School year 2019-20 began like any other: Students attended classes, enjoyed field trips, and ate lunch with friends in the cafeteria. Loyal fans cheered on the Wolves. Proud parents attended concerts and art shows.

And then came COVID-19. In mid-March, schools transitioned to an extended period of eLearning due to the global pandemic.

Students logged on to complete assignments. Class meetings took place via Google and Zoom; field trips were virtual. School meals (more than 20,000 each week!) were provided for curbside pick up.

“It was a school year like no other,” says MCAS Superintendent Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins. “But I’m so proud of how quickly our staff and students adapted. Thanks to our 1:1 program, all students had access to Chromebooks, and our teachers had participated in professional development that helped them transition lessons to the online environment. It certainly wasn’t the way we wanted to conclude the year, but we were able to make the most of an unexpected situation.”

During the eLearning period, MCAS school counselors, social workers, nurses, and other staff continued to support students and their families. “It was essential that we continue to meet both the academic and social-emotional needs of our students,” says Eason-Watkins. Staff showed they cared through

**Students and staff adapted quickly thanks to the district’s 1:1 program.**

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Michigan City Area Schools added eight new propane school buses to its fleet this year. These buses are environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient, quieter than diesel, and are equipped with stop-arm cameras and other safety features.

South Shore Clean Cities helped MCAS secure a grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management that funds approximately 25% of the purchase price. Co-Alliance, the district’s propane provider, installed a fueling station at the Transportation Department on Woodland Avenue, at no cost to the district.

The buses replace eight 20-year-old diesel models, which will be scrapped as part of the grant agreement. “Our goal is to continue to explore cleaner, more efficient fuel options,” says MCAS Director of Transportation Sue Harrison.

Look for the green “bluebird” logos that identify these new buses.
FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

When I posed for this picture with students from Marsh Elementary School last August, none of us had any idea what the year would bring.

COVID-19 truly turned our definition of “normal” upside down. In addition, racial inequities that exist in our society were brought to the forefront, with calls for change being chanted across the globe.

Next school year, our district will have new protocols for health, safety, and transportation. But we’ll also be focusing on our curriculum, with a renewed focus on rigor, equity, opportunity, and building stronger relationships with all of our students.

MCAS serves a diverse student population; this is one of our greatest strengths. This past school year, our administrators attended training on cultural competency, implicit bias, and using an equity lens to improve student outcomes. We have created a diversity, equity, and inclusion team and have empowered hiring managers to recruit a diverse teaching staff. We are also partnering with the National Equity Project to provide additional professional development for staff and to help build our district framework. These are all steps that will have a positive impact on our work.

Our students must achieve at high levels and be college and career ready upon graduation.

Despite the challenges we face, we are poised for a spectacular year!

— Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins, Superintendent

A FOCUS ON SAFE, HEALTHY FACILITIES

Michigan City Area Schools’ facilities and grounds had a busy year! Major projects included refinishing the gym floor at Joy Elementary, power washing bleachers at Ames Field, and replacing playground equipment at Springfield Elementary School. Sodexo also constructed a much-needed storage shed at Pine Elementary and performed a number of routine maintenance tasks including the removal of wallpaper at Knapp and restoration of the courtyard at Coolspring.

An innovative pilot project this year included the installation of an ultra-violet unit in HVAC systems in several Coolspring Elementary classrooms. The units (interior pictured below) are similar to those used in hospital settings; they reduce bacteria in rooms by cleaning the air with ultraviolet light before it is circulated. “We are one of only three school districts in the Midwest to pilot this ultra-violet technology, thanks to a competitive grant from Sodexo,” says Paz Garcia, Sodexo General Manager for MCAS. “Our data at Coolspring showed reduced rates of absences this year due to flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses.”

Sodexo hopes to expand the UVC program to other MCAS schools.

SCHOOL YEAR

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creative videos, yard signs, phone calls, and emails. Some held car parades through neighborhoods to stay connected to families. Transportation staff teamed up with Domino’s to deliver free pizzas to families across the city.

MCAS also pitched in to help those on the front lines of the COVID crisis. MCHS engineering teachers and students on the Safe Harbor Robotics team used 3D printers to make close to 1,000 face shields for doctors, nurses and others in need of PPE. Children at several schools shared artwork and video messages of encouragement for hospital employees.

“Team MCAS stepped up,” says Eason-Watkins. “We’re grateful for the support of our heroic staff, our families, and community.”

ENROLL & REGISTER ONLINE!

www.EducateMC.net.

Online enrollment (new students) is now open for the 2020-21 school year! Registration (for current students) begins July 13.

Need help? Enroll or register in person on Tuesday, July 28 (12-6pm) and Wednesday, July 29 (8am-1pm) at all schools.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL: AUGUST 12, 2020
BARKER MIDDLE SCHOOL - STEM and History Stars: Now in its third year as an Indiana-certified STEM school, Barker has established a popular tradition: Challenging one another, community groups, businesses, and elementary students in engineering competitions. This year, the contests included a “Gummy Bears in Space” catapult-building competition in November and a “Ramp Challenge” (below) held during National Engineers Week in February. In the ramp event, teams tested the effects of slope, rise, and run on ramps constructed for a ping pong ball using only a file folder, 3 sheets of paper, 4 straws, 30cm of masking tape, and scissors.

Barker’s annual STEM Fair was another success; two students (Bailey Chavis and Madison Gresham) advanced first to the Regional Science and Engineering Fair at Valparaiso University and then to the Hoosier State Science and Engineering Fair, which was held virtually in March.

Barker students also reached the state level in a History competition this year. In January, 25 projects from the school were featured at the National History Day Northwest Regional competition in Mishawaka. Three projects (a website on Michigan City’s Underground Railroad, an exhibit on Benazir Bhutto, and a documentary on the George Rogers Clark Campaign) advanced to the State History Day Fair, which was held virtually in April.

Barker teacher Mariah Pol (pictured above with history students and fellow teacher Michael Eldridge) was honored with a prestigious accolade: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History named her the 2019 History Teacher of the Year for the State of Indiana. In addition to a $1,000 honorarium, Pol received an archive of American history books and educational materials for Barker.

KRUEGER MIDDLE SCHOOL - Winning Year: Krueger received exciting news on two fronts this spring, which will result in a combined $125,000 in prizes.

The school finished in 6th place nationally in the PepsiCo Recycle Rally Challenge, winning $25,000 for their recycling efforts. From September through mid-March, students, families, and business partners collected and weighed plastic #1 beverage bottles, plastic milk cartons, and aluminum drink cans — gathering more than 194 tons of material. (Last year, Krueger finished in 9th place in this competition and received $10,000.) “This has been an incredible opportunity to help our school and to help students make recycling a lifelong habit,” says Environmental Science teacher Daisy Lee, who coordinated the effort.

Krueger also was selected for a “Don’t Quit! Fitness Center Award” through the National Foundation for Governor’s Fitness Councils. The prize: a $100,000 fitness room, cardio equipment, and weights. Installation of the equipment will take place this fall. “We were absolutely thrilled to receive this,” says Krueger principal Josh Malone, who worked with Krueger Health & Wellness Teacher Ryan Labis, teacher Jenny Jones, and students to prepare a video application for the award. “The fitness room will be a huge motivator for our students, benefiting their physical and mental health.”

Although Krueger’s annual spring “Field Days” and “Living History Trail” tours had to be canceled this spring, the school completed Krueger Reaches Out volunteer day projects in the fall. Students spread out across the community for the initiative, helping out at Fried’s Cat Shelter, the Elston YMCA, the Washington Park Zoo (left), Friendship Botanic Gardens, and the soup kitchen at Macedonian Missionary Baptist Church.
MARSH ELEMENTARY - Literacy Leaders
Marsh focused on literacy in a big way this year: Families had fun “camping” indoors as part of a Family Literacy Night, a schoolwide read-a-thon raised $1,200 for reading awards and incentives, and grades 2 and 6 piloted a new curriculum called “EL” that will be used districtwide next fall.

“EL joins structured phonics with content-based literacy, providing support for English language learners. It led to rich, powerful discussions among students,” says principal Marsha Tappan. “All students became better readers of challenging texts, while developing positive character traits. We were so impressed with the level of student work.”

KNAPP ELEMENTARY - Positive Start: This year, Knapp started a new tradition: a Monday Morning Assembly. Each week, all staff and students met in the gym on Monday mornings for in-person announcements, shout outs, and reflections and thoughts on a life skill of the week. The meetings always included singing the Knapp fight song or reciting the school’s vision statement. “We have a strong school community that we call our ‘Knapp Family,’” says principal Holly Martinez. “We love to cheer each other on while encouraging others to persevere to do their best.”

COOLSPRING ELEMENTARY - LEGO Vipers:
Did you know that Michigan City’s successful Safe Harbor Robotics high school program has a feeder system? After-school robotics clubs like the one at Coolspring engage young students in problem-solving, teamwork, and research.

This year, the school’s “LEGO Vipers” team worked on an environmental challenge, inventing an air filtration system on turbines. The students quickly realized that their invention could benefit the environment and reduce respiratory infections, including lung cancer. After researching the effects of turbines on birds, they determined that reflective strips needed to be added to deter birds from being harmed. Their efforts earned them a creative research award at an end-of-season competition.

“I am always impressed with the students’ innovative ideas, ability to problem-solve as a team, and their consideration of one another,” says Coolspring teacher Brianne Covington, who coaches the team. “I couldn’t be more proud of our Vipers.”

JOY ELEMENTARY - Spreading Joy “What brings me joy is camping and making smores and looking at the moon.”

“What brings me joy is my brother. He is two years old. He is funny. He loves pizza so much!”

This year, each student at Joy answered a question: What brings you joy? Their heartfelt answers (and illustrations) were compiled into booklets that were distributed across the city to physician waiting rooms, car-repair shops, hair salons and other locations. “What began as a simple writing exercise blossomed into something really special,” says principal Lisa Suter. “The kids’ perspective helped people, sometimes in stressful situations, take a moment to reflect on what’s truly important.”
PINE ELEMENTARY - Blocking for the Arts:
Pine switched things up for sixth graders this year, offering them new options thanks to a “block” schedule for related arts programming. Instead of two 30-minute visits to art, music, and PE each week, the students were able to choose from offerings such as sculpture, percussion (bucket drumming!), and basketball for three hours per week each trimester. The extended time allowed students to dig deeper into their chosen specialty, learning and refining new skills.

“Blocking was very popular,” says principal Zach Huber. “Students formed close bonds with one another and with teachers — resulting in better grades, fewer discipline problems, and very high-quality work.”

SPRINGFIELD ELEMENTARY - Sharktastic!
Three years ago, the Springfield Shark became the school’s new mascot, thanks to a popular vote by students. Since that time, Springfield students have learned a lot about their new namesake, through book projects on sharks, shark artwork, shark field day t-shirts... and of course appearances by the Springfield Shark himself in parades and at assemblies.

Next school year, the school will launch a “Shark Frenzies” initiative, where students across all grade levels buddy up to work together and provide support to one another.

“Shark Frenzies will foster social-emotional skills,” says principal Lisa Emshwiller. “Each shark group will be like a small family, helping students connect to one another and to the larger school community.”

LAKE HILLS ELEMENTARY - Sign of a Legend:
The City of Michigan City recently unveiled a tribute to a local legend in education: a street sign proclaiming “Connie Bachmann Way.”

The sign, located near Lake Hills, honors the school’s principal, Mrs. Connie Bachmann, who retired this spring after 49 years with MCAS. She served as an elementary art consultant, a teacher, a volleyball coach, and a principal over the course of her career.

Under her leadership, Lake Hills became a magnet school for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) that has been recognized at the local, state, and national levels for innovative programming, partnerships, and impact on the community. The school was one of only 41 sites in the country selected to pilot an elementary engineering curriculum and has been the recipient of many grants and donations. “Connie has always had an ability to motivate and support staff, which results in high-quality learning experiences for students,” said Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins. “She has positively impacted thousands of families, who will remember her for her expertise, willingness to listen, and no-nonsense approach.”

EDGEWOOD ELEMENTARY - Creative Coders:
You may know that the State of Indiana has standards for subjects like Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Math. But did you realize that schools must incorporate lessons on Computer Science, too?

At Edgewood, children learn some of the state standards in a weekly class co-taught by their music and art teachers. Grades 2-6 enjoy “unplugged” activities such as translating and deciphering binary code messages and designing binary code images into “melty bead” backpack tags.

Students also use a variety of technology gadgets from the LaPorte County Public Library. They generate LED images with block coding using micro:bits, program tiny robots called Ozobots to learn about logic, assemble robots that react to stimuli with Cubelets, and create mini apps using javascript with Bitsbox. K-3 children learn design skills by reading The Billy Goats Gruff and building bridges with Keva wooden planks, Legos, and other materials donated by the Michigan City Drifters and Donors Choose.

“These projects help students become strong, creative problem-solvers,” says principal Kristin Smith. “We’re preparing them for careers of the future.”
COMPRESSED AIR ACADEMY WINS ACCOLADES

Michigan City High School welcomed industry executives, education partners, and local and state officials to a ribbon-cutting and open house in October for the Compressed Air Academy. By February, the program had received multiple awards, including a “State Earn and Learn” designation from the Department of Workforce Development, an international award from Hitachi, and the Indiana Association of Career and Technical Education Districts’ top honor for CTE partnerships.

The Academy is the first of its kind in the nation. It was developed in 2018 to address regional workforce needs through a partnership involving MCHS, the Economic Development Corporation of Michigan City, Sullair, Boss Industries, Dekker Vacuum Technologies, Sullivan-Palatek, and Vanair.

The program, which this year involved 45 students, now occupies a renovated classroom adjoining an Advanced Manufacturing flex lab with two compressors and an industrial vacuum system. The flex lab also features a tabletop CNC system, 3D printers, computers with CAD software, and industrial robotic components. (A Skill Up 3 grant and a partnership with Arconic provided teacher training and equipment for the lab.)

“This partnership is more than just a donation of equipment,” says Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins, MCAS Superintendent. “It involves companies engaging with and mentoring our students, offering internships, and sharing resources. This is a model for what is possible through the power of collaboration among economic development, industry, and educators.”

RUSHING FOR YARDS

City’s football team had another winning season in 2019. But the Wolves had success off the field, too.

Athletes spread out across the city to assist the elderly, retired first responders, and individuals with disabilities in maintaining their yards. Team members mowed, trimmed, clipped, and cleaned gutters for over 50 homes in under two months. Twenty-five business sponsors provided supplies and made donations to the team in support of the effort.

Due to COVID-19, the project didn’t continue this summer — but stay tuned for next year!

MARCHING FORWARD!

The Wolf Pack Marching Band is looking sharp in new uniforms (modeled here by 2019-20 drum major Parker Gouge). Donations are still needed to ensure there are enough to fit students of all sizes. Visit http://educateMC.net/banduniforms to help!

LANDMARK ART

In May, a large mosaic mural by MCHS Art students and teachers was installed in the Discovery Center at the Washington Park Zoo. The project took over 6 months to complete and involved over 150 students, faculty, and community members. (The image came from a 1931 postcard of the zoo’s Observation Tower.) The project was funded through a grant from the Unity Foundation.
SCHOOLS WITHIN A SCHOOL

A high school with close to 1,600 students can seem daunting to a freshman (and his or her parents!) That’s why MCHS has created four “schools within a school” that offer students individual attention and opportunities.

The Honors College challenges high-ability students with honors sections for all core classes. Weighted grades are awarded for Academic Honors, AP, and Dual Credit classes.

Early College students receive a strong foundation for success in college and career, with added guidance and study skills support.

Core Academy students are prepared to pursue an Indiana Core 40 diploma. By junior year, they supplement their schedules with dual-credit and career and technical education courses.

The P.A.C.K. Academy serves students who need academic support. An extra class period of math, smaller classes that emphasize study skills, and focused counseling help students close gaps.

MCHS also offers two alternative schools.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Thanks to a new partnership with the Michigan City Paper Box Company, students with special needs in the Career Skills class at the A. K. Smith Career Center are gaining hands-on experience in the box-assembly process used at the company’s two local plants.

Last fall, the manufacturer installed a workstation in a classroom lab, including a conveyer belt, vacuum system, sorting table, and packing tools and supplies. The innovative partnership also involves teacher training, field trips, and guest speakers, and will lead to internships and employment.

Career Center students benefit from many other partnerships that provide students with hands-on opportunities. For example, a used fire truck was donated to the Fire Science Program this year by the City of Michigan City; 12 county fire departments have now donated equipment.

And when the Michigan City Chamber needed a new furnace and air conditioner in November, four students in the Construction Technology program worked alongside experts from Michiana Mechanical on the install, learning technical skills and about career options in the HVAC industry.

For information about the 12 career-tech programs available to county students through A.K. Smith visit http://educateMC.net/careertech.
End-of-year traditions took new forms for the Class of 2020: A “college signing day” was moved online, Distinguished Grads were surprised at their homes by teachers and school board members, and Commencement went virtual — with a day-long, in-person diploma conferral made possible by business sponsors and the Michigan City Chamber of Commerce. Visit EducateMC.net/mchs for more photos and videos!

CLASS OF 2020: BY THE NUMBERS

3,000+ Hours of Community Service
51 Students Earning Work Ethic Certificates

2,352 COLLEGE CREDITS Earned
237 AP COURSES COMPLETED

32 number of graduates with 4.1 OR HIGHER GPA
10 number of graduates with 4.42 OR HIGHER GPA
69 EARLY COLLEGE program graduates

College & Career READY!

All-DAC Athletes: 11
9 Athletes signed to play on college teams

$3.6 MILLION scholarships accepted (not including the Promise Scholarship)

Follow us on:
@EducateMC

#ONECITYONEPACK

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