



Encouraging Global Citizenship Through Sustainable Practices and Learning

Mansfield Schools students and staff live our Core Beliefs every day, and among these beliefs is Prepare Global Citizens. From the classroom to the



lunchroom, students and staff have been incorporating learning practices that expand understanding of what it means to learn, apply concepts and serve the world beyond school walls.

In early November, the Grade 4 Eco Team worked closely with the Food Services Director, cafeteria staff and the Town's Recycling Coordinator to celebrate a Plastic-Free Lunch Day. Staff eliminated

plastics from the service line, and served whole fruits or portions in waxed paper bags. The kitchens have also resumed using washable serving trays and silverware. Students on the Eco Team helped promote the concept among their friends, and brainstormed ways to suggest families cut back on plastic in students' lunch boxes. Teachers Jen Zugarazo and Michelle Mather recruited the team members, a strategy they learned on their trip to Denmark this summer studying sustainability strategies as Fund for Teachers scholars.

This culture of sustainability as global citizenship has been a subject throughout the past year in the district. Enrichment and Science staff members have themselves become students of the emerging net-zero Mansfield Elementary School, learning about concepts such as storm water runoff and geothermal

(See GLOBAL CITIZENS pg. 5)

Mansfield's Teacher of the Year Kate Harbec Honored as a State Semi-Finalist

Kate Harbec, grade 2 teacher at Mansfield Elementary School, was celebrated by her peers and the Board of Education this school year as the 2023 Mansfield Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Harbec has taught for 15 years, including 13 years at Mansfield Public Schools. At the former Vinton Elementary School, Mrs. Harbec was a member of the Leadership Team and the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee, is a Little League coach, and is well-loved by her peers, students and families.

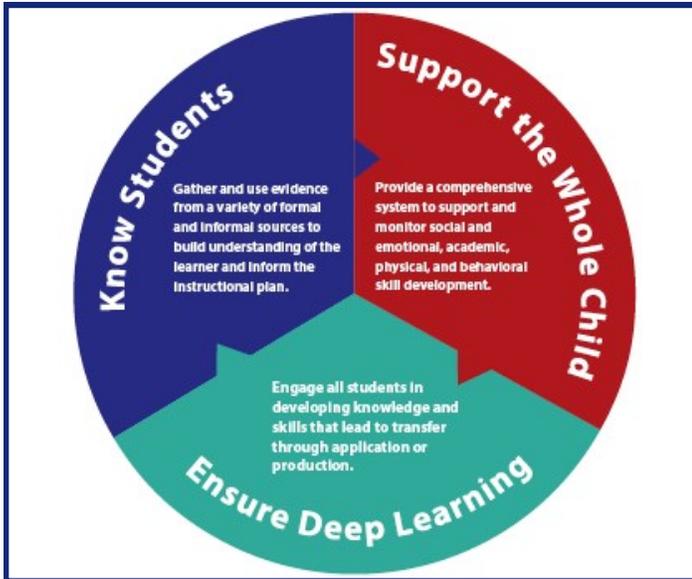
For the third consecutive year, the Mansfield Teacher of the Year was selected among the top ten semi-finalists in the state, too. Mrs. Harbec, like Kim King in 2022 and Ashley Rancourt in 2021, was named among the top teachers in the state's program for Teacher of the Year. She was honored as a semi-finalist by the Connecticut Department of Education at a ceremony in Hartford in November.

(See TEACHER pg. 4)



Mansfield Teacher of the Year Kate Harbec greets her grade 2 students on the first day of school.

Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences to Grow Skills and Competencies



Mansfield Public Schools is committed to making conscious and intentional efforts to ensure that every child has equitable opportunities to engage in deep learning experiences. All students need intellectually challenging tasks that allow them to apply and transfer what they learn in school to the real world.

Candace Morell, in her new role as Director of Teaching and Learning, supports the work of teachers through professional learning and curriculum development. With a focus on our Key Drivers, *Know Students~Support the Whole Child~Ensure Deep Learning*, our teachers are working to create meaningful learning experiences that grow the skills and competencies of our students enabling them to be problem solvers, active community members and good stewards of a sustainable world.



Students at Mansfield Middle School in the Technology Education classroom are learning how to program autonomous drones to navigate obstacle courses that they designed.

The task illuminates the Mansfield vision of 21st century learning that requires students to actively apply concepts to new challenges. While this experience may include countless hours of trial and error, the final success of the mission makes it all worth it!

Veterans Honored at Mansfield Middle School

Mansfield Middle School (MMS) hosted a ceremony on Veterans Day and 21 guests attended the celebration. The MMS Concert Choir, Orchestra and Concert Band all performed. For the Service Medley, the



veterans were invited to stand and be recognized during the song that represented their branch of the service. Featured speakers were E5, 2nd Class Petty Officer Gary Drew and CW3 Kathryn Niemasik, USA Retired, both of whom had worked at the middle school. Each veteran received a key chain fabricated in Technology Education class, as well as a Red Cross War Cake baked by Life Consumer Science students. Before the ceremony, the MMS Student Council hosted the invited guests at a breakfast.

Middle School Leadership is Committed to Continued Student-Centered Focus

With the appointment of Candace Morell as Director of Teaching and Learning for the district early this summer, a new leadership team is shaping the future of Mansfield Middle School (MMS).

Larry Barlow, who served as Assistant Principal at MMS for eight years, was selected to lead the middle school as Principal in August. Larry was chosen from a robust pool of qualified candidates. According to Superintendent Peter Dart, “Larry is a talented educator who is passionate and advocates for strong middle school experiences that support 21st century learning.

“His service as the Assistant Principal coupled with the multiple district leadership roles he has supported, including TEAM District Facilitator, Diversity-Equity-Inclusion Team, Social Studies Curriculum Team Chair, and Vice Chair of Mansfield’s Youth Services Advisory Board, makes him an outstanding candidate who will effectively lead Mansfield Middle School,” says Superintendent Dart.



Mansfield Middle School’s new Principal Larry Barlow helps students navigate their locker combinations on the first day of school. A familiar face to MMS, Larry served as Assistant Principal for eight years.



New Mansfield Middle School Assistant Principal Danielle Vliet is introduced to the Board of Education by Superintendent Dart in October.

Joining Larry’s team in late October, Assistant Principal Danielle Vliet has a strong background in middle school education and leadership.

She has served as an Interim Assistant Principal, Instructional Technology Specialist, Athletic Director, and Social Studies Teacher in Ellington, CT.

Danielle has a BA in History and Adolescent Education from St. John Fisher University, a Masters in Educational Technology from Boise State University, and a 6th Year Certificate from Central Connecticut State University in Educational Leadership.

Local Food Advocate Leads School Food Services Initiatives



Food Services Director Maraiah Popoleski-Tilley leads students in a Local Apple Crunch Challenge.

Chef and Certified Dietitian Maraiah Popoleski-Tilley has joined the leadership team at Mansfield Public Schools as Director of Food Services. Maraiah has practiced food service management as well as nutrition counseling and education.

Maraiah understands the key role school meals play in Supporting the Whole Child, one of the district’s key drivers. Maraiah has

increased “from-scratch” cooking in the cafeterias, and sources local produce when possible. She is also working toward more sustainable kitchen and cafeteria practices with her staff, teachers and students. Maraiah is a graduate of Johnson & Wales University in Culinary Nutrition. For more information on her professional career, visit: **mans-**

Teacher of the Year (cont. from page 1)

In her winning application, Kate shared, “My goal for all of my students has always been to get to know them as individuals first, to then build up their confidence and to help seeing themselves in the books they read. In order to truly help students guide and own their learning, I have had to embrace flexibility and student choice.” She cited an example of students who chose to produce plays about the life in vernal pools instead of creating posters on the subject. “I discovered when there is a choice, students are much more willing to use their voice to showcase their learning.”



Kate Harbec was celebrated as Teacher of the Year at Convocation by the Mansfield learning community, by the Board of Education, and as a state semi-finalist by the Connecticut Department of Education in November.

At Convocation before the start of school, Kate celebrated her fellow teachers who have taught her own children here in Mansfield. “They come home as better humans each and every day, each and every year, because they spend their days here in Mansfield Public Schools. “Not only do Mansfield’s educators let our students know we believe in them, but we let them know

we love and care for them. Love is a tool we use day in and day out, letting our students and our colleagues know that ‘we are not alone, when we’re walking in the dark.’”

At the Board of Education meeting on October 13, Board of Education member Katherine Paulhus, Principal Lauren Rodriguez and young students via video all acknowledged Kate’s professionalism and devotion to student learning.

The common theme from her students’ video messages: Mrs. Harbec makes learning fun!

Corinne Bergeron Celebrated as Paraeducator of the Year

Corinne Bergeron, a paraeducator who has worked with kindergarten students for 17 of her 20 years, is known for her fierce advocacy for young students. Trained as an occupational therapist assistant, Corinne came to Southeast School and put her skills to work with some of Mansfield’s youngest elementary students, refining their fine motor skills while also building the foundations for reading and writing.



Paraeducator of the Year Corinne Bergeron has worked in Mansfield for 20 years, and advocates for her peers as leader of the union.

“On a daily basis I work individually with students. We read each word and book together. Often we have conversations about the book which leads them to make connections with their lives and their knowledge. It is a time when they get individual one-on-one attention, and they thrive on this!” she adds.

Corinne is also an advocate for her peers. As the leader of the Paraprofessionals Union for seven years, she challenges paraeducators to rise to the professional role. “We need to put the time and energy into promoting our profession. Here in Mansfield we are fortunate to be recognized for what we offer the district. That is not so in many districts,” she adds.

We congratulate Corinne for her devotion to supporting teachers and students in the classroom, applying that extra dose of love and experience that only comes with practice. “I believe in the role and the need for the paraeducator. I am still here after 20 years because I am invested in being part of the education of Mansfield’s children, and want to continue to add to my contributions,” she says.



A Message from the Board of Education

Mansfield students, families, staff, administrators—and yes, even the Board of Education—are watching with great excitement as the new school transforms before our eyes. If you have driven by it after dark in recent weeks, you can see the windows lit up and it makes it so real that we are close to moving in.

Supply hold-ups with key pieces of equipment and fittings plus other delays have pushed the original move-in date from August now into the new year. We know that this is extremely disappointing to our community. For four years our School Building Committee volunteers have monitored information on progress in twice-monthly meetings—what are the critical pathways to progress. Despite proactively trying to anticipate and prevent delays, not all has gone as scheduled.

Yet the commitment to ensuring the school is built right—to the specifications we outlined—has never wavered. Town officials from the Building and Housing Department and Fire Marshal’s Office, plus TSKP Architects are on-site almost daily approving each step of the progress. This is the checks and balances put in place with a major project—to catch and check construction details, especially in the last mile. The warmth of the sun-lit classrooms, the cafeteria that doubles as breakout space with floor-to-ceiling windows, the exterior learning and play spaces—this will be a school built for learning in a truly sustainable environment.

Mansfield Elementary School and district leaders are mapping out a comprehensive plan for our two elementary campuses to transition to one. As one Board of Education member pointed out, the *WOW!* factor will be palpable when young students begin to tour the building and attend school there, and orientation to this fabulous new space will take time. But what a fun time that will be!

Do we wish we were already in the school? Yes. But it is better for the building to be built right, with no cut corners. We urge your continued patience, and trust that process that school construction professionals employ to ensure our school is ready for 21st century learning and beyond. It will be worth the wait!

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.

Global Citizens *(continued from page 1)*

wells to include in their own teaching. Monitoring devices will capture the impact of the energy generation and usage within the school so students can closely study energy efficiency. The new school will be outfitted with electric vehicle charging stations, providing a convenient service to community members and staff.

array will generate enough electricity to power about one quarter of the school’s needs.

Practicing sustainability in our schools is not a new concept. Students have grown seeds in greenhouses and maintain school gardens. They also separate food scraps at lunch which the Town’s Recycling Coordinator collects and transports to the Transfer Station for composting each week. Data on school food waste composted has been collected since 1994.

When students practice Global Citizenship daily through sustainability practices like these, Mansfield youth understand that it’s a way of life worth living.



At Mansfield Middle School, an array of solar panels are now installed on the roof. The solar



Knowing Students
Supporting the Whole Child
Ensuring Deep Learning

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



Mansfield Middle School was awash in pink when these students organized a “Pink Out” for breast cancer awareness, raising \$500 in donations—a great example of emerging global citizens.

Important Dates

Dec. 6	Family Advisory Team meeting at MMS 6PM
Dec. 14	Middle School Winter Choral Concert 7PM
Dec. 26-Jan. 2	Winter Break
Jan. 3	Family Advisory Team meeting at MMS 6PM
Jan. 16	No School

Inside This Issue

- **Teacher of the Year Makes Learning Fun (pg. 1)**
- **Encouraging Global Citizenship (pg. 1)**
- **Learning Experiences Grow Skills (pg. 2)**
- **Veterans Honored at MMS Ceremony (pg. 2)**
- **New Middle School Leadership Team (pg. 3)**
- **Paraeducator of the Year Celebrated (pg. 4)**
- **Message from the Board of Education (pg. 5)**

Mansfield Public Schools

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