



12 September 2016

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Welcome back! It's wonderful to be back in school with our students and staff – everyone is so excited about the new school year. Over the summer the stage in the cafetorium was refinished in preparation for the annual musical! And the Merivale Care Staff worked very hard to clean the school and bring shine back to all the floors!

In the first weeks of school, there are many administrative details to attend to. Please ensure that you complete and return your Student Information Verification Form, Media Permission Form, update your contact information if there were any changes, and be sure to make the school aware of any medical allergies or other conditions.

A reminder that managing student attendance is one of our first priorities, if your child is going to be absent from school, please phone the school attendance line at 613-224-1807 press “2” or email merivalehsattendance@ocdsb.ca.

Parents are so important to building a sense of community in our school. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the following upcoming events:

- Meet the Teacher night is Thursday September 22nd-meet in the cafetorium starts at 7 p.m.
- Basketball team Yard sale Fundraiser Saturday September 24 in the front Parking Lot
- **School Council meets Tuesday Sept. 13** in the staff room (off entrance B) for 7 p.m. start

Merivale School Council

Traditionally, one of the first tasks in the new school year is to elect the school council. This past spring however, in anticipation of the Western Area Review (West.AR) and subsequent recommendations to trustees, council unanimously voted Lorrie Vidalin and Marie McFaul-van de Berg to continue as chair and vice-chair of MHS school council, respectively for the 2016-17 school year.

School council and MHS administration continued communications and planning over the summer in order to promptly and effectively address and respond to the West.AR recommendations, which were publicly disclosed last week. More information regarding the report is provided further below.

Another of council's efforts late June/early July was a successful procurement of a Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant from the Ontario Ministry of Education. The “Discover Merivale” grant will highlight opportunities at Merivale including;

- *Mathematics & Numeracy focus*
- *IB awareness, process and program deliverables*
- *Special High Skills Major (SHSM) and the related Arts specialization, Transportation & Construction*

Dates and further details for “Discover Merivale” will be posted to the MHS website as well as school council link. Council has also reached out beyond our immediate school community to encourage schools of all levels to learn more about all that Merivale has to offer, both currently and in the future.

We warmly welcome all parents, guardians and family members to attend any of the MHS school council meetings. They are routinely the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Full information is on the Merivale HS website "calendar of events" and school council link/Wiki Page (the latter to be updated upon accessibility). If you are unable to attend meetings but would like to be kept informed, we are pleased to add your email contact to our membership. See the website for contact details and further information. Past agendas and minutes are available as well as further information and links are available and are updated throughout the year dependent upon current events/activities.

At the end of August, all parents in the school should have received an email from the school district with information about the West.AR. As a member of the Merivale Family of Schools, our school is part of this review. Here is a summary of the impacts specific to our school.

Merivale High School

Grade and Program Configuration:

Currently a Grade 9-12 secondary school and proposed change to a Grade 7-12 school structure.

Proposed introduction of western area International Baccalaureate program (IB) (subject to applicable approvals).

Student Impact:

Grade 7-8 ENG/EFI students from Carleton Heights and Sir Winston Churchill PS are relocated to Merivale HS (new 7-12 program).

Meadowlands PS would feed directly to Merivale HS for 7-12.

Steve MacLean PS and (Farley Mowat) will continue to feed to Merivale HS at Grade 9.

Special Education:

Potential for additional Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) courses.

Facility / Capital Requirements:

Internal renovation to add a Learning Commons area.

Implementation:

Changes proposed to come into effect for September, 2017.

IB program in 2019 +/- (pending approvals)

News about potential change can be unsettling. I want to reassure you that these proposed changes will be the subject of consultation over the next six months. The school district has a comprehensive consultation plan and I will also do my best to keep you informed at every stage in the process. In addition, the school council will be selecting a representative from our school to sit on the Western Area Review Committee. If you have an interest in representing MHS at Accommodation Review Committee meetings in the coming 6 months, please connect directly with MHS school council.

As a school community, we will have plenty of opportunities to discuss these changes at school council meetings. I also encourage you as parents/guardians to participate in the planned public meetings and the upcoming online consultation process. More information about the proposed changes, the consultation process and timelines is available on the school website – click on the Multi-Year Student Learning and School Accommodation Review button. The changes are proposals at this time; the Board of Trustees is scheduled to make a final decision in March 2017.

We have a busy school year ahead. Student learning and well-being is our shared purpose. We look forward to seeing you at the first school council meeting tomorrow!

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Barb Gage
Principal