



2024-25 SCHOOLHOUSE MT. ZION SCHOOL DISTRICT #3 MMXXIV



Jeffrey Sams
Board President



Nathan Brock
Board Vice President



Michelle Shumaker
Board Secretary



Regan Deering
Board Member



Kyle Janvrin
Board Member



Kent Newton
Board Member



Kristi Niles
Board Member

School Start Times:

Grades 7-12.....7:45 a.m.

Grades K-6.....8:30 a.m.

Early Dismissal Times:

Aug 15, Dec 20 & the last day of school

Grades 7-12.....11:05 a.m.

Grades K-6.....11:35 a.m.

Regular Dismissal Times:

Aug 16 & each regular school day after that

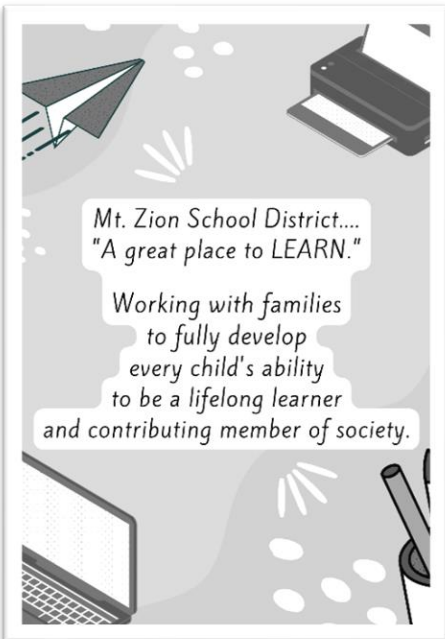
Grades 7-12.....2:30 p.m.

Grades K-6.....3:00 p.m.

SUPERINTENDENT



Dr. Travis R. Roundcount



We would like to welcome everyone to the 2024-2025 school year! I've [linked](#) the full-year school calendar so you can plan accordingly. All faculty, staff, and administrators of the Mt. Zion School District will start the new school year with a teacher's in-service on August 13th and 14th. The district has scheduled building-level meetings, district meetings, and other organizational meetings for the faculty during those days. Students will return to the classroom on Thursday, August 15th with a half-day dismissal. Regular bus transportation will be available on August 15th. Please understand that bus pick-up and drop-off times will vary in August as families and drivers adjust to route changes. Parents with special circumstances or questions regarding any aspect of the educational programs or activities for the 2024-2025 school year are encouraged to contact the building principals or central office administration.

We have a tremendous group of faculty and staff returning for this school year. Our teachers have performed at the highest level in addressing our student's needs, and we appreciate all of their talents and efforts. Additionally, we are hiring a few new teachers for next year, including a new Art teacher at the K-3 schools, a speech teacher, an EL teacher, a 4th-grade teacher, a 6th-grade teacher, a physical education teacher at the

HS, and after hiring two additional special education teachers last fall, we are hiring two more special education teachers for this fall.

To showcase the tremendous academic achievements of our students and schools, we eagerly await the school report cards to be released in the fall. Test scores aren't everything, but we are proud of the student scores because they are an indicator that our students are ready for their future challenges.

Regarding facilities, the biggest project on the horizon is the Science lab remodels at the JH/HS. While the JH remodel is a smaller change, the high school science labs may be completely redone in 2025 to provide a better learning environment for our students. Labs require access to gas, electricity, and water, among other things. Seating arrangements in some rooms will be reconfigured to improve group project activities. The planning for this future improvement is very exciting, and the bids will be coming in this fall. The district also bid on new air conditioners at the Intermediate School and the Grade School. They were installed this summer to ensure that older units are replaced and that we have a comfortable learning environment. The Intermediate School also had their carpeting replaced to provide a fresh new look. The district is almost fully carpeted in all hallways and classrooms to make it a quiet and pleasant school. While McGaughey didn't have major projects on the list for this summer, their playground received substantial improvements last year, and their bus circle is on this list for a major improvement in the future. New signs are also being installed at designated locations to help people from outside the area find the school facilities. The person at the center of many maintenance improvements is our new District Maintenance Director, Grant Ryder. He takes great pride in our school facilities, and he is already taking on several additional projects to improve the overall school environment. as we strive to make Mt. Zion Schools a great place to learn.

New buses are on the way! After receiving board approval in the spring, we ordered new school buses for the 24-25 school year. They will likely not arrive by the first day of school, but they will be switched to the new buses as soon as they arrive.

A special recognition to our baseball team for their IHSA sportsmanship and attitude award for the month of May. Congratulations to the high school softball team for making

it to the super sectionals at the end of the last school year, as well as the 8th-grade girls' track team, which placed 4th at state, and the 7th-grade girls' track team, who won the state championship!

The District will be rolling out a new communication system this school year called Parent Square. This system will allow communication from our administration, teachers, and coaches to all be in one place. Watch for Parent Square information coming from the schools over this coming year as we transition to this new streamlined method of communication.

While I hope everyone is enjoying their summer, we have many great things to be excited about for this coming school year!

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

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



MT. ZION FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

We are fortunate to have the Mt. Zion Foundation assist our schools with items that fall outside of the school budget. The Mt. Zion Foundation for Quality Education is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization governed by a Board of Trustees whose members are parent volunteers, business leaders, and professionals from the community with a commitment to education. The Foundation operates as an independent entity, established to enrich programs throughout the Mt. Zion Schools. In 2024 the Foundation will again extend its support by allowing teachers to submit mini-grants for various items they want for their students. These items would be valued at or under \$200, and the Foundation covers the cost. To donate please follow this link. If you would like to provide the Foundation an extra hand please email mzfqe@mtzschoos.org.

Once again the Foundation has provided a major boost to classroom engagement through a series of large grants to our district educators. Some of the Foundation's contributions include monies utilized to purchase various items in all grade levels including Interactive and non-interactive flat-panel TVs, new SmartBoards for all kindergarten classrooms, field trips, science materials, supplies to enhance our special education program, books, curricular supplies, as well as materials needed to support the TRIBE freshman orientation. During the past 31 years, the Mt. Zion Foundation for Quality Education has provided over 2 million dollars for projects to further educational opportunities in Mt. Zion Schools.

Mt. Zion is fortunate to have the following individuals as Foundation for Quality Education Trustees for the 2024-2025 school year: Zach Anderson, Jessica Allen, Amy Brammer, Katy Doolin, Trisha Erickson, Lisa Flora, Jamie Foster, Amanda Jones, Ross Munsterman, Kylee Roney, Billy Rockey, Michelle Shumaker, Mary Swartz, and Betsy Tanner. To continue our success, our schools are staffed with dedicated men and women who are committed to providing our children with an excellent education in a safe and secure environment. Parental involvement also contributes immeasurably to the success of our schools. We encourage our parents to join us and be involved in the many active parent organizations in the District. This combined effort makes Mt. Zion Schools "a great place to learn."

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT



Brian Rhoades

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! For those of you who are new to the District, welcome to Mt. Zion. We look forward to meeting you and helping your child be successful in our schools. For those that are returning, we are glad to have you back. Together, let's make 2024-2025 the best school year yet.

Our goal in the business office is to continue to provide an exceptional learning experience for your child and continue to offer many opportunities for them to be successful while being fiscally responsible with your tax dollars. You can be sure that our decisions are based on providing what is best and necessary for our students to become productive and successful citizens. The state has continued to fund education through the evidence-based funding formula. This formula aims to provide all schools with a set amount per student based on each school's demographics and gives schools who are not yet at that goal additional funding to get closer to the desired funding level. This has resulted in additional funds for our district, as we are still under 70% of this goal, which continues to put us in the lowest funded tier in the state. We hope the state continues to fund these additional dollars so we can eventually get to the state goal level.

I want to let you know that I am always open to suggestions, questions or comments about our schools. We will look to build on all of the successes of the past and continue to look for ways to improve all of our schools. I look forward to working with all of you and together we all can make Mt. Zion schools continue to be a "great place to learn".

STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE

All students enrolled at Mt. Zion CUSD #3 are covered under the District's Supplemental Student Accident Insurance. The Student Accident Policy provides coverage for eligible medical expenses as a result of an accident while attending school or participating in school sponsored co-curricular activities. This policy is **secondary coverage** and will pay a **portion** of eligible expenses when no other health insurance is available and/or fill gaps in current health insurance coverage. When an accident occurs, the student should receive a form for the parent to fill out and send in to the insurance carrier. If the student and/or parents have any questions regarding this insurance coverage, they may contact the Central Office at 864-2366.

E-FUNDS AND ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS

E-funds will once again be available for parents to make many school payments. This system makes payments for school expenses in real time. You must create an account with e-funds using the link provided in the family access food service page or the link on the school web page. Once you create an account with e-funds, you can select your child's name and make the appropriate payment by checking account transfer or credit card. This payment will go directly into the proper account. A convenience fee of \$1.25 per transaction for checking or \$2.85 per \$100 transaction for credit card will be charged by e-funds.

The District will also accept electronic payments for student food service accounts, registration fees, and other payments made to the School District. This system usually takes up to a week to process so it is not intended for lunch balances below \$10.00 or other payments that need to be made immediately. Credit will not be applied to your child's account until the District has actually received the check from the bank. To utilize this free electronic payment system:

1. Go to your local bank's online bill pay system. Enter a school building's name and address from the list below, as the company you wish to pay. For children in different buildings, please make separate entries and the bank will send separate checks. If you are making a payment for Registration and Food Service to the same building we would again ask that you make separate entries and the bank will send separate checks. This will allow the District to better track the payments being made by the bank.

2. On your bank's online bill pay system, enter the amount of the payment you wish to make.
3. On your bank's online bill pay system, enter in the memo line/description line the reason for the payment. Please be specific and provide as much information as possible (student's name, student's ID#, reason for payment - food service, registration fee, etc.).

START DATES:

***Teacher Institute Days
(No Student Attendance)
August 13th and 14th***

***First Day for Students
Grades K-12, Early Dismissal,
August 15th
11:05 for Grades 7-12,
11:35 for Grades K-6***

McGAUGHEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Heather Ethell, Principal

Greetings from the entire faculty and staff at McGaughey! We want to welcome all new and returning families and children to the 2024-2025 school year. We look forward to partnering together in educational and social efforts in order to assist the McGaughey Busy Bees to "Be the Best You Can Be!" As your student begins their educational career at McGaughey, please feel free to ask questions, assist in activities, and become part of our extended family.

REGISTRATION

Online registration will be open beginning Monday, July 22, 2024. Onsite registration is scheduled for Wednesday, July 31, 2024 from noon until 6:00PM. Parents of returning or registered first grade students, along with incoming kindergarten students that were screened and pre-registered in the spring, are able to complete registration online beginning July 22nd. Online registration will allow parents to update contact and health information, pay the registration fee, update transportation information, and deposit money into your child's food service account.

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

Registration fees for kindergarten and first grade students will be \$70.00. Registration fees, and most others, may be paid online using e-Funds, by cash, or by check made payable to "Mt. Zion School District".

A friendly reminder that **all** incoming kindergarten students will need to provide a physical and up to date

immunization record to enter school. Dental and eye exams are required as well.

OPTIONAL ORIENTATIONS

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

- **Tuesday, August 6th, 2024 at 5:30PM**
- **Wednesday, August 7th, 2024 at 10:00AM**
- **Wednesday, August 7th, 2024 at 2:00PM**
- **Thursday, August 8th, 2024 at 5:30PM**

OPEN HOUSE

Open house for all kindergarten, first grade, and ASPIRE students will be held on Tuesday, August 13th. Students are to bring their supplies to the open house. To ensure ample parking, and space in our classrooms, there will be assigned times based on students' last names. If you are unable to attend the open house, you are welcome to drop off supplies during the day on Tuesday, August 13th or Wednesday, August 14th.

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



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

KINDERGARTEN, FIRST GRADE & ASPIRE SCHOOL HOURS

McGaughey school hours are from 8:30 AM until 3:00 PM. Children who arrive before 8:00 AM should register for the Before and After School Activities Program (BASAP). Detailed information regarding drop-off and pick-up procedures will be available prior to the start of school.

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

PREKINDERGARTEN HOME VISITS & ORIENTATION

Prekindergarten families are not required to attend registration. Prekindergarten parents will be contacted by PreK staff to schedule an introductory home visit which will be done on August 15th or 16th. Preschool family orientation will be held on Monday, August 19th. Our AM families should plan to attend from 8:30AM-9:15AM. Our PM families should plan to attend from 9:30AM-10:30AM. The first day of student attendance will be on Tuesday, August 22nd.

PREKINDERGARTEN SCHOOL HOURS

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

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS & SUPPORTS

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

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

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

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

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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

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

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

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

students. It is our goal to keep parents well informed of student progress.

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

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

MCGAUGHEY FACULTY & STAFF	
Principal:	Mrs. Heather Ethell
Lead Secretary:	Mrs. Kaye Moran
Attendance Secretary:	Mrs. Alicia Berg
Pre-K:	Mrs. Taylor Larrison
	Mrs. Jennifer Taylor
	Mrs. Cherish Bough
	Mrs. Tonya Freeland
	Mrs. Melissa Hilton
	Mrs. Amanda Richardson
Kindergarten:	Ms. Angelina Adams
	Mrs. Mandi Ditty
	Ms. Alysa Doneske
	Mrs. Angie Hamrick
	Mrs. Amber Larkins
	Mrs. Rachel Orris
	Ms. Dana Perry
	Mrs. Brittany Reatherford
1st Grade	Mrs. Rachel Cravatta
	Ms. Lori Hanson
	Mrs. Christine Koehn
	Mrs. Sarah Nichols
	Mrs. Katie Patrick
	Mrs. Lindsey Waller
	Mrs. Dianna Weirman
Nurse:	Mrs. Alex Smith
Social Worker:	Mrs. Marie Baker
Remedial Reading:	Mrs. Shelly Wheeler
Music:	Mrs. Jamie Sill
Art:	Mrs. Jenny Cowgill
Speech:	Mrs. Rachael Connelly
	Mrs. Allison Hammer
Special Education:	Mrs. Jill Driscoll
	Mrs. Allison Behrends
	Mrs. Kristen Bollhorst
	Mrs. Heidi Bullock
	Ms. Addison Orris
Physical Education:	Mr. Mike Patrick
	Mrs. Jenny Moore
Library Resource:	Mrs. Amy Grove
BASAP Director:	Mrs. Shirley Johnson
Custodian:	Mrs. Kristina McKean
	Ms. Jane Blackman
Playground Supervisors:	Ms. Brittany Cochran
	Mrs. Michelle Huggins
	Ms. Carey Flesch
	Mr. Chance Mendenall
	Ms. Samantha Niana

SCHOOL HEALTH



Alex Smith
Nicole Wilson (Not Pictured)
School Nurses

SPECIAL EDUCATION



Renea Smith, Administrator

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

Physical Examination requirements are due on or before the first day of the school year, but no later than October 15th, 2024 for all students entering the following grades for the first time:

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

Dental Examinations or Waiver are required by May 15th, 2025, for all students entering:

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

Eye/Vision Examinations or Waiver are required by October 15th, 2024 for students entering:

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

Immunizations must be up to date and on file by October 15th, 2024.

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

As we start the 2024-2025 school year, we hope to offer more parent opportunities. Last year we hosted our very first transition night. We had several exhibitors present to share opportunities for students with special needs for their next chapter of life following graduation. Our second transition night will be offered again this year. The transition night will be scheduled for October. This event is designed to provide students with disabilities and their families with a comprehensive set of information about the steps and agencies involved in the process of planning for employment and life after high school. Additionally, our first parent informational meeting was also held during the first semester of school. The first parent informational meeting consisted of a panel of parents with students with disabilities sharing their experience and knowledge. Additional meetings will be scheduled for this school year as well.

SAVE THE DATE: The Illinois Transition Conference will be held November 7th-8th in Springfield at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The Illinois Statewide Transition Conference is for transition-aged youth and young adults with disabilities, their family members and teachers, vocational professionals, caregivers, health care professionals, college students pursuing careers in special education, and community advocates. The conference will focus on best practices in promoting effective, person-centered transition planning that addresses all aspects of adult life for youth with disabilities. Visit their website to register.

As always, I look forward to continuing to develop the services and programs that Mt. Zion is able to offer students with varying disabilities. Currently, Mt. Zion offers special education services from PreK students to students through their 22nd

birthday. Services range from speech-language services to self-contained classrooms with related services ranging from occupational therapy to hearing or vision therapy. I can assure you that I will be dedicated to caring for our students and providing them with a learning environment in which they can be successful.

I continue to believe that every child can be challenged to meet their full potential. This can be done with cooperation between home and school. I hope to foster a relationship between home and school that allows for trust and self-esteem building. I am excited to explore new ideas to meet the needs of all students and to interact with parents and community members. Relationships first. You can reach me by email at smithr@mtzschoos.org.

CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY



Billy Rockey, Director

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

Mount Zion Schools continues to focus on helping our students be 21st century learners. All 7-12th grade students are assigned their own Chromebook to take to classes and work with at home, while all other students in the district have a device they utilize in the classroom. As we navigate our ever-changing technological world, it's hard to picture a time where Chromebooks weren't

utilized as an educational tool for our students. Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a prominent topic amongst educators and we continue to navigate this new world by working with educators and students on how to incorporate this technology safely and appropriately. GSuite and Google Apps provide pupils in all grade levels avenues through which to create and explore while learning. Several teachers in our district took part in Google Level 1 and Level 2 cohorts to become Google Certified Educators. We are proud of the efforts our teachers have made to develop their own proficiencies in utilizing technology to develop the young minds of our students.

We continue to increase opportunities for our students at all grade levels with S.T.E.M. initiatives funded by A.D.M. We look forward to continuing our Lego/Robotics program this year. In addition, funds from A.D.M, the Foundation has provided funds for classroom technology upgrades. In addition, The Foundation put forth funds to support upgrading many, many classrooms across the district with, among many other items, audio systems, STEM supplies, and new classroom displays to enhance the classroom experiences of our students. Braves TV had another successful year allowing people near and far to witness events involving Mt. Zion students and allowing HS students the opportunity to participate in media of various forms.

Internet safety is a major concern for our district. We are proud of the safeguards we have put in place to allow us to track student activity and filter the content as dictated by Children's Internet Protection Act. Google Chromebooks used at school and home are filtered using both the built-in Google content filter, as well as an additional layer of filtering and reporting software called GoGuardian. Teachers at school will also utilize Hapara, which allows them to see a student's Chromebook screen while they are at school, in addition to other features used within the educational setting.

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

bandwidth will be a robust 4,000 mbps to support the continued growth of online educational learning across the district.

Mt. Zion Schools continues to look for ways to improve communication with parents. We are excited to move from Skylert to ParentSquare as our primary means of communication with stakeholders. This service will allow us to utilize text/SMS messaging with parents, staff, and students. It will also provide a more efficient means of communication between teachers and parents. All parents have access to Skyward Family Access. Logging into this program will show you a wealth of information including student grades, food service information, discipline, report cards, and more. If you do not currently have this access, you can fill out the Family Access Request Form found under the links section of the district web page. Our website will be receiving a refresh as we move from Schoolwires to Finalsite as our provider. Our district homepage can be found by going to <http://www.mtzschools.org>. All teachers have email and their addresses can be found on the district web page. We'd also like to encourage parents to follow our district Facebook and Twitter pages on social media.

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

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

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



TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



Paul Reeve, Director

Hello from transportation. This is Paul Reeve, Transportation Director here at Mt. Zion Schools. Summer is ending and we have been busy here in the office getting ready for the new year. I want to share a few statistics with you. The 27 Mt. Zion school buses traveled 265,668 miles in order to cover 29 daily routes plus 640 extra-curricular trips. Over 2000 students used a school bus at least once this past year. The constant starting and stopping over all those miles just takes its toll on every mechanical part on each bus. With that being said, I am pleased to announce that in March, the board approved the lease/purchase of 24 brand new buses to replace everything except the wheelchair buses that were replaced 2 years ago. As of now, we are anticipating these buses to start arriving in October. These buses will feature WIFI, climate control (AC) and an updated camera system that includes 3 interior, 360 degree HD cameras along with an outside stop arm camera that will help us in identifying drivers who run the stop sign while students are loading and unloading. The interior cameras are designed to look down into the seats instead of across the seats so we can better monitor activities on the buses. All these features will help to make our buses even safer than they already are.

Like we do every summer, we are continuing to evaluate routes and stops to make riding the bus as safe and reliable as possible. The challenges we run into is constant changes in neighborhood dynamics as far as students getting older and changing schools, younger children getting old enough to attend schools along with students graduating. These changes make it important for our staff to analyze the makeup and number of students who will be riding each bus. It also means that just because we have done something one year that it will happen again this coming school year. We have increased ridership the last couple of years and this has added to our need to look at all aspects of our routes. With more ridership it means routes are getting longer and taking more time because of more stops. In order to save time and ensure we can get students to school in a timely manner, we will be looking at more group stops for students in certain areas where houses

are closer together. We have already made some changes and are working on more so as we get closer to the beginning of the school year, make sure to watch your emails and check the school website for updated bus stops and times. Please understand that for the first couple of weeks, these times could change as the drivers settle into their routes or small changes are made.

I would like to address a couple of things that inevitably comes up every year. "Why won't the bus come down my street so my student doesn't have to walk to the corner? There is plenty of room to turn around." In most cases this is because of it not being a through street. We do not take our full-size buses into cul-de-sac's where there is not room to make a complete turn without having to back up, where residents park in the street, or when there are other obstacles that would prevent a safe turn around. It is just not safe and we are not putting our students or buses in danger. Most cul-de-sacs are not designed with school transportation in mind. The second issue we get a lot is wanting us to change the route to accommodate an assortment of issues. While we feel each and every one of our students is special, it is impossible to make changes to meet individual wants or make every stop convenient for each request. On average we bus around 1,600 students daily and there is no way we can do specific requests for everyone. There is just not enough time to do that. Please understand how tight our daily schedule is.

"Why isn't the driver controlling the kids on their bus?". Imagine yourself sitting in the front of a big yellow tin can with 50 – 60 students sitting behind you. The students have been cooped up all day in a classroom and once they leave the school, all that pent-up emotion and energy comes pouring out. Our drivers are trained extensively in how to drive and are some of the best around but it is not easy to drive looking out the front of the bus and see everything that goes on behind them. Please remind your students of how important it is to behave on the bus for everyone's safety. Distracted driving is one of if not the biggest causes of accidents in every form of vehicle let alone a full school bus. Please regularly talk to your riders that they are safest if they talk with a classroom voice, don't yell or scream, stay properly seated, don't stand up or walk around or jump seats. The driver can't see everything and properly drive the bus. With your help, we can ensure a safer ride on the bus.

I'd like to take this time to clear up a few protocols that we must follow. These again are in place to keep the daily flow of running the department as smooth and efficient as possible:

1. Students need to be outside, at their stop, waiting for the bus 5 minutes before their scheduled pick up time. We have limited time to get students picked up and to school on time. Many of our routes have as many as 20 to 25 stops and if even a few students aren't ready and we are delayed,

it can cause our buses to get to school late along with making the other students who are on time have to wait. Our High School and Jr. High routes are designed to have more group stops than individual stops so it is even more important to have those students at their stop on time. It can be very dangerous to have a student running to catch a bus.

2. We cannot allow students to ride on other buses other than their assigned bus without prior notification from a parent or guardian. If your student tries to get on another bus without permission, they will either be sent to their regular bus or back into the office at the school. If you do need your student to ride on a different bus because of an emergency, you must contact the bus garage at 217-864-5233 and contact your students' school so they can issue a temporary bus pass to be given to the driver. Please do not give your student a note to give to the driver. It must go through the office. These protocols are needed to ensure we have the correct students on the correct buses. We cannot be responsible for students riding wrong buses.

3. All kindergarten and 1st grade students must have a parent or an approved adult **PRESENT AND VISIBLE** at the bus stop before we can release their student off the bus. If no adult is present, we will continue the route while the Transportation Office tries to contact someone to make arrangements to drop them off at the end of the route or to bring them back to the bus office or school to be picked up. We can release them with an older sibling as long as we have permission on file in the Transportation Office. Just send us an email at reevep@mtzschool.org and we will inform the driver and put your request on file. Just remember if the older student doesn't attend school one day, an adult will need to be at the stop.

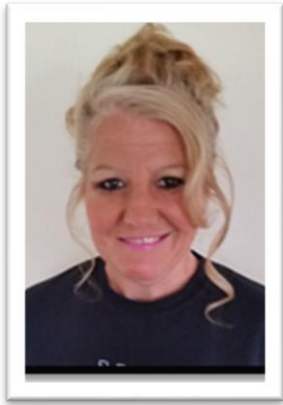
4. If you drop off your student, instead of bus them, understand that the bus lanes at the schools are closed to cars from 7:00am – 7:30am for Jr High and High school and 7:50am – 8:20am at the elementary schools. Please do not stop or park in those areas at those times. Also be aware that all laws regarding stopped school buses apply even in the school parking lots and drives. It is unlawful to pass a stop school bus with their stop arm deployed and the red warning lights are activated. Please be mindful of students getting on and off their bus.

5. If your student normally rides the bus, especially in rural areas, and your student is not going to ride to school that day, please contact us as soon as possible at 217-864-5233 and let us know. This helps us save time and fuel by not driving unnecessarily.

6. If you have moved over the summer, please notify your school and the Transportation Department 10 days prior to the start of school so we can input that information into our system and schedule your students new stop. We are unable to make those changes the day of school starting.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Transportation office at 217-864-5233 or email at reevep@mtzschoos.org and we will do our best to answer them for you. Remember, we can't do this without your cooperation so let's work together and make the 2024-2025 school year a safe and successful year.

FOOD SERVICE



*Darcie Hayes, CDM, CFPP
Director*

NUTRITION STANDARDS IN NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH

The 2024-25 school year continues following the National School Lunch Program requirements for hot lunch. Our school nutrition services will be participating in the DOD program this 2024-25 school year. The USDA annually allocates money for Illinois to spend with the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program. Mt. Zion Food & Nutrition Services will be maintaining a healthy balanced nutritious quality meal. Students may purchase a hot nutritious meal and healthy ala carte items.

The focus continues on offering healthier options for students in the Mt. Zion Community Unit School District #3. The District monitors the Local Wellness Policy and makes appropriate changes to improve nutrition and health education in the classroom, PE classes, and class parties. We encourage healthy choices in the breakfast and lunch program in the District. The Wellness committee includes administrators, teachers, PE staff, school nurse, food service, parents and students. Mt. Zion School District will continue to monitor the policy's implementation in the 2024-25 school year. Parents are encouraged to look at their student's food service information on Family Access. Any school organization that requires the kitchen in any of the schools for the 2024-25 should contact Darcie Hayes **four weeks** prior to the event at

217- 864-9450. This allows for plenty of preparation in order to make the fund-raising event successful.

FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM DISTRICT #3 OVERVIEW

The food service program for grades K-12 offers a daily meal consisting of a meat/meat alternative, vegetable, fruit, bread, and milk. A breakfast meal is offered to students in grades K-12 each day before school. A Grab N Go lunch that consists of nutritious items that are approved for the Child and Nutrition Program. The National School lunch program continues to offer nutritious ingredients in all items for the lunch program. We will be decreasing the sodium 10% more for the upcoming school year 2024-25.

DEBIT ACCOUNT OVERVIEW

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

GRADES K-6

Payments will be accepted each morning school is in session. Payments should be sent in an envelope with the student's name, student's ID number, and teacher's name. Payments should include break-milk money for students in Kindergarten only. Payments will be posted to the student's debit account on the same day if received before 10:00 a.m. The food service office maintains a record of student payments. Payments may also be made using e-funds through Family Access. Once online payments are made, the money automatically is

credited to the student account. Online payments can be made anytime.

GRADES 7-12

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

Payments by check, money order, cash and online e-fund payments are accepted and must contain student name and ID number to ensure proper posting. Payments of cash will be accepted in a sealed envelope, available at drop box locations. The envelope must be labeled with student name, ID number, and amount of cash deposit. No change will be given to students. The school Food Service Administrative Assistant will maintain records of all cash deposits and parents can view these deposits in Family Access.

FREE/REDUCED MEAL APPLICATIONS

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

Meal Pricing

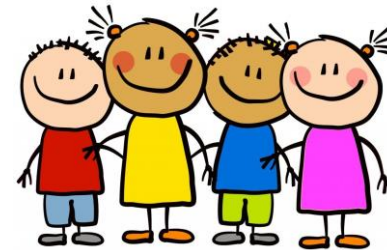
Breakfast K-12		Lunch K-3		Lunch 4-12	
Full	\$2.25	Full	\$2.95	Full	\$3.15
Reduced	\$0.30	Reduced	\$0.40	Reduced	\$0.40
Adult	\$2.45	Adult	\$3.65	Adult	\$3.65

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

Second meal - \$6.80 Second meals are charged at full price; there is no federal support for second meals. Menu items may be purchased separately only in addition to a paid lunch.

- K-3 one week of lunch = \$14.75
- 4-12 one week of lunch = \$15.75
- K-3 one week of breakfast = \$11.25
- 4-12 one week of breakfast = \$11.25

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



Shirley Johnson, Director

The Before and After School Activities Program for the 2024-2025 will officially begin on August 15, 2024, the first day of school for students. All children registered in the program should bring a sack lunch on this day since this is an early dismissal day.

Prior to this date, the BASAP staff will be hosting an orientation on Tuesday, August 6, 2024 at McGaughey Elementary School at 6:30 PM. A complete overview of the program will be discussed.

We look forward to another exciting school year. If you have any questions regarding BASAP or the upcoming orientation, contact Shirley Johnson, BASAP Director, at 217-864-2814.