



# MORTON

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## UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

May 25, 2021

## Superintendent transition coming to Morton Schools

Morton School District 709 Superintendent Jeff Hill has announced his plans to retire, effective at the end of the 2021-22 school year.

Hill, 60, will have spent five years at the helm of Morton schools when he steps down on June 30, 2022, capping a 37-year career in education overall.

After graduating from Illinois State University, the native of Glen Ellyn began his career as a special education teacher in Hinsdale. Eight years and a couple of advanced degrees later, he decided that administration was where he wanted to be. He took the top job at Tremont High School, followed by principal stints at Olympia High School, at the private Clarksdale Academy in Tennessee, and at Normal University High School. In 2012, Hill was elevated to superintendent at the Illinois State University Laboratory Schools in Normal.



In 2017, Hill was hired to lead Morton School District 709.

“Morton has been an enjoyable experience, and I think it has been a productive time,” he said, citing as accomplishments the Morton Moving Forward program

that brought full-day kindergarten, a new and improved reading curriculum, more counselors and increased professional development opportunities for teachers to the district. Meanwhile, standards-driven learning is on the way, along with the academic progress expected to accompany it.

Hill's tenure also has been marked by significant investments in facilities, specifically at Morton Junior High with an impressive renovation and addition to the campus – enhanced by a milestone agreement/land swap with the Village of Morton – and Morton High School, which will see major improvements to its science/STEM labs and main gymnasium.

Of course, nothing topped the achievements of the past year, when Morton



became one of the few school districts in Illinois to return to in-person classroom instruction full-time in the midst of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. Not only that, but the district did so successfully, without interruption, while providing as normal a school experience as possible given the unprecedented circumstances.

'We did it,' Dr. Hill tells staff members on final day of 2021 school year

"I'm pretty proud of the fact that we were all rowing in the same direction" through the extensive planning that had to occur and the adjustments that had to be made along the way, said Hill.

"Dr. Hill has been a stable leader and a voice of reason, especially during times of uncertainty," said Morton School Board President Jeff Schmidgall. "Most recently, he successfully navigated the district through a full year of in-person instruction when some thought it wasn't possible. Dr. Hill also has led the district through the incredible facilities transformation at MJHS that will be completed later this year, as well as upgraded STEM facilities at MHS.

“Dr. Hill's accomplishments over the past four years will impact students for years to come, and we look forward to working with him in his fifth and final year as superintendent.”

That final year will be an active one, marked not only by overseeing a smooth transition to the next superintendency – the School Board will be announcing its plans on that score in the near future – but by continued attention on the academic advancement of students, on facility improvements, and on balancing changing legislation at the state level with the principles of local control, seeing to it that “the schools reflect the values of the community.”

It has been a long and rewarding career, said Hill. What has he learned?

First, that mentorship matters. He mentioned former superintendents Brock Butts in Tremont, Don Hahn and Brad Hutchison at Olympia, and Bob Dean at the ISU lab schools for their helping hand along the way.

Second, and most importantly, that “my highway or the highway doesn’t really work,” said Hill. “There’s compromise. There’s negotiation. There’s teamwork. The best answer for everybody isn’t always what you think, at first ... Leaders have to be flexible, to make adjustments, to meet the needs of the broad constituencies they impact. The good ones do that.”

And just one more point, before he starts on his capstone year:

“Morton is a wonderful place, and very supportive of its schools. Honestly, it has been an honor to serve the community in this capacity.”

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