



MORTON

UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

May 14, 2022

Morton District 709 Weekly Update

Saturday's commencement ceremony began about 20 minutes late but the diplomas arrived just in time for 246 Morton High School seniors, as the clouds



parted and the raindrops dried and ultimately, the sun came out to give this Class of 2022 its due.

What a fitting metaphor for a class that endured more than many a predecessor and distinguished itself every step of the way – in the classroom, on our stages of performance, on our fields of play. I join many in the Morton community in saying hats off and we could not be prouder.

Seniors Ilyse Knepp and Lena Oswald captured the theme of overcoming

adversity in their addresses to their peers. As Ilyse noted, "Despite all the odds, what didn't we accomplish?" Lena also acknowledged the obstacles of the last four years – "I'm tired of hearing about these



‘unprecedented times,’” she said, no doubt on behalf of more than a few – and the triumphs that came in spite of them, but added that she was encouraged most by the “small acts of kindness” that her classmates showed one another, a characteristic that could pay the biggest dividends of all moving forward.



Ilyse Knepp

“We are going to make a difference,” she promised her peers. “Work hard, be brave and stand up for what is right ... We will always be a community, and we will always be Potters.”

Well said, on both counts.



Lena Oswald

Principal Deidre Ripka ticked off the remarkable run of this Class of 2022 – more than 100 students graduating with honors, nearly 45 percent of a group that also bragged 33 Illinois State Scholars, 77 Mid-Illini Conference Scholar-Athletes, six moving on to the U.S. military. She also advised graduates of the challenges to come, which will demand learning how to “be comfortable with being uncomfortable” as they move on because that’s where the growth occurs, and ultimately “where the magic happens.”



Handshakes all around

Again, agreed. As I noted in my own remarks, success requires “sustained effort over time.” The celebrated author and journalist Malcolm Gladwell has written that mastery of any task requires 10,000 hours of deliberate practice. So patience – like the patience we displayed in waiting out the raindrops Saturday, like the patience we exhibited all through the trials of the last two years – is



The Morton High School Class of 2022

required. But when we do that, as our Class of 2022 and their families did over the last four years, we can get the most positive, life-changing results.



Jefferson field trip to Forest Park

While our graduates look to their futures beyond District 709, we still have two more weeks left in this school year, of course.

Going into the weekend, nine students were home with a positive COVID diagnosis, compared to seven a week ago, for an overall infection rate of .28 percent in a student body of more than 3,200. Four staff members were out with the virus vs. one last week. Please help us complete this fantastic school year on a high note by being alert to symptoms and keeping sick children at home.

Like most of the school year before it, this has been a great spring. Our MHS girls track team won the Mid-Illini Conference title – the boys finished second – and just this week qualified three athletes for state. Our Morton High math team, meanwhile, took third in the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics (ICTM) statewide competition.



And they're off ...



Our Morton High math performers

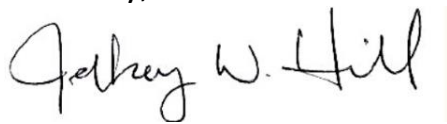
Congrats to all.

Just a reminder that our last student day will be a half day on Friday, May 27. High school finals also are set for May 26-27.

Finally, we'll also be saying goodbye and good luck to retiring staff members this coming Wednesday, May 18, at the Bertha Frank Performing Arts Center. Our Staff Awards Ceremony is scheduled for May 25.

As with today's commencement, sometimes there's nothing quite so satisfying as emerging from a storm into the welcoming sunshine. We in District 709 have persevered these last two years, and this Class of 2022 and the students coming up behind them now are seeing the fruits of that. Thank you to all for sticking with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey W. Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line to the right of the name.

Jeffrey W. Hill, Ed.D

Superintendent

Morton Community Unit District 709