



# MORTON

Jeffrey W. Hill, Ed. D.  
Superintendent

## Community Unit School District 709

1050 South Fourth Ave • Suite 200 • Morton, Illinois 61550-2596 • Phone (309) 263-2581

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Welcome to the 2019-20 school year!

I hope by now your students are settled into their new routines and the beginning of the new year has been smooth. Morton District 709 is fortunate to have parents and a community that truly support education, and part of that support is sending students to school ready to learn. We appreciate your efforts in getting our students organized for the year and providing experiences for them outside the classroom that enhance their learning.

As we settle into the new year, I want to bring to your attention the many improvements in our District. Morton District 709 has a tradition of excellence, and we want to continue that tradition by making sure our students have what they need to learn. Our focus for improvement has been on curriculum, new programming, hiring and developing quality staff, and facility enhancements. Over the last two years we have worked consistently on four core strategies for improving student achievement:

1. Cultivating a systemic focus on reading
2. Ensuring a purposeful transition to the secondary grades
3. Redefining college and career readiness
4. Organizing and investing in professional learning

Last school year, we implemented district-wide strategies for improved reading. These included increasing kindergarten to full day, hiring literacy coaches in each elementary school, and implementing a new reading curriculum.

This year, we have implemented actions that help improve rigor in 5th through 8th grades, including a new schedule and courses at MJHS and departmentalization in 5th and 6th grade at our elementary schools. As part of this focus, we have employed additional counselors at MJHS and MHS, significantly reducing the student to counselor ratio.

For next year, we hope to develop additional certification programs for MHS students, as well as new opportunities to earn college credit through additional advanced placement and/or dual credit courses. We also hope to implement a personal learning profile for each student that captures his/her participation in activities and academic achievement for these two aspects contribute toward a student's success after high school. This new learning profile will be



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accessible to students and parents as a living document that can be updated as the student completes assessments and accomplishes activities that positively depict his or her success.

These efforts could not take place without the efforts of our staff and administration who have been busy acquiring new knowledge and skills. Our last strategy, organizing and investing in professional learning, was advanced last year as we utilized a monthly early release day. As you know, this year we have expanded our use of professional learning time on each of these days. Staff development has been essential as we work to improve student achievement, and the teachers' desire for learning has been inspiring.

In addition to our efforts in improving student achievement, we have also been busy improving our facilities. Phase 1 of MJHS, (new secure entrance, office space, increased classroom space, and improved drop off areas), continues to move at a fast clip, and we will be sending out Phase 2 bids, (new gymnasium and locker rooms), this fall. Other facility improvements include a focus on MHS, including new HVAC systems for Bertha Frank Performing Arts Center and a new video scoreboard for Carper Field. In the near future, we will be creating STEM labs at MHS to better serve our students in science, technology, engineering, and math.

As we enter the third year of our *Morton Moving Forward* initiative, we look ahead to develop Morton's vision for student success. We know that Morton is a special community, and we need to articulate what our students should know and be able to do in conjunction with our mission of preparing students to become leaders in a dynamic, global society. We will be engaging our community in this dialogue, seeking individuals to collaborate with as we develop this vision.

We are thankful for your support as we begin a new year. Your role in supporting our students is essential to their success, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with you to accomplish our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey W. Hill".

Jeffrey W. Hill, Ed. D.  
Superintendent,  
Morton District 709