



# The Mid-State Messenger

September 2020

## We Are Smiling Under These Masks!



MSSE welcomes Dana Bivens, Special Education Coordinator and Assistant Principal in Vandalia, and Brenda Partick, program coordinator for Panhandle, to our team! Dana brings a great deal of experience to us including serving as a teacher for the hearing impaired, working with students with multiple disabilities, and serving as a parent liaison. Brenda, previous MSSE director, assistant director, program coordinator and teacher, has returned to MSSE to share her expertise in Panhandle. We are blessed to be fully staffed at MSSE and are looking forward to working as a team to meet the needs of our 13 member districts.

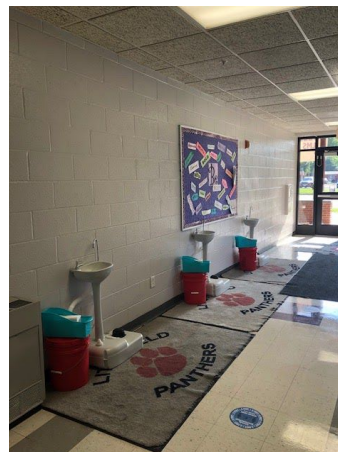
## Return to School Thoughts

Today I saw children smiling with their eyes. Today I said "Welcome to the junior high" a few dozen times. Today I got to escort kids to new places they've never been. Today I watched 5-year-olds walk outdoors and gasp a joyous "Yes!" after they saw what a Kindergarten recess looks like. Today I gave elbow bumps and virtual high-fives. Today I corrected/helped a young student after he "washed his hands" in the urinal water (cascading

down from the top....not the pee). Today I "heard" how much both kids - and adults - have missed this. Today I re-discovered the reason why I decided to become a school social worker 27 years ago. Today, after a 5-month hiatus, I once again have a purpose. Rick Cina

## Litchfield Schools Prepare for Learning

To assist with cutting down on germs, Litchfield schools have set up portable handwashing stations around the buildings. Since lockers are not being utilized, clear backpacks have been provided to the Middle and High School students so they can safely carry all of their materials.



## Remote Learning Survivors

Tracy Soots, 2nd Grade Special Education Teacher from Carlenville Primary School knew how to reward her parents for a job well done this spring.



## Pockets of Joy

Panhandle School District staff and administration are working hard to get back to normal. Things aren't the same, but there is excitement in the air as the school year begins. The students have arrived and are quickly adjusting to new routines and safety precautions. It has been refreshing to see that staff and students are able to find pockets of joy as everyone strives to navigate these uncharted times. Mr. Hopper found one of those pockets of joy with students as he was supervising a scheduled mask break.



## Ready to Provide Therapy!



Armed with cleaning supplies, masks, and plexiglass, Mrs. Beyers can't wait to start providing speech therapy to her students! We are all so happy to be back at school and to be working with students again! Special thanks to the amazing maintenance team from the Hillsboro School District!! They made plexiglass dividers for any special education teacher or related service provider who requested them. The dividers work great and staff are very pleased to have them!

## Sensory Room

St. Elmo Elementary's sensory room got a face lift prior to school starting. Thanks to Emma Reichert, Behavior Specialist, along with St. Elmo Elementary special education teacher Melissa Daugherty and assistants Rhiannon Durbin and Mindy Healy, the "stage" has been redefined. The stage at St. Elmo Elementary has housed a critical space for students with disabilities, but now the purpose has expanded. This space will now be used for increasing mask tolerance, discrete trial instruction, re-establishing a routine, and addressing sensory needs for the students it serves.



