

District Development Plan

2024-2025

A photograph of a man in a dark green blazer, white shirt, and blue tie pointing at a whiteboard. A woman with braided hair, wearing a white t-shirt with a blue and yellow graphic of a skeleton, a crescent moon, and flowers, is looking at the whiteboard. The background is a blurred office or classroom setting.

MANSFIELD
CONNECTICUT

Public Schools



Introduction to Development Plan

Mansfield Public Schools created the Development Plan in the spring of 2021 with the Board of Education and District Leadership Team with input from staff, students, and community members. This five-year strategic plan is our North Star as we navigate the work that best supports our students. The plan is built on the foundation of our district's Mission and six Core Beliefs that describe the values and desires of the community for its children. It is the responsibility of all members of the Mansfield Public Schools community to make these Core Beliefs actionable.

Four Key Drivers, or strategies, ensure that we are mindful as we integrate the Core Beliefs throughout our work. For example, equity is a thread in all aspects of our work. Each driver (Know Students, Support the Whole Child, Ensure Deep Learning, and System Coherence) includes a set of Actions and Indicators. The Actions define the steps to be taken to bring the Core Beliefs to life while the Indicators describe the outcomes to be achieved as a result of the Actions. At the start of each school year, schools, departments, teachers, paraeducators, and leaders develop goals and professional learning plans that align to the Key Drivers and Core Beliefs. To assess the fulfillment of the commitment to our students and community, Reports of Progress are presented to the Board of Education during the course of the academic year. The Mansfield community holds the quality of its education to a high standard. This Development Plan guides the district's actions in fulfilling its mission for "each and every child."

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.



Core Beliefs



Lead with equity. We believe that children must be supported to learn and develop in a safe, antiracist environment free from discrimination, bias, and prejudice against all people where conscious efforts and intentional actions ensure equitable opportunities.



Develop the whole child. We believe schools have an obligation to teach academic and social skills while nurturing the emotional, physical and behavioral development of all children.



Ensure active learning. We believe students learn best when they engage in joy-filled, empowering, intellectually challenging, and personalized experiences that deepen understanding of the world while building academic and social-emotional skills.



Build partnerships. We believe engaging families and the community as equal partners is necessary to fulfill the mission and vision of Mansfield Public Schools.



Prepare global citizens. We believe schools must develop young people to be stewards of their community, nation, and the larger world around them by instilling the skills needed to contribute to a peaceful society and sustainable world.



Grow educators. We believe that providing an environment that allows for inquiry, supports risk taking, provides for continuous learning, and attends to the whole person is as important for educators as it is for students.

Lead with **EQUITY**

Mansfield Public Schools continues to make our Core Beliefs actionable. This past year, a team of Mansfield Elementary School (MES) teachers worked with an equity coach while Mansfield Middle School (MMS) Teacher Leaders shared Joe Feldman's book, *Grading for Equity*. Culturally responsive teaching is adaptive work within our classroom practices that ensures materials represent our diversity and establishes a clear pathway for all students to have enriching experiences such as the arts, STEM robotics, and physical education. During the past year, Grade 8 students continued to participate in the Witness Stone Project where they used primary resources to research people who were enslaved in Mansfield. Elementary school students celebrated cultural events that included the Lunar New Year and Black History Month. The district supported the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Team, a committee composed of community members and staff, to unpack challenges, share successes, and hold the district accountable to ensure that "each and every child" has opportunity and access. School calendars reflect the diversity of our community by acknowledging days that have been traditionally ignored. Translation technology and documents remove barriers so that multilingual families can support their children. Academically, we ensure that there are equitable pathways and supports for all students through multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and advanced coursework. Deep learning activities focus on using key Portrait of the Graduate skills such as critical thinking and collaboration with *low floor, high ceiling* tasks that allow all learners access and opportunity. Finally, the Board of Education adopted a transformative Diversifying Workforce Plan that has helped increase the diversity of Mansfield Public School staff and teachers by more than 4%. We also have tripled the number of multilingual staff members who support families who speak Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic, Bosnian, and more. As part of our effort to make sure our students and families see themselves in our staff, Mansfield hosted a regional Educators of Color event that supported a growing professional community in our area.



Anthea Grotton, Mansfield's 2025 Teacher of the Year, shares that she did not see teachers who looked like her when she was growing up. Inspired by her father who tutored dozens of city youth, she recognized that teaching "... is what I want to do. I want to make a difference in students' lives. I have worked every year to improve not only my teaching practices but also to meet my students and families where they are, without judgment, and to love, teach, and support them." As an advocate for equity, Anthea leads Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion work within her own hometown and in the district, and co-chairs the newly organized Educators of Color



collaboration in the region. She invests time in Mansfield Elementary's CARE Team to help meet families' needs. Anthea shares, "I believe all students should be represented in their schools, and that their classrooms should not only look like them but also the world around them."

Develop the whole **CHILD.**

Mansfield Public Schools has expanded and deepened its commitment to developing the whole child. Both schools have a full complement of mental health/wellness professionals that include social workers, school psychologists, behavior technicians, and support services so that we meet the needs of all learners. Staff continues to reach out to families, conduct home visits, and provide wrap-around services through community partnerships. Our Food Services Director and staff have expanded menu offerings that include local ingredients and scratch cooking. Establishing a positive climate, enriched with our ongoing implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), acknowledges that social/emotional development and learning is an important part of our work. Through robust programming, students continue to have access to enriching experiences that include the Grade 4 Biking Program, Lego Lab, athletic teams, and an extensive after school program that includes transportation home for middle school students. Developing the whole child means that we need to support emerging readers and mathematicians with strong foundational skills while keeping classrooms joyful and student centered. Multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) ensures that there are nested, leveled supports to help all students attain key skills while allowing all students to experience thematic projects, field trips, and a strong catalog of related arts classes. More than 85% of our students participate in instrumental, strings, choral, or theatrical performances.



One day Mansfield Middle School student Aviv casually approached Food Services Director Chef Maraiah and cafeteria manager Kim and shared that she makes falafel for her family at home. Can we make my recipe to serve here in the cafeteria, she asked. Staff coordinated schedules so Aviv could prepare the dish with Chef Maraiah using the ingredients her recipe specified, all of which were readily available in a school kitchen. Falafel, a middle eastern staple, is fashioned from a chickpea base enriched with vegetables, garlic, onion, fresh herbs, and Mediterranean spices. After scaling up the recipe to feed a school instead of a family, Aviv's Falafel was added to the menu at MES, MMS and E.O. Smith High School. Aviv helped to produce a promotional video to introduce falafel to other students. Chef Maraiah introduced the recipe to other chefs through the Chef Anne Foundation, and now Aviv's Falafel is served as far away as Berkeley, CA. Developing the whole child requires us to know our students and give them ownership and voice within our district.



Ensure **ACTIVE** learning.

Mansfield Public Schools continues to uphold the Core Belief that we must ensure active learning for all students. The elementary school held a summer professional learning institute for staff focused on play-based learning. Hands-on, minds-on instruction are key components of our student-centered instruction. Our young scholars participate in enriching experiences with an end-of-year celebration and field experience that included studying and kayaking Mansfield Hollow with representatives of Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Army Corps of Engineers, and New England Science & Sailing staff, hiking with DEEP and Joshua's Trust staff, and creating a hallway exhibit of river organisms and ecosystems from their studies of the Connecticut River. Students across grade levels and subject areas used virtual reality technology to extend their understanding of concepts and places. Middle school Grade 7 students celebrate diversity and hands-on learning through the annual World Fair that includes cooking, games, and crafts. In a collaborative endeavor, our middle school writers created children's books and visited Kindergarten classrooms to share their books and work with our young scholars. The middle school redesigned the first day of school to focus on relationships, team building, and belonging. All students continue to set goals, reflect, curate portfolios, and share their learning during Student-Led Conversations and Celebrations in March. Grade 8 students participate in Model Congress, focusing on human rights issues, that simulate state and national governance. Technology complements instruction and gives students real-world, hands-on tools and experiences that allows them to learn about coding, presenting information, communicating, and researching.



A middle school student may not believe they have influence on the world around them until they experience it themselves. Providing an authentic, real-world challenge to demonstrate the impact of their work is a powerful learning tool. When asked to create a storybook for a very discerning audience – Kindergarteners at Mansfield Elementary School – young Grade 7 writers must think hard about their audience. What literary skills and craft can one use to draw in a young, emerging reader? Using a writer's workshop model that includes peer reviews, editing, and multiple drafts, middle school students published stories that were ready for new eyes. In a partnership between schools and grade levels, 7th graders boarded a bus and shared their stories, one on one, with some of our youngest readers. Learning to read is hard work, yet the power of pairing students



with a middle school friend and mentor makes literacy and writing fun. This transformative experience connects our kids, teachers, and schools and highlights another example of active learning that is authentic, rich, and meaningful to students.

Build PARTNERSHIPS.

Mansfield Public Schools believes that our families are full, equal, and equitable partners that support our children. Student-led conferences engage families in student progress. More than 95% of our families attend these student-led conversations and celebrations. Families participate in a variety of events that help us strengthen the school-home-community connection. Family and community members serve on the Board of Education, Parent-Teacher Organizations (MES PTO and MMS Association), Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Advisory Team, Wellness Committee, as well as serve on various ad hoc groups that include the Minimum Age Kindergarten Task Force. Mansfield leverages our university partnerships with the University of Connecticut and Eastern Connecticut State University to support work in social/emotional learning, equity, and reading. Local community organization Bike Mansfield partnered with MPS and Eastern Highlands Health District to ensure that every Grade 4 student knows how to safely ride a bike, plus each child was given a bike helmet to keep and use. We also celebrate a long-standing international relationship through the middle school's German Exchange Program that has hosted students for 30 years.



Mansfield students benefit from partnerships the district cultivates beyond the school walls. Local non-profit Bike Mansfield volunteers, along with tenacious school staff, worked to fulfill a vision to provide bicycle instruction to every Grade 4 student at MES as part of the physical education curriculum. Bike Mansfield raised \$28,000 toward purchasing bicycles, signage, and other teaching materials for the school in cooperation with Sustainable CT. Eastern Highlands Health District provided the helmets for each child to keep as their own. Mansfield Public Schools helped fund the storage trailer, and created the block of time in the spring for Bike Week. Supported by community volunteers and staff, students learned the rules of riding, how to change a flat tire, and how to ride in a group. Some had never ridden a bicycle before this experience and became proficient, excited new riders. Successfully



completing their first neighborhood ride, students returned confident, and empowered to travel under their own power. This strong, equal partnership between stakeholders who had vision, provides just another example of the great Mansfield community.

Prepare **GLOBAL** citizens.

Service is a common thread embedded in many project/problem-based learning units such as Grade 3 studying the ways in which the Connecticut River influenced commerce or the in-depth study in Grade 6 of water quality's impact on macroinvertebrate populations at Bicentennial Pond. These experiences allow our students to engage in studying how human activities affect the world around them. Students actively participate in civic and school-based groups that plan school events. Grade 8 students participate in Model Congress and visit the State Capitol and Legislative Office Buildings in Hartford. MMS has an active Student Council that supports student voice in school-wide activities and represents Mansfield at the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) student leadership conference. There are 29 different languages spoken within the district that helps us recognize the diversity within our own community and the world. The district provides a rich world language program that starts in second grade and includes middle school offerings such as French, Spanish, and Latin. The middle school continues to participate in a unique German Exchange program that provides the opportunity for Grades 7 and 8 students to participate in travel and the hosting of German students. Sustainability is a common practice that is evident throughout our buildings. Both schools benefit from solar panels and energy dashboards. All students participate in composting within our cafeterias. Meals use locally sourced ingredients and are served on reusable trays. Participation in field studies within and beyond our community are an important part of instruction. The elementary school, adjacent to Mansfield Hollow State Park, enjoys the opportunities for students to hike, cross-country ski, and kayak there. Mansfield Middle School uses nearby Schoolhouse Brook Park for cross-country running, art classes, and nature studies.



Personal experiences are powerful, and the best way to expand perspective on our world. For 30 years, Mansfield Middle School has engaged in a vibrant student exchange with Sarstedt, located in north central Germany. MMS welcomes a group of young students every other year who enrich the school community with their language, culture, and shared family experiences. Our school is proud to show off our community and share time in the classroom, and host trips to New York City, and across New England. Any MMS family can offer to host these students during their three-week stay. The next year, representatives from MMS fly to meet the families of these German friends. They travel to big cities like Berlin and Hamburg, see castles, explore



European history, and enjoy family life there. The entire school community benefits from this experience, a glimpse into global citizenship. As one MMS family shared, "This was truly an amazing experience for all the middle school students, even those who were not directly involved as a home host or school host. My daughter built a strong bond with her German family/friends and is inspired to learn German as she enters E.O. Smith High School."

Grow EDUCATORS.

As a teaching-learning community, our Core Belief that calls us to grow educators is paramount. All MPS staff members are educators and leaders of learning. As a district, we endeavor to grow and support all staff members through robust and timely professional learning and development. Mansfield's CT TEAM program provides support to all beginning teachers and provides them with an experienced mentor while the district ensures that they participate in various coaching cycles that support mathematics, reading, and the use of educational technologies. As part of Mansfield's Educator Evaluation Plan, which has become a state model program, teachers and administrators set goals and work collaboratively with colleagues who help them expand their knowledge and practices. There are differentiated and self-selected supports for all that include professional development cycles and instructional coaching. Teachers interested in leadership development are encouraged to participate in various opportunities to expand their sphere of influence in their school, district and beyond. Well over 50% of our educators participated in summer learning experiences and both schools use shared decision-making with teacher leadership teams to support the work of their building.



The best educators are driven to develop and improve their own professional practices. Mansfield's team of Teacher Leaders are closely engaged with district and school administrators in how to enhance our classroom practices to push our district forward. Teacher Leaders are often interested in taking on additional responsibilities as they advance within their profession as educators. Mansfield's open-minded Teacher Leaders share the vision, but are also ready to do the work it takes to progress. Their expertise and openness to share with colleagues expedites communication and lowers the anxiety of trying something new. Mansfield continues to embrace innovation

and risk-taking that helps to create a "green light" culture for educators that help us answer big questions such as, How can we revise report cards to reflect how we evaluate students? How do we engage students in their own progress? Teacher Leaders at each building provide a structure to help our small district tackle big ideas as well as grow cohorts of teachers who are interested in educational leadership that expand their sphere of influence beyond the classroom. Tapping into partnerships across schools, and enhanced by university and community resources, Teacher Leaders strive for deeper learning and higher expectations.



Portrait of the Graduate

The Mansfield Public School student develops a love of learning rooted in a strong academic foundation. Students grow within a safe and respectful environment while contributing to the local and global community. This educational journey encourages risk taking, builds perseverance and resiliency, and celebrates individual growth. Skills and dispositions across five elements— the 5 C's— interact with each other and with content standards to support the development of a learner prepared to face future learning and career challenges.

CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

Students recognize their role and responsibility in the larger world seeking understanding of others while demonstrating empathy and respect. They actively contribute to their community for the benefit of all. Students will:

- Build appreciation for diverse cultures and beliefs present in our global society
- Develop elements of strong character such as sound decision making that considers the effect on many
- Demonstrate respect and responsibility for self, others, and the environment
- Strive to establish equity, increase diversity, and promote inclusion of all people

COMMUNICATION

Students deliver coherent, organized messages through a variety of mediums tailoring their communication to the intended purpose and audience. Students will:

- Connect and share ideas with others
- Engage in active listening and respectful discourse
- Inform, influence, motivate, or entertain

COLLABORATION

Students demonstrate the ability to interact within a group to set and achieve common goals. Students will:

- Engage with others
- Participate in thoughtful discussions
- Analyze and reflect on ideas shared by others
- Respect and accept diverse perspectives
- Work toward consensus

CREATIVITY

Students exhibit originality, imagination, and inventiveness. Through the creative process, students engage in productive struggle and build resilience as they persevere to reach intended goals. Students will:

- Engage in imaginative thinking
- Exhibit divergent and flexible thinking when solving problems
- Put new ideas into practice

CRITICAL THINKING

Students engage in analysis, evaluation, and reflection to build understanding, solve problems, and identify alternative solutions. Students will:

- Ask meaningful questions
- Use prior knowledge to analyze and understand
- Synthesize information from multiple points of view
- Describe one's thought process and justify position/decision



Key Drivers

Key Drivers, or strategies, to advance the work of the Development Plan are defined above. The Key Drivers provide focus and build coherence across multiple schools and departments. Actions and Indicators linked back to the Core Beliefs have been developed for each Key Driver as described on the following pages. Annually, a Report of Progress for each Key Driver will be provided to the Board of Education at a public meeting.



Know Students

Gather and use evidence from a variety of formal and informal sources to build understanding of the learner and inform the instructional plan.

Actions

- Develop strategies to support knowing the student that includes their lived experience, academic performance, social and emotional development, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and agency.



- Implement collaborative structures, practices, and professional learning that develops the capacity of educators to use data and evidence to understand student performance and support instructional planning.



- Analyze student performance data and evidence across multiple grades and content areas using district data systems.



- Develop multiple ways to engage families that deepen our ability to know our students and build partnerships.



Indicators

- Performance on state and local academic assessments
- Student attendance
- Demographics
- Enrollment
- Student, Family, and Staff Climate/Connectedness Survey results
- Evidence of ongoing collaborative data analysis of student performance using student work, artifacts, reflections, exhibitions, and data systems

CORE BELIEFS



Lead with equity.



Develop the whole child.



Ensure active learning.



Build partnerships.



Prepare global citizens.



Grow educators.



Support the Whole Child

Provide a comprehensive system to support and monitor social and emotional, academic, physical, and behavioral skill development.

Actions

- Develop and implement Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for academic, behavioral, and social and emotional skills.
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- Integrate social and emotional learning throughout the school day.
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- Ensure equitable opportunities and access to enriching art, physical education, and wellness programs that are aligned to student interest and needs during and beyond the school day.
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- Engage all families with effective and accessible communication outreach that acknowledges and removes barriers that include language, access to technology, culture, and/or ability.
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- Partner with community agencies to provide behavioral and mental health during and beyond the school day.
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- Implement culturally responsive teaching practices that are relevant to our community and students.
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Indicators

- Student chronic absences
- Student behavioral data
- Student support service data
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support data
- Recognitions and celebrations
- Participation data for student enriching experiences
- Participation rates for events that supports a full, equal partnership with staff, family, and community
- Evidence of equitable practices, access, and opportunities for all students, families, and staff

CORE BELIEFS

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Ensure Deep Learning

Engage all students in developing knowledge and skills that lead to transfer through application or production.

Actions

- Develop deep learning tasks and projects that are relevant to students while fostering cultural awareness, belonging, self-efficacy, and agency.



- Provide professional learning for staff and families that increases instructional capacity, skills, and dispositions which support deep learning and the use of transfer goals, learning progressions, and learning targets.



- Develop tools and practices for students to share understandings that include the use of portfolios, self-reflection, peer review, and revision.



- Increase student ownership, agency, and leadership in the classroom.



- Define and implement practices that assess deep learning and the Portrait of the Graduate skills.



- Transform grading and reporting practices to align with Core Beliefs and learner outcomes.



Indicators

- Tasks that are relevant, rigorous, and culturally responsive from across grade level teams and content areas
- Student exhibitions, informances, performances, portfolios, self assessments, and reflections that provide evidence of deep learning, transfer, and Mansfield's Portrait of the Graduate
- The development and pilot of a progress reporting system that aligns to deep learning, Mansfield's Portrait of the Graduate, and the SEL Framework
- Student and family attitudes and satisfaction with learning experiences
- Participation of students and families in student-led conferences
- Evidence of growing educators and teacher leaders to increase capacity that supports deep learning and the instructional core

CORE BELIEFS

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System Coherence

System Coherence is defined as the Time, Talent, Funding, Facilities, Information Technologies, and Food Services that serve and support our schools while aligning to the District’s Mission, Core Beliefs, and Key Drivers.

Actions

- Implement structures and systems that increase staff engagement and attendance.
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- Recruit diverse candidates and retain talented staff.
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- Implement and monitor energy-saving practices, technologies, and zero waste initiatives.
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- Increase and leverage the use of local products in Food Services to reflect the community’s values on sustainability, wellness, and diversity.
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- Develop and implement plan to ensure that all Mansfield schools support safe, 21st century learning.
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- Build understanding through increasingly effective communication and technology practices, including story-telling, that illuminates the District’s Mission, Core Beliefs, and Key Drivers.
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- Develop structures and systems that improve how we align, manage, and communicate fiscal resources that support the district’s Core Beliefs and Development Plan.
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Indicators

- Staff recruitment events
- Staffing data
- Energy, trash, and procurement data
- Facilities Upgrade Plan for Mansfield Middle School
- Cyber Security Plan
- Data Dashboard prototype
- Food Service menus
- Food Service community events
- Website/social media data and artifacts
- Budget Book

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