Executive Summary: 2025-26 District and School Report Cards

This executive summary introduces the 2025–2026 Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) School Report Cards for Meridian CUSD 223 and its four schools. It also provides an evaluative three-year analysis examining district academic trajectories, attendance patterns, staffing, and financial indicators.

The annual report cards serve as an accountability instrument under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and provide actionable data to benchmark instructional effectiveness, resource allocation, and continuous school improvement.

Three-year District Longitudinal Analysis

Core Metric	2023–2024 District	2024–2025 District	2025–2026 District	2025–2026 State Average	3-Year Direction
Total Student Enrollment	1,466	1,441	**1,431**	1,819,118	Slight Decrease (-2.4%)
ELA Proficiency (All Tests)	39.0%	58.0%	**59.3%**	55.4%	Slight Growth (Cut Score Change)
Math Proficiency (All Tests)	27.4%	42.9%	**42.8%**	39.2%	Slight Decrease (Cut Score Change)
Science Proficiency (All Tests)	60.7%	39.3%	**54.6%**	48.7%	Significant Growth (Cut Score Change)
4-Year High School Graduation Rate	89.9%	91.1%	**89.3%**	89.8%	Stable (~90%)
9th Grade On Track	94.8%	96.0%	**92.1%**	89.6%	Strong (Consistently > State)
Chronic Absenteeism Rate	17.2%	17.6%	**15.7%**	23.5%	Positive Decline (-1.9 pts)

Teacher Retention Rate (3-Yr Avg)	88.4%	90.8%	**91.2%**	90.8%	Upward Trend (+2.8 pts)
Teachers with Master's or Higher	63.2%	60.2%	**59.7%**	56.5%	Consistently > State
Evidence-Based Funding % of Adequacy	81.7%	81.8%	**80.7%**	Tier 2 State Funding	Underfunded relative to target

Celebration & Positive Trends

- **Multi-Year Academic Gains Outpacing State Standards:** Districtwide academic proficiency in English Language Arts has increased, outperforming the state average of 55.4%. District Math proficiency has also increased, exceeding the state baseline of 39.2%. Science rebounded sharply to 54.6%, remaining 5.9 points above Illinois averages (48.7%).
- **Exemplary Postsecondary & Early College Preparation:** SVHS demonstrated college and career readiness, with 42.5% of students earning dual credit college credit (more than double the state rate of 20.0%), and 93.6% of seniors achieving 3+ Career Ready Indicators (state average is 37.6%).
- **Reduction in Chronic Absenteeism:** Overall district chronic absenteeism dropped to 15.7%, significantly outperforming the statewide mark of 23.5%. Elementary attendance is strong, anchored by Monroe Center at 10.7%.
- **High Staff Retention & Professional Experience:** Meridian's 3-year average teacher retention has climbed steadily to 91.2% (surpassing the state at 90.8%), paired with an average teaching experience of 17 years (vs. 14 statewide) and 100% evaluated as proficient or excellent.
- **Strong Early Secondary Transition:** The district's 9th Grade On Track rate reached 92.1%, continuing to track above the state benchmark of 89.6%.

Priority Areas for District Improvement

- **Junior/Senior High School Attendance & Truancy Drop-Off:** While early childhood through middle school rates remain controlled, chronic absenteeism accelerates rapidly in the upper grades: 8th grade at 15.6%, 9th at 20.4%, 10th at 20.6%, 11th at 24.8%, and 12th grade reaching 29.7% (SVHS building overall is 23.9%).
- **Special Education & IEP Achievement Gaps:** Persistent proficiency gaps exist across state testing. On the ACT Suite at SVHS, only 26.2% of students with disabilities scored proficient in ELA and fewer than 10 met standards in Math.
- **Elementary ELA Performance:** Monroe Center (51.2%) performed below the state average (55.4%) in overall ELA proficiency.
- **High School Math Performance Trajectory:** While Monroe Center (49.5%) and MJHS (42.9%)

maintain proficiency above state baselines, SVHS overall math proficiency dropped to 34.5% on the ACT.

- **Financial Constraints & Equity of Adequacy:** Meridian CUSD 223 currently operates at 80.7% of Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) adequacy. Operating expenditure per pupil ($16,797) remains well below the state average of $20,978, highlighting the district's efficient fiscal operations despite revenue limitations.

Individual School Summaries

Highland Elementary School (Grades PK–2)

- **Summative Designation:** Approaching Exemplary School
- **Key Observations & Highlights:**
  - Serves as the district's early learning foundational center. Because state summative testing (IAR) begins in Grade 3, formal IAR proficiency data is non-reported.
  - Average class size of 19.3 students (K at 17.3, 1st at 20.6, 2nd at 20.2) and a strong 89.4% teacher retention rate.
  - Strong early grade consistent attendance rate of 87.5%, holding chronic absenteeism to 12.5% (K: 12.4%, 1st: 9.7%, 2nd: 15.5%).
  - Site-based per-pupil expenditure is $9,690 (total per-pupil $15,679).
  - Critical area of focus: Enhancing pre-K and kindergarten transition interventions to address readiness deficits identified by the district's KIDS screener.

Monroe Center Grade School (Grades 3–5)

- **Summative Designation:** Commendable School
- **Key Observations & Highlights:**
  - **Exceptional Attendance:** Boasts the lowest chronic absenteeism in the district at 10.7% (Grade 3: 11.5%, Grade 4: 10.2%, Grade 5: 10.4%), with an 89.3% consistent attendance rate.
  - **Academic Progress:** Math proficiency stands at 49.5% (well above the state average of 39.2%), and ELA proficiency reached 51.2% (below the state average of 55.4%). Overall Science proficiency reached 52.9% (vs. 48.7% state).
  - **Efficiency:** Maintains the lowest site-based expenditure in the district at $7,835 per student ($13,824 total).
  - Focus areas include narrowing IEP proficiency gaps (18.9% ELA and 22.4% Math) and elevating student growth percentiles in mathematics (cohort Mean Student Growth Percentile 45.7).

Meridian Junior High School (Grades 6–8)

- **Summative Designation:** Approaching Exemplary School
- **Key Observations & Highlights:**
  - **Outstanding Literacy Achievement:** MJHS achieved a district-leading 70.6% ELA proficiency rate, surpassing the Illinois state average by 15.2 percentage points (55.4%).
  - **Strong Growth & Science Scores:** Delivered an ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile of 53.1 and a Math MSGP of 57.3, both above state averages. 8th Grade Science proficiency reached 58.8% (vs. 48.7% state).
  - Chronic absenteeism is well managed at 13.5% (state is 23.5%), and teacher retention is solid at 89.4%.

- A key priority is to move 8th-grade Math proficiency beyond 42.9%.

Stillman Valley High School (Grades 9–12)

- **Summative Designation:** Approaching Exemplary School
- **Key Observations & Highlights:**
  - **College & Career Preparation Leader:** Exemplary CTE and dual-credit outcomes: 43.0% earned dual college credit, 26.0% enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, and 83.7% of CTE concentrators attained postsecondary credits (state average is 50.8%).
  - **Graduation & College Transition:** Holds an 89.3% 4-year graduation rate, a 92.0% 5-year graduation rate, a 91.7% 9th Grade On Track rate, and a 60.3% postsecondary enrollment rate within 12 months.
  - **ACT Suite Academics:** ELA proficiency is 55.2% (vs. 55.4% state), while Science proficiency registered at 51.0% (vs. 48.7% state).
  - **High Staff Stability:** Strong 94.3% teacher retention rate with an average of 22 years of teaching experience.
  - **Improvement Targets:** SVHS math proficiency registered at 34.5%. Chronic absenteeism reached 23.9% (with Grade 12 at 29.7%). Enhancing senior engagement and targeted mathematics interventions are primary focal points.

Summary

Meridian CUSD 223 continues to be a high-performing educational organization that consistently outpaces state averages across most core academic metrics, including English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science proficiency. Credit for the success is given to the employees within all position groups as each is critical, in their own ways, to the academic and social-emotional development of our students.