



P.O. Box 129 | Morrison, IL 61270

[www.morrisonsschoolsfoundation.org](http://www.morrisonsschoolsfoundation.org)

*Working together to enhance the education of our students and strengthen our community*

November 2010

**Open Letter to the Community from the  
Morrison Schools Foundation Board of Directors**

Dear Friends:

We are proud to announce the recent formation of Morrison Schools Foundation. The mission of the Foundation is two-fold: to enhance the education of our students by raising funds to enable greater educational opportunities; and to strengthen our community by promoting the engagement of our residents, businesses and alumni in our schools. We would like to take this opportunity to explain why the Foundation was formed and our vision for the future.

**A Brief History.** The State of Illinois has had a structural deficit for many years. The recent economic downturn has exacerbated the State's financial difficulties, leading it to borrow and grow increasingly reliant on Federal dollars to fund education. Illinois currently ranks last in the percent of state funding and at the bottom in fairness for educational funding.

In early 2010, it appeared the State would likely not fund certain grant-based programs, such as early learning programs. These programs serve our community's at-risk preschoolers – those who qualify based on environmental or developmental factors. The Morrison Early Learning Program (MELP) provides opportunities for children with Special Needs and students who have been identified as At-Risk to share learning experiences in a blended, team-based environment. The services offered by this program are unique to the community and invaluable for the special needs and at-risk preschoolers.

When it appeared MELP would not be funded, a small group of parents began meeting with each other and with District administration and the Board of Education to explore options for saving the program. As these discussions progressed, it became apparent that the District and our community could benefit from a foundation to support not only the short-term problem of MELP funding, but also a variety of long-term challenges and opportunities.

On March 3, 2010, the Board of Education held a public meeting, where many voiced concerns over the funding issues presented by the State's financial difficulties. Many also voiced support for the concept of forming a foundation and signed up to either lend support or receive updates on progress. On April 7, 2010, a community meeting was held to specifically address forming a foundation and solicit additional volunteers.

Those preliminary efforts led to the incorporation of the Morrison Schools Foundation on June 9, 2010. The board of directors was seated on July 8, 2010. The Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation and is an affiliate of the Community Foundation of the Great River Bend based in the Quad

Cities. The Community Foundation provides support to a variety of non-profits in the area, including the Morrison Area Community Foundation. This partnership will benefit the Foundation by providing access to the Community Foundation's extensive resources and by reducing some of the administration burdens and costs associated with non-profit organizations. Gifts made to the Morrison Schools Foundation are tax exempt.

**Early Successes.** Both before and after the official formation of the Foundation, a committed group of volunteers has generated many creative initiatives that have led to many early successes. We were one of the vendors at the Farmers' Market, where our student art, flowers, pot holders, and other donated items were very popular. We also planted two plots at the Community Garden, where we planted seeds for children participating in the Early Sprouts program. There were additional initiatives for the Early Learning Program campaign, including Dino Dollars and the popular Family Fun Day on July 31. In all, we were able to raise over \$10,000 to support the Early Learning Program, enabling it to continue at full strength for the 2010-2011 school year.

**Looking to the Future.** As the Board looks to the future, we are developing our short term, medium term, and long term goals. Our short-term focus will be on developing creative and low-cost initiatives that will provide immediate benefit to our students and community. These initiatives will range from providing technological assistance to the District to expanding current volunteering programs. Our medium-term goals will focus on things such as fostering the already strong community support for our schools and a committed alumni network. Our long-term goal will be establishing an endowment fund and campaign that will provide the necessary resources to make a lasting impact long into the future.

If you would like to be part of this exciting organization or have any questions, please feel free to contact any of our board members. Please visit our website – [www.morrisonchoolsfoundation.org](http://www.morrisonchoolsfoundation.org) – for additional information, news, and opportunities to help.

Sincerely,

Your Morrison Schools Foundation Board of Directors

Trent Bush, President

Sandi Wilkens, Vice President

Ona Allison, Secretary

Joy Tegeler, Treasurer

Supt. Dr. Suellen Girard, *ex officio*

John Frame

Rebecca Green

Jeff McIlrath

Heather Stoudt