



Mansfield Elementary School Opens to Support 21st Century Learning



Students grades PreK to 4 returned from their April break April 18 and 19 to their first day of school in the new Mansfield Elementary School (MES). The exuberant youngsters were greeted by school mascot, Thunder the Tiger, and cheering teachers as they bounded off their school buses to enter the new school, an event as exciting for many of them as exploring the new classrooms and common spaces.

As Connecticut's first new net-zero elementary school, MES features many attributes that ensure efficient energy use, but the school also gets high marks for its 21st century learning spaces. Although designed to accommodate 600 students, the school environment feels like small, cozy sections where students are welcomed with a grade-specific color palette, combined with warm wood tones on the ceilings, fixtures, and furnishings. The floor-to-ceiling windows bring the outside in, and the natural light and warmth adds to the spaces. A variety of child-friendly seating options and work surfaces accommodate many learning styles, and community

MMS Leader Larry Barlow Named as State's First Year Principal of the Year

The Connecticut Association of Schools (CASS) has named Mansfield Middle School (MMS) Principal Larry Barlow as recipient of the William Cieslukowski First Year Principal Award for 2023. Mr. Barlow has led MMS as Principal since August after serving as Assistant Principal for eight years.

The award was created in honor of William Cieslukowski, a dedicated school principal and former president of the Elementary & Middle School Principals of Connecticut, and recognizes a first year elementary, middle and high school principal who have had a positive impact on their school or school district. Recipients who demonstrate exemplary instructional and organizational leadership, a



**Mansfield Middle School
Principal Larry Barlow**

willingness to take risks, and the ability to overcome adversity are nominated by their school administration.

Congratulations to Mr. Barlow for receiving this coveted state honor. This award recognizes his leadership, and shines a bright light on the Mansfield Public School district.

breakout spaces adjacent to each grade-level pod invite collaborative work in small groups.

A well-orchestrated orientation to the school was rolled out for staff members, students, and families

(See NEW MES pg. 2)

Bike Mansfield Partners with MES to Cultivate a Love for Safe Bicycling

Local non-profit Bike Mansfield is partnering with Mansfield Public Schools to bring bicycling into the physical education instruction program for grade 4 students. Bike Mansfield volunteers are working to raise \$28,000 toward purchasing bicycles, helmets, a storage trailer, and other materials for the school. Mansfield is a nationally designated Bicycle Friendly Community.

BikeWalkCT has developed a complete training program and manual for teachers. In working toward

this goal, Bike Mansfield set up a fundraising effort, and is nearly halfway to the goal already thanks to matching funds from Sustainable CT.

Building Partnerships is a Core Belief of Mansfield Public Schools, and this project demonstrates the true value of community support.



If you want to donate to this initiative to help children to learn to enjoy safe bike riding, please visit the district's website: mansfieldct.gov/mboe

New MES Welcomes Students *(cont. from page 1)*

starting in February when the Town took possession of the substantially completed building. Students traveled with their class and teachers on field trips to preview the new spaces, classrooms and playgrounds. Families were then invited to tour with their children.

The first community members to see the new school prior to move-in were the neighbors from adjoining properties who had watched the school grow from below the ground up. Superintendent Dart led Friday afternoon tours for other residents throughout May, and the school hosted an Open House Celebration and Ribbon Cutting June 9 and 10.



Locally produced Mountain Dairy milk from dispensers has replaced cartons at MES to reduce waste.

The benefits of the net-zero design will be experienced throughout the year, and Town building staff are refining the sophisticated technical systems that make the energy-generation efficient. Geo-thermal wells heat and cool the school, and more than 700 solar panels capture the sun's rays. Even the kitchen appliances function without fossil fuels. To minimize waste, students use reusable trays and cups, and staff borrow washable to-go containers. Milk is poured from dispensers filled with local milk from Mansfield's own Mountain Dairy, and students sort their food waste from trash at the end of each meal. The school is a learning center for earth-friendly practices.

Mansfield has made a tremendous investment in its youngest citizens by creating such a forward-designed facility. Our community will reap the net-zero energy benefits, and the children will thrive in a student-centered learning environment.

Summer Learning for Students and Staff: Mastering Skills for a New Year

Students to Focus on STEM Mastery

Mansfield Elementary School will offer a Summer Learning Experience for invited students to bolster academic skills. This program will also offer opportunities for hands-on Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) learning experiences.

Additionally, the program will partner with the Mansfield Public Library to share theme-based experiences on the popular child-pleasing topics of the jungle and outer space. This program will take place at the new Mansfield Elementary School from July 10 through August 3.

Growing Educators: Learning New Skills

Mansfield Public Schools (MPS) maintains an ongoing commitment to supporting educator growth. Grounded in one of our Core Beliefs, Grow Educators, MPS encourages teachers to seek out learning experiences that ignite passion while also growing their personal skill and expertise that impacts students in positive ways. As part of this ongoing commitment, the school district provides to teaching staff several opportunities for summer learning through our Mansfield Public Schools Summer Institutes.

The *Foundations Institute* is designed to support the launch of the *Foundations Program* in grades K to 3. A second opportunity, *The Universal Design for Learning Institute*, will provide teachers time to immerse themselves in understanding the purpose and application of the *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) framework to unit design. Each session supports teachers in doing their best work for our students.

In addition to summer institutes, MPS supports ongoing curriculum refinement through our Summer Curriculum Work program. This year, teaching teams will be supported with the time, tools and resources to make revisions that enhance the learning experiences for our MPS students.

This spring the school district has hired a number of talented new certified staff to fill open positions that have occurred due to teacher retirements. In August, all new MPS certified staff will attend a two-day



Exposure to STEM projects provides authentic learning opportunities in Mansfield Elementary and Middle Schools.

onboarding seminar. The focus of this seminar will be to ensure that all new certified staff have the tools and information necessary to support their success as they begin their work teaching students in Mansfield.

All of these opportunities are intended to meet the professional learning needs of teaching staff, fulfilling the promise that Mansfield is Your Place to Grow!



MES teaching staff meet regularly to collaborate on best grade-level practices and how to meet students' needs

Award-Winning Writers Recognized for Outstanding Work



Connecticut Writing Project Winners

Each year The Connecticut Writing Project recognizes and publishes outstanding student work. This year seven grade 8 students submitted their artwork and creative writing to the project. Grace Hanzlik won a platinum award for her artwork, "The Collector." Two students won silver awards including Sonya Harvel for her nonfiction piece called, "The Effect of Repatriation on Children," and Ellie Soares for her poem, "Trustworthy." Honorable mentions were earned by Brynn Cartier for her poem, "Shoes," Ella Gan for her poem, "From the 18th Floor," Madeline Martin for her fiction, "The Shattered Apartment," and Maggie Owen for her poem, "The Essence of Life." These students attended The University of Connecticut's Student Writers Celebration at Jorgensen Auditorium.

Scholastic Art and Writing Awards

The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards recognize student work that exhibits outstanding merit in originality, technical skill, and the emergence of personal voice and vision. Ella Gan won a gold key for her short story, "Who is the most beautiful in the world?" She also advanced to the national competition and earned a national silver medal.

Irene Rossi won a gold key for her free verse poem, "Ceramic Figure." Alice Han took home three prizes: honorable mention for the poems, "Don't" and "Princess," and a silver key for the flash fiction piece, "Words From the End." Oliver Kravet earned a silver key for his science fiction/fantasy piece, "American Plutocracy."

Congratulations to these amazing young writers!

Community Invited to Provide Input on New Principal Search

Mansfield Elementary School Principal Lauren Rodriguez announced in late May that she will be leaving the district at the end of the school year.

Superintendent Peter Dart shared the news with the community, "For the past two years, Lauren has tirelessly led our efforts to consolidate three elementary schools and open a brand new net-zero building. She has effectively led district professional learning and developed a strong community of care-givers."

Ms Rodriguez was recognized in 2021 as the UConn Neag School of Education Outstanding Administrator, and recently completed the Executive Leadership Program at the University of Connecticut. She has served as Principal here in Mansfield for 10 years, and Southeast School received four distinguished school awards under her leadership.



Superintendent Dart announced that a survey has been launched to begin soliciting community input about the important qualities for consideration in searching for a new elementary school principal. Participation in the survey is open to all community members, staff, and students, and the link is available through the district's website Home page: Mansfieldct.gov/mboe





Knowing Students
Supporting the Whole Child
Ensuring Deep Learning

A Message from the Board of Education

Throughout this year, the Board of Education has received updates from school staff and administrators providing evidence about how Mansfield Public Schools supports the whole child, knows students, and ensures deep learning. In order to sustain these key drivers and

uphold our Core Beliefs, the district carefully invests its resources of time, talent, and budget. Over the past few school years, federal and state funding has provided a considerable boost to school districts like ours through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to ensure students' needs were met during the COVID crisis.

Research shows that student learning was interrupted by this challenging period, and social and emotional needs among children are magnified. Therefore, it is critical to our students' success that, as a community, we step in and ensure the appropriate resources are available. The district's 2023-24 budget includes adding behavioral technicians to support classroom teachers, and hiring a teacher with specialized skills to support English language learners. In the coming summer, staff will attend learning sessions to develop their skills to meet the needs of their students. These are important investments. All of these efforts will make a significant impact on supporting students and ensuring the learning outcomes our community values. Thank you!

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.

District Strives to Lead with Equity



Lead with Equity is one of the district's six Core Beliefs, and recognizing the diverse needs and beliefs of students has been a priority within the Mansfield Public School district this year. With input from the staff

and community Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) team, which has met through the year, the district implemented a DEI Calendar resource. The calendar summarizes those holidays, celebrations and historic dates that are important to families within the Mansfield community. It is available for staff as a teaching tool, and to community members who want to expand their understanding of world cultures. (Find it on our website under Calendars.)

Throughout the year, school staff were also encouraged to tap into Language Line when communicating with families. There are 28 home languages spoken in Mansfield, so it can be challenging for families to understand all school communications. This resource provides access to interpretation for any language by telephone. It can be a terrific tool

for family-school meetings and in working through questions.

An equitable approach to education means striving to provide each student what they need to succeed, and the district will continue to work to lead with equity.



Mansfield Middle School Band students give a cheer for music. After performing on May 10 at their spring concert, they began to practice marching for their appearance in the Memorial Day parade and ceremony on May 29.



Knowing Students
Supporting the Whole Child
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Mansfield Board of Education
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Mansfield Middle School grade 7 students Abida Tabarssi (shown above), Charlotte Fuerst, Lily Tinnel, and Raha Esmaili visited Mansfield Elementary School first graders to read original children’s literature stories they created and illustrated.

Important Dates

June 10	MES Open House Celebration
June 14	Grade 4 Promotion Ceremony, MES
June 16	Grade 8 Promotion Ceremony, MMS
June 19	School Ends for PreK Students
June 20	School Ends for K-8 Students—early dismissal
July 10-Aug 3	Summer School

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Mansfield Public Schools

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