



Lauren Rodriguez Named as Principal of New Mansfield Elementary School

Mansfield Public School Superintendent Kelly Lyman has announced Lauren Rodriguez as principal of the new Mansfield elementary school. Ms Rodriguez is currently principal of Southeast Elementary School where she has served since 2013. The new elementary school, Connecticut's first net-zero public school, is scheduled to open for the 2022-23 school year. Pre-K to grade 4 students now attending Annie E. Vinton Elementary School, Dorothy C. Goodwin Elementary School and Southeast Elementary School will join together at the new school on



Lauren Rodriguez has been selected to be principal of the new Pre-K to Grade 4 Mansfield elementary school.

Warrenville Road.

In an announcement to parents, Superintendent Lyman said, "Construction of the new elementary school is well underway, and we have engaged in a significant amount of planning to support the transition into this new school next year. An important step

in that transition planning is naming a principal for the new school. I am happy to announce that I am appointing Lauren Rodriguez to that position."

Prior to working in Mansfield, Ms Rodriguez held positions at the University of Connecticut (UConn) assisting schools with improvement efforts and was an elementary teacher in general education and gifted

(See *PRINCIPAL* on pg. 4)

District's Core Beliefs to Guide Daily Experiences in Schools



The first day of school across the district kicks off a new year of student-centered learning and a commitment to develop skills defined in Mansfield's Portrait of the Graduate.

The Board of Education in Mansfield has updated its strategic plan for the district, a reflection of the values and desires of the greater Mansfield community. Known as the Development Plan, it defines the goals of the district for its students.

Building off the achievements of the previous five-year plan, this new plan focuses on six Core Beliefs that are intended to guide the work of the district.

The Development Plan outlines how the learning community can live its Core Beliefs in its daily teaching and learning activities. At the district's Convocation ceremony at the start of the year, Superintendent Kelly Lyman described the plan to the teaching staff, "If we accept that it is our obligation to ensure that all students meet our rigorous expectations, and we are committed to living our Core Beliefs, then we need to know our students deeply--not only as learners, but as people with likes and dislikes, and hopes and dreams, and lives outside of school.

(See *CORE BELIEFS* on pg. 2)

Core Beliefs Outlined in New Development Plan (cont. from page 1)

“When we know others deeply we have the knowledge we need to truly lead with equity. We can extend ourselves beyond the child to the family and come to both know and engage them as their child grows. We can help set the path for future growth and development. And when we know our students deeply, we also grow as educators. These are our Core Beliefs.”

Core Beliefs

-  Lead with **EQUITY**.
-  Develop the whole **CHILD**.
-  Ensure **ACTIVE** learning.
-  Build **PARTNERSHIPS**.
-  Prepare **GLOBAL** citizens.
-  Grow **EDUCATORS**.



Mansfield Public School’s distinctive signature, too, is its focus on student-centered learning. The Core Beliefs reinforce that students learn best when they engage in active learning, and further emphasize the commitment to developing the whole child. While it is important that students achieve command of academic and social skills, their physical, emotional and behavioral development needs must also be nurtured.

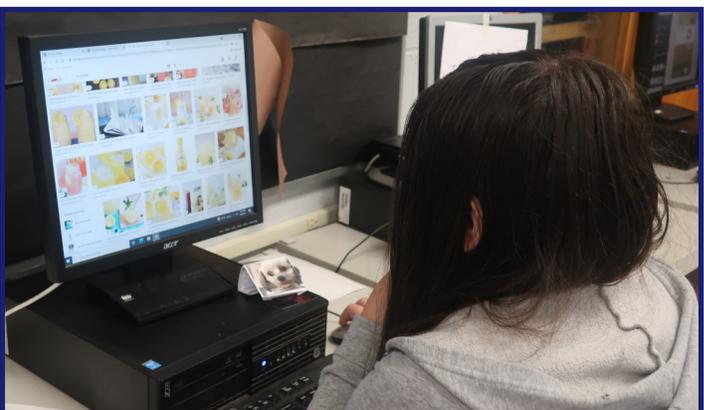
The plan is coming to life as the new school year develops. It includes key drivers and action steps that define the work in more detail and indicators that will help each teacher, each school and the Board of Education to measure progress. Administrators and teacher leaders have spent time this summer sharing ways to put the Core Beliefs to work in the classroom.

Regardless of the subject or the grade level, school district staff is determined to be driven by the desire to know students, ensure deep learning and support the whole child in bringing the Core Beliefs to the classroom, the cafeteria, the gymnasium, the playground and the hallways of Mansfield Schools each day. The new Development Plan can be found at: www.mansfieldct.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12075/Mansfield-Development-Plan_FINAL-Sept2021

Summer Learning Experiences



Mansfield Middle School students this summer honed literacy skills working with an artist-in-residence from Hartford Stage Company. They each developed a story, wrote, and performed a play.



Students also blended engineering and design skills through filmmaking, and learned to program robots to complete complex tasks.

Kim King Selected as State Finalist for Teacher of the Year



Art Teacher Kim King was selected as Mansfield Teacher of the Year, and has now qualified as a finalist for Teacher of the Year at the state level. The final selection will be announced in late October.

Kim King has a sign in her art room at Southeast School that reads, “You Matter.” When one of her students was helping the principal give a tour to a prospective student’s family, he told the family that art was his favorite class. When asked why, he pointed to the sign and said, “That’s why. I matter here.”

Ms King says that story is why being an educator is her life’s work. Her regard for students and the ability to teach students to trust, nurture and stretch their creative thinking through art makes her a standout educator. Kim King was selected by a committee of her peers and administrators as Mansfield’s Teacher of the Year.

With five years of teaching experience here in Mansfield, Ms King splits her time between Annie E. Vinton School and Southeast School as an art teacher. Although she admits that sometimes specialists outside of the core classrooms can feel like they are “in a bubble apart from the rest of the school community,” her goal is to establish her art classroom as the metaphorical center of the school and the greater community. Each week, Ms King comes into contact with 325 students in Kindergarten to grade 4, so her

excellent teaching ripples through students and makes an impact on how they approach their other subjects. In her work she likes to shift their focus from skill-based art work to embedding skills and technique-building. She believes that building student confidence gives them ownership of their learning, a critical goal in the district.

Prior to her time in Mansfield, Ms King taught for seven years at Riverside Magnet School in East Hartford and Westbrook High School, and also tutored reading at a school in Bronx, N.Y. She earned her Masters in Art Education from New York University’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development and a Bachelor’s Degree in Fine Art in Art Photography from Syracuse University’s College of Visual and Performing Arts.

She is also active in community work, leading art projects and programs on a variety of topics at the Mansfield Public Library and the Mansfield Community Center. Working closely with Superintendent Lyman, Ms King created the Mansfield Portrait of the Graduate watercolor graphic that the district features. She has tutored refugees from Syria and Korean speakers who are new to her community, and also mentors Korean adult adoptees and prospective adoptive parents.

Ms King is driven by helping students take pride in their own cultural identities. As a woman of Korean descent, she stresses that “students need to see accurate representations of themselves in art, science, literature, and media so that they can imagine a future where they can be active contributors.”

Through a grant opportunity, she traveled to Korea to study its art and culture to learn how “to guide students to develop an understanding and learn to respect people and communities different from their own through art.” As she says, “What better way to inspire student learning and growth than by setting the example of what a lifelong learner and citizen of the world looks like?”

Mansfield is proud to call Ms King one of its own and thrilled that she has been selected as a finalist for the State Teacher of the Year!

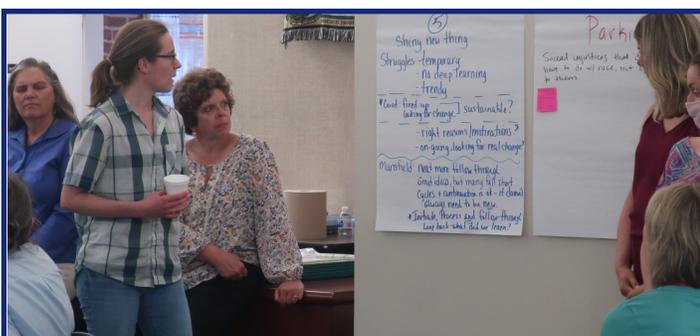
Rodriguez Named as Principal *(cont. from page 1)*

education classrooms. She holds a Bachelor of Science in elementary education from the College of New Jersey, a Masters of Arts degree in educational psychology with a concentration in gifted and talented education from UConn and a Sixth Year Certificate in Educational Leadership also from UConn. She is currently enrolled in the Executive Leadership Program there, and last year was honored as the UConn Neag School of Education Outstanding Administrator.

“Lauren’s leadership is characterized by her caring, compassionate approach, strong belief in the abilities of all students, and a commitment to creating equitable experiences for all students. She builds strong community, ensures students have a voice in their school, and welcomes families into their children’s learning,” says Superintendent Lyman.

Principal Rodriguez says, “It is a pleasure to work in a community that values education and I appreciate the support that we continue to receive from our town. Goodwin, Vinton and Southeast are each incredibly special places - - I am dreaming of what we become when we put our amazing staff in one place - - with all the energy, dedication, knowledge and passion in one building!”

Summer Teacher Learning



Summer is a time for learning for all members of the Mansfield Schools. Several formal programs were offered to Mansfield employees. Sixty-four staff members participated in a four-day Equity Institute (shown above), 23 teachers took part in a Math Mindset summer book club, and seven teachers built new units of study in a Project-Based Learning Institute. In addition, 22 staff taught in our four-week summer school for students across the grades.

Sarah Desso Selected as Mansfield Schools Paraeducator of the Year

With Mansfield Public School’s approach to student-centered learning and developing the whole child, paraeducators are a critical part of the education



Sarah Desso, Mansfield Paraeducator of the Year, assists grade 1 students at Southeast School.

team providing active support of students and teachers.

This year Sarah Desso was selected as Mansfield’s Paraeducator of the Year. Sarah is a paraeducator at Southeast Elementary School, working primarily in grade 1.

Sarah’s passion for her work comes

through in every interaction she has. One colleague described her as “a master of building relationships” who “gets to know every student’s unique personality, interests, quirks, and life outside of school.” This focus on supporting the whole child helps ensure success academically, socially and emotionally.

As Sarah noted, “I am always gaining perspective through young eyes.” At the core of Sarah’s work is a belief that “all children are innately capable, and that if they are given the right tools they will be successful learners.”

In her Convocation address, Ms Desso reached out to her peers. “As paraeducators, we have unique jobs where we touch the lives of our students in an intimate way. We not only provide children with knowledge, but we provide them with stability, community, and emotional support. This extends to the families of our students as well.”

Ms Desso was selected from among 36 nominees after a lengthy process and review by a committee of her peers. Prior to working in Mansfield, Ms Desso worked as an instructor at EASTCONN Educational and Vocational Center. EASTCONN is the public Regional Educational Service Center that serves as a resource to schools in Eastern Connecticut.



A Message from the Board of Education

The opening of a school year is always an exciting and exhilarating time for students and staff. As we embark on the 2021-22 year in Mansfield, the third school year impacted by the global pandemic, we are eager to welcome students back for full in-person learning.

This year is particularly exciting, too, because we have refined our Development Plan that guides our work. Simply put, we have adopted these Core Beliefs: Lead with equity. Develop the whole child. Ensure active learning. Build partnerships. Prepare global citizens. Grow educators. Everything we do in our classrooms, every day, will be matched to these core beliefs.

Additionally, our practices will be guided by three key drivers--Does it Ensure Deep Learning? Do we Know Students? Does this Support the Whole Child? Over the course of the year, the Board of Education and the community will have the opportunity to learn about the actions we are taking, and review the measurable outcomes of this work.

Although all of our Core Beliefs are important, the commitment to Build Partnerships reminds us that our families and the community are important team members in fulfilling our mission for students. Mansfield's commitment to building a new elementary school is a grand undertaking which will benefit generations of students to come. The transition to a single school will be a major focus in our schools this year. We encourage our community to connect with our students' activities, offer feedback at our Board of Education meetings, and stay engaged with our new school building progress in 2021-22. As you are likely to hear echoing in the halls of our schools at the beginning of school, Happy New Year to our staff, our families and our students.

Our Mission:

It is the mission of the Mansfield Public Schools, in partnership with the Mansfield community, to ensure that each and every child develops the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for civic engagement and personal excellence in learning, life, and work within our local and global community.

Watch Our School Grow ! New Elementary School Construction on Schedule.

From the time six young Mansfield students put their oversized shovels in the ground on June 24 at the official groundbreaking ceremony for Mansfield's new elementary school, site preparation and foundation work has progressed briskly around the present Southeast School.

When you drive past Southeast School you can see walls beginning to emerge from behind the construction fencing that circles the site. The school project is divided into three sections that are being built simultaneously. Retaining walls and foundation preparation will be complete and steel will begin to be put in place in early October. In anticipation of supply chain delays, the project managers have ordered some materials in advance of normal schedules to help ensure they are on-site when they are needed.

The project is on schedule so students can start school in early September 2022.



At the groundbreaking ceremony in June, school leaders announced that community members and students can watch the new school emerge from the site—literally. A live web-cam has been installed on the roof of Southeast School which runs live day and night. Watch the construction progress anytime through this link on the town and school website:

mansfieldct.gov/2178/Watch-our-School-Grow

Students' Work Featured in Exhibit by National Museum of American History

Mansfield Board of Education
4 South Eagleville Road
Storrs, CT 06268-9983



Several students from Mansfield Middle School submitted History Day projects that were advanced from state- to national-level competition.

Advancing to the national level with a History Day project is an incredible achievement. But three students from Mansfield received an additional honor: their project was featured in the National Museum of American History's Virtual Exhibit Showcase.

Sylvia Halbrooks, Simonne Thibeault and Amanda Zadnik of Mansfield Middle School represented Connecticut with their project, "Mark Twain and Imperialism: Exposing the American Eagle's Talons in the Philippines" for the National Museum of American History Virtual Showcase this summer. Only 51 exhibits from across the country were featured.

Several Mansfield Middle School students qualified for nationals and submitted their projects for judging. Sophia Caneira of Mansfield Middle School earned fifth place, Junior Papers, for her project, "Letters for Understanding: Communication during the Cuban Missile Crisis."

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Mansfield Public Schools

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Superintendent of Schools

Kelly Lyman

District Central Office, 4 South Eagleville Road, Storrs, CT 06268

860-429-3350 mboesupt@mansfieldct.org

