnership.org

GSRP is a free program for children who turn four by December 1, 2025, running Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Breakfast, lunch, and a snack are provided daily, and safe, preschool-only busing is available within Meridian Public School lines—with five-point harnesses and two adults on every bus.

The Three Year Old Preschool is a tuition-based program at \$625 per month, with DHHS child care assistance accepted. It runs Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and includes breakfast and lunch. This program helps children build social and emotional skills, solve problems, and learn to play well with others.

This fall, MECC students have enjoyed several community activities. The GSRP classes took their first field trip to Leaman's Green Applebarn in Freeland, learning about apple growing, cider making, and taking a hayride. After the holidays, students will take six more field trips that explore different parts of the community.

In early October, MECC staff hosted a successful McTeacher Night at the Sanford McDonald's, raising funds for new playground equipment. Later that month, the center held its first-ever Touch-A-Truck event, where children explored vehicles from the Jerome Township Fire Department, the Midland County Sheriff's Department, Pat's Gradall Service, and Meridian Public Schools Transportation. The event was a big hit, and the staff hopes to make it an annual tradition.



At MECC, families, teachers, and community partners work together to provide a positive early learning experience for every child. For questions about preschool or childcare, contact **Julie Sheets at (989) 687-3460**

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