



## Monthly Bulletin

November 2009

*Dr. Patrick Michel*  
Superintendent of Schools

[www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net)

### **From the desk of the Superintendent: Working together toward success**

Hopefully, your school year began with a great start. We are very pleased to report that our programs are addressing the needs of our students, we are making great progress academically and our schools are safer than ever. During the past four years, we have been grateful for the support this community has given as we worked to retool our schools for the 21st century. Our progress is recognized throughout the state to the point where representatives from other school districts have begun visiting our campus to study our methods for success.

Now, we stand at a crossroad. Change in public education is slow to nonexistent and for generations our school system has looked the same. Although it is easy to find comfort in that sameness, it is undermining our effectiveness to meet the needs of our students and their families. There has always been openness with the community regarding the changes in our approach to education. We promote public comment and input throughout the process. There has never been a more challenging time for us as an educational community. Enormous strides have been made and we have come a long way in creating a school system that is nimble and responsive.

Due to the present economic crisis and the budget reductions from New York State, we will have to accelerate our innovation to proactively respond to this. We are facing two fundamental issues with which we have to deal. The first is funding and the second is student population. Every year schools are asked to gather data for a system called BEDS. This requires that we report our student populations to the state. Those numbers are what the state uses when calculating the amount of money they will give us. This past summer we have seen a significant reduction in the student population at the elementary level. The long-term ramifications of this means that we will eventually lose the ability to provide the same number of classes and programs we now offer at the elementary level. As this low number works through the system year to year, we will eventually see the same effect at the middle and high school levels.

Last year I wrote about the "fiscal perfect storm" the district would face. Unless we see a significant improvement in the economy, our contingent budget cap will be zero this year. We will also be facing significant reductions in state aid and a large increase in the amount of money we have to pay into the Teachers Retirement System. The impact of the state budget cuts is already being felt at the county level and if things do not improve, we will see the same negative impact in our school district.

Every year we hold open forums - called Firehouse Chats - within the community and we open our budget formation process at our Citizens' Advisory Budget Committee (CABC) meetings. We need your participation in these forums more than ever as we search for the answers to make the difficult decisions that will impact the lives of our children and grandchildren for years to come. It is important that we hear your voice during this process. Please make the time in your busy lives to attend these meetings - community input in this process is vital. During the next few weeks, we will be advertising our Firehouse Chats in the newspapers and on our web site. Please attend.

Thank you again for all of your support and as always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

**The RJK Middle School musical, *Seussical, Jr.* will be presented on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 13 & 14 at 7:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium. \$5 adults. \$3 children and students. Free for senior citizens. Tickets available at the door. For more information, contact Director of Music Dr. Kevin Dirth at 794-8840, ext. 10993.**

## School Closings and Delays

All school closings and delays are posted on the district home page at [www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net).

The decision to delay the opening of school, dismiss early or close school for the day due to weather conditions is never an easy one. Our priority is always the safety of the children. Any decision to delay opening, dismiss early or close must begin early. Delayed openings mean all schedules will be delayed either one or two hours. Bus pickups will be approximately one or two hours later than the scheduled time.

Our transportation supervisors arrive at the Bus Garage by 3:30 a.m. After consulting weather reports and checking road conditions, the Transportation Director consults with the Highway Departments for additional road information. The Superintendent is consulted and any decision to delay or close must be made no later than 5:45 a.m. If there is a delayed opening but weather conditions continue to be a problem, the district must determine whether to close by 7:45 a.m. Decisions to delay opening by one or two hours, dismiss early or close are not taken lightly. We want the children of the district to have uninterrupted and continuous instruction. We are sensitive to the inconvenience to parents who must make arrangements for their children if school is delayed, dismissed early or closed, but safety must take precedence over all other considerations.

If parents are concerned with the conditions of the roads in their neighborhood, they are advised to use their own judgment in making the decision about sending their children to school on that day.

## Radio and Television Announcements

Parents can get information about delayed openings, early dismissals and school closings by listening to the following radio and television stations which broadcast our announcements: WALL, WVOS, WJFF, Thunder 102, WSUL, WELV, WDNH, WRRN-TV, WGYN, WPDH, WHUD, and FOX 5.

## School Closing Hotline

Parents can also access school closing information by calling the School Closing Hotline at 845-796-5006 for a current recorded message.

*PLEASE NOTE: When there is a closing or delay, a message is recorded with the date of the incident. The message is updated ONLY when there is a new message about a new closing or delay. If a person calls the Hotline and hears an old message, that means there is no updated information at that time and schools are running on their regular schedules.*

## Important Dates

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3:**

- Countywide Conference Day - NO SCHOOL

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5:**

- Board of Education meeting

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11:**

- Veterans Day - NO SCHOOL

**FRIDAY-SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13-14:**

- RJK Musical, 7:30 p.m. (see page 1 for details)

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18:**

- Elementary Evening Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Chase PTO meeting, 7 p.m.

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19:**

- Board of Education meeting
- RJK Parent Conference Night, 6 p.m.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20:**

- K-12 Parent/Teacher Conference Day - NO SCHOOL
- Area All-State Music Festival, Liberty (also 11/21)

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24:**

- KLR Fun Friday

**WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25-27:**

- Thanksgiving Break - NO SCHOOL

## Quick CLIPS

### Monticello High School celebrates Education Week with Panther Parent tours, Nov. 17 & 18

Parents are invited to visit the high school and tour the building during school hours. This will give them a greater understanding of what goes on during their child's day and allows them to see "learning in action." Preregistration is necessary for the tours by calling Heather Strauss at 794-8840, ext. 10904.

### FYI: Grades 3-8 Test Dates to be Released

The New York State Education Department has changed the testing dates for the 2009-2010 school year. Because of this, they are not listed in the district calendar.

Once the new dates are finalized for Monticello Schools, they will be printed in future publications and posted on the district web site at [www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net).