

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Dear MPS Families, Students, & Staff:

I hope you had a restful winter break and are ready for an exciting new year. As promised, I am writing to share our transition plan into the new Mansfield Elementary School building.

While we do not have the needed Certificate of Occupancy quite yet, we are now in the final phase of this project. As such, we are beginning the transition between construction and moving in. New furniture will start arriving next week and contractors are working on their final punch lists. Given the uncertainty of an exact completion date, we have made the decision to set April 18<sup>th</sup> as the opening date for students in Grades 2, 3, & 4 and April 19<sup>th</sup> for students in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, & Grade 1. The April dates will give us plenty of time to best prepare staff, students, and families while ensuring that the building is ready. Please see the included “Frequently Asked Questions” that provides more information about the elementary school project and transition plans that will begin in March.

I truly appreciate all the support and flexibility that has been required to complete this project while best supporting our students. Families and staff have had to adjust to mitigate the many challenges that were caused by the delays in this project. Yet, I assure you that the wait will be worth it as the new building will fulfill the vision of creating a sustainable, state-of-the-art school that supports 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning.

We are excited to invite you to be a part of our team that delivers on the promise that we made to our students to unite our schools into one amazing campus. I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming transition events that include campus walks and building tours. In the meantime, please visit our website to watch the MES “Video Visits” to learn about the new building and our elementary school:

<https://www.mansfieldct.gov/2375/Video-Visits-to-the-new-Mansfield-Elementary-School>

Sincerely,  
Peter Dart  
Superintendent of Schools



# Frequently Asked Questions about the Move-in to the New Mansfield Elementary School (MES)



## ***When will MES open?***

Students in Grades 2 through 4 at the Goodwin campus will be the first to start in the new building on Tuesday, April 18. Students in PreK through Grade 1 will start in the new building on Wednesday, April 19. Monday, April 17 will be a Professional Learning day for Elementary staff only (no school for elementary students; MMS will have a normal school day).

## ***My child is at the Vinton campus. Will they have school on the day when the upper grades at Goodwin move in?***

Yes. Students, PreK through Grade 1, will attend school on Tuesday April 18th at their current Vinton campus location.

## ***Why are there two opening dates?***

Just like with new restaurants, we wanted to create a “soft, staggered” opening that will help us make any needed adjustments and learn more about the building while students are present. Grades 2, 3 and 4 were chosen given that they are older and able to flex should we need to change procedures. They are also our school leaders and will help our younger students on their first day.

## ***What is taking so long?***

MES was scheduled to open on the first day of school in September 2022. There are many factors that contributed to the delay of this project including challenges with procurement, shipping, labor shortages, and the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the School Building Committee has had to address certain design and construction challenges that impeded timely progress.

## ***How are we supporting students during the transition?***

Students have been learning about the new building even since before the groundbreaking in June 2021. STEM classes have focused on the Net-Zero energy design and all students had a chance to visit the site last year, watch the construction equipment at work, and sign a construction beam that is in the building. Starting in September, all elementary students united under their new mascot, the MES Tiger! Morning announcements are video broadcasted to both MES campuses highlighting various student reporters and teachers in an effort to link both schools. Current 4th grade students have been working on becoming “Ambassadors” to help lead student and family tours. In March, students and their teachers will take a field trip to visit the building and campus. Classrooms will appropriately prepare students for the transition through discussions and ensure that they have a role. As one student shared, “We are like a family that is moving into a new house.”

## ***How are we supporting teachers during this transition?***

Administration and the Board of Education have made sure that our teachers and staff members are supported during the transition. The building project includes professional movers, so staff members can focus on preparing their own boxes of classroom materials for moving. The BOE approved an amended calendar that will build in additional professional development days before and after the move to provide time for teachers to unpack and set up their classrooms for learning. Please review the amended [District School 22-23 Calendar](#).

### ***Why do we need to move the February Professional Learning Date to April?***

The February Professional Learning date (Feb 17th) will now be a normal day of school for students and staff. If families have planned trips for this date, students will be excused from school. The new Professional Learning date is now scheduled for April 6th. Students will not be in school and staff will use this day for professional development and transition activities that will include both elementary and middle school staff. April 5th will be a district wide Early Dismissal day that will be used for professional learning and transition activities. See amended [District School 22-23 Calendar](#)

### ***Why not wait until September to move in?***

Our students and staff have been patiently waiting, and actively preparing, to move into the new net-zero school. Since the school will be suitable for occupancy in the next month or so, our school community is anxious to move in and enjoy the new learning environment as soon as possible.

Our Grade 4 students especially deserve to take ownership of this school, even for the final few months of the year, to experience all the systems they have been studying and serve as the school's "ambassadors" for students as well as the public visiting in the coming months. They have been preparing for this role for more than a year.

We believe that it will be best for students to move in with the classmates and teachers they are familiar with so that they all experience the change—and the excitement— together. To wait until September when students will be riding new bus routes, meeting new teachers and classmates PLUS a new school environment would be a tall transition for young elementary students.

An added bonus to moving in April—the world celebrates Earth Day in April. What a great time to move into and celebrate our new net-zero elementary school!

### ***How can I help?***

Families have already helped us in a tremendous way! Your support, patience, and flexibility have helped us support our students and staff while teaching in alternative locations and preparing for the transition. Please participate in the community tours and visits. Watch the "Video Visits" to the new building with your child at: <https://www.mansfieldct.gov/2375/Video-Visits-to-the-new-Mansfield-Elementary> And finally, the MES PTO has organized a family sign up should we need your help during the transition. Please visit the PTO website to learn more about the organization and send an email expressing your interest: <https://sites.google.com/mansfieldct.org/mespto/home>

### ***Can I visit the school before it opens?***

The district is already planning to lead tours for students and families of the campus and the interior spaces of the school.

An outdoor campus walk is scheduled for the weekend of March 18 and 19 between 10am and 2pm. Families will be invited to walk around the building and visit the playscape. A map with QR codes will help families learn more about the campus and building. Staff will be on site to answer questions.

We will also provide an opportunity for families to take a self-guided tour through the public interior spaces of the new school so that you can discover and experience the amazing features of this building. Tours will be scheduled for the week of March 27th from 5 to 7pm and will be organized so that all families have a chance to walk inside the school. More information will be shared at a later date.

### ***Will my child get to visit the school before it opens?***

Yes. During the month of March, elementary students will be enjoying field trips to the new MES building with their classroom teacher and classmates. This will provide a personal experience to help our young students to envision what the new building will be like so they know what to expect in April.

***Are there bathrooms that support gender-neutral students?***

Yes. There are private bathrooms conveniently located around the school that any student can choose to use as an alternative to the larger bathrooms located on each grade-level corridor.

***When will we get information about buses?***

Bus information will be provided to all families by the end of March.

***Will my child ride a different bus once the new school opens?***

Most students will ride the same bus that they are currently using. Times will be adjusted and some students will have to be reassigned to a new bus route.

***If I opt to drive my child, how will I drop off and pick up?***

While we encourage all families to use bus transportation, you can still drop off and pick up students from the new MES campus. You will receive more information on how to navigate the large lot for drop off and pick up as we approach the opening day.

***What are the school hours for the new building?***

The new MES school will use the following student times: School starts at 9:00 am and ends at 3:35 pm.

***Will there be a before and after school program for students on site?***

Yes. The same program that is supporting before and after school care now will continue in the new building. More information will be provided to families prior to the opening day.

***What will happen to the Vinton and Goodwin campuses once we move?***

The two school buildings are the property of the Town of Mansfield. The Town, with assistance from outside design and engineering professionals, has undertaken a master facilities visioning/planning process for all Town-owned buildings and campuses. The Goodwin and Vinton buildings are part of this in-depth planning and assessment process. The robust public engagement strategy being developed as part of the Town's ongoing facility planning work will include community listening sessions, surveys and additional means to ensure Mansfield residents have ample opportunity to provide valuable input with respect to how these facilities can be best used in the future.