

RIDGEVIEW MUSTANGS

300 S. Harrison Street. Colfax. IL 61728 Phone. 309-723-5111

Erik Young
Superintendent

Zach Freed
JH/HS Principal

Ben Hutley
Elem Principal

Dear Elementary Families, Parents/Guardians, and Friends,

On behalf of the entire staff, it is our sincere pleasure to welcome our new and returning students to the 2025-2026 school year. Each time I add another year to those numbers it's difficult to believe how fast the time has flown. I, personally, will have been with the district for 24 years and in my experience it is one of the most amazing places to be. Thank you for all you do as family and community members to make our school district an excellent place to be.

As we kick off the new year there are several new developments that I would like to draw your attention to. While some of them are bittersweet, there are still positive changes in motion and I am encouraged by the strong potential for success for our district and students.

- First, I'd like to recognize our departing staff members - Nicole Winterland (teacher), Sam Jakubek (paraprofessional), Susan Brinkman (paraprofessional), Andrea Nunamaker (paraprofessional), and Katelyn Petersen (one-to-one nurse). While their transition to new destinations and new employment is sad for us, we wish them nothing but the best and hope they find just as much success in their new placements. In fact, some of their new placements are right here in the building.
- On a more positive note, I'd like to welcome our new staff members - Susan Brinkman (teacher), Kali Caldwell (teacher), Ryleigh Brown (Teacher), Brigitte Tracy (paraprofessional), Halie Heinz (paraprofessional), Amber Gillenwater-Centi (paraprofessional - started last year), and Lana Fisher (paraprofessional - started last year). I am excited by the possibilities these individuals will bring to their new positions and know they will help make our school an even more outstanding place to be.
- In addition, I'm excited to welcome Ms. Allison Boettcher who will be serving as the Ridgeview Elementary School Assistant Principal. Ms. Boettcher previously taught special education at Gibson City and she brings a variety of skills to support our students, families, and staff. Please make sure to stop in and say hello next time you are in the building.
- As always, we are fortunate to have a variety of technology at our disposal. We are working diligently to get our ROOMS communication platform up and running as well as get Skyward access out to all families. If you have not familiarized yourself with ROOMS yet, please find information about this communication tool on our website and download the app. We don't want you to miss out on all of the great things going on at Ridgeview Elementary School.
- We are rolling out a new literacy curriculum called Arts and Letters through a company called Great Minds. This will be a complete overhaul in regard to how we teach reading and writing so please bear with us as our staff learns along with your students. Arts and Letters is a knowledge based curriculum, intent on building a strong foundation in a variety of topics to improve reading and writing across the board. It is grounded in the principles of structured literacy and the science of reading and we know it will be a great tool for teaching your students to be the best readers and writers they can be.
- Finally, I wanted to inform you about our partnership with CHAMPIONS through Kindercare. CHAMPIONS will be providing before and after school care here at Ridgeview for all students grades Kindergarten through seventh grade (up to age 12). While this is not a free service, CHAMPIONS coordinates with a variety of support services and families may be eligible for free or reduced cost childcare. Ridgeview staff does not oversee or coordinate anything with regard to CHAMPIONS, but we can still answer questions or facilitate communication as needed.

We are very excited for all of the new developments in our building supported by our superintendent and school board. We are more excited about your students starting school or returning to school here at Ridgeview Elementary. Thank you again for allowing us to be a part of your student's life and for everything you do as partners with us in their education. Do not hesitate to contact us should the need arise.

Sincerely,
Ben Hutley
Elementary Principal