



Interdisciplinary Learning: Creating Food Trucks and Kayaking in Science



Teams of students researched recipes and created signature dishes for their food truck project at MMS.

Food trucks are extremely popular. They're fun, convenient, unique, and lend a great atmosphere to gathering places. Now, imagine designing a food truck business—the business plan, the exterior, the interior kitchen and serving spaces, and the menu. That was the assignment given to Grade 8 students in a collaboration between the Consumer Life Sciences class and their Technology Education class at Mansfield Middle School.

Mansfield Public Schools invites collaboration among teachers as well as students because problem-solving together provides an authentic learning experience. During the second quarter, students worked

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Candace Morell Selected as Mansfield's Next Superintendent

The Mansfield Board of Education has announced that Candace Morell has been selected as Mansfield Public School's next Superintendent. Candace has served in the district for 25 years, starting her professional journey in Mansfield in 1999 as a Reading and Science teacher at Mansfield Middle School (MMS). Former MMS students remember she has always been passionate about science education, collaborating with colleagues to develop engaging authentic learning experiences for all students that included science studies on the school campus as well as overnight excursions to Nature's Classroom and the Worcester Ecotarium.

Candace became Assistant Principal at MMS in 2005, and in 2009 the Connecticut Association of Schools named her as Assistant Principal of the Year. She was also recognized as a National Educational Leadership Policy Fellow. In 2014, Candace

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Candace Morell, who has served as a teacher, building leader, and administrator in Mansfield for 25 years, will begin as Superintendent July 1, 2025.

in teams to create a food truck idea under the guidance of Tech Ed Teacher Bob Burrington. They drew plans for the outside and inside of the truck, brainstormed a t-shirt design, and produced a menu board. Then, in Life and Consumer Science class with Teacher Ryley Zawodniak, students developed their menus, recipes, and pricing, created a signature dish, and wrote shopping lists. Finally, they cooked over two days and served samples of their specialty dishes to school staff including tasty items like varieties of loaded fries, sliders, s'mores pancakes and waffles, tacos, cupcakes, chicken skewers, and pasta.



Cross-curriculum projects like this make learning fun, but also challenge students with real-world problems. Students call on their skills in research, writing, math, and creative thinking plus hands-on execution of an idea.

Another popular interdisciplinary activity has been enjoyed by grade 4 students at Mansfield Elementary School. With the support of teachers, students studied the science and history of Mansfield Hollow that included tours



Students tour inside the Mansfield Hollow Dam with Army Corps of Engineer guides.

led by rangers from the Army Corps of Engineers who provided a guided tour inside the dam (who knew you could do that!?).

To top off the unit, students learned how to kayak at Mansfield Hollow State Park Lake, with the assistance of staff and New England Science &

Sailing. Students were provided their own kayak to practice paddling and steering skills, many for the first time.

Students' experience on the water had another purpose, too, as they conducted science research by collecting water quality data and creating erosion control devices.



Grade 4 students learn to kayak at Mansfield Hollow.

“We are giving students the opportunity to perform research in the field the way real scientists do,” says MES Principal Kate McCoy. “We want to expose students to the magic of watersports here in their backyard, but also provide a science lesson that excites them. This idea came from our creative teachers working to provide an authentic learning experience,” she adds.



Grade 4 student Mihin Witharana and his invention SmartTrash was selected as a U.S. National Finalist to compete in the Invention Convention, the third time Mihin's project was selected to advance in national competition. Third grader Audrey Young was also invited to Nationals next year. Congratulations!

New Superintendent (cont. from page 1)

was promoted to Principal at MMS where she implemented innovative approaches to learning that improved student engagement and achievement levels. With Candace's leadership, *The U.S. News & World Report* recently ranked MMS as 20th among 557 Connecticut middle schools.

In 2022, the district established the administrative position of Director of Teaching and Learning, and Candace quickly became a key player in Superintendent Dart's leadership team. In this new role, Candace initiated programs to formalize Mansfield's commitment to Growing Educators. Working closely with the Teacher Leader Team, Candace has guided the district focus on improving progress reports to



help families understand student mastery and progress, and creating a structure for curriculum development work. She has also been responsible for ever-important grant programs and transportation coordination. Under her leadership the district has implemented Student-Led

Conversations and Celebrations, and closely aligned curriculum of PreK to Grade 8. Candace believes in the importance of relevant real world experiences for all students, and that each and every student should have access to a breadth of learning experiences in which they "begin to see their future selves".

Mrs. Morell earned her Bachelor and Master of Science degrees as well as her Educational Leadership (UCAPP) from the University of Connecticut, and her Superintendent Certification from Central Connecticut State University.

In a letter to families, Board Chair Kathy Ward says, "As a Board of Education, we have seen the progress and innovation that Candace has brought to our district with her student-centered approach to teaching and learning. She has earned the respect of the leadership team and families. The Board believes she is absolutely the right candidate to continue fulfilling our district's vision for excellence, and dedication to our Core Beliefs."

Grows and Glows—Student-Led Conferences and Celebrations

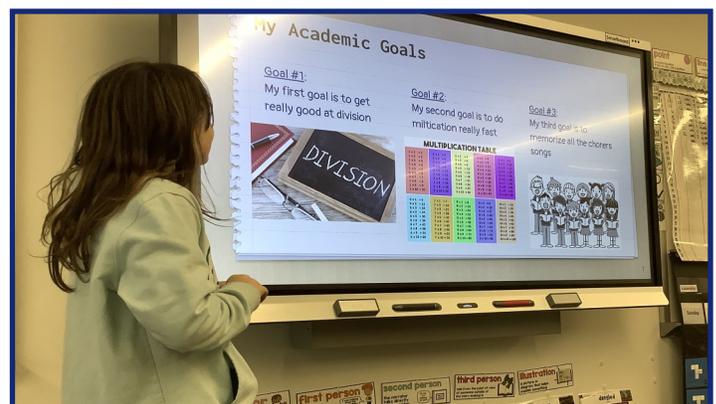


This MMS student demonstrates how she owns her own learning through her SLCC presentation.

At Mansfield Public Schools, all students grades K to 8 present a digital portfolio of their work, along with their goals and progress, to their families and teachers at Student-Led Conferences and Celebrations (SLCC) sessions each spring.

The personal portfolio is maintained on a website the student creates and adds to each year, and it becomes evidence of their growth over time. This initiative helps young scholars reflect on their work and share personal pride and celebrations.

Family feedback indicates an increasing understanding of the SLCC purpose, a departure from traditional parent-teacher only conferences, One parent shared, "I love the sense of empowerment and the opportunity to see what my kids are doing in school."



This young scholar presents the academic goals she set for herself, and how she feels she is progressing.

Middle School Entrance Reimagined



Installation of a new elevator and an improved, more secure entrance is underway at Mansfield Middle School (MMS). These two features, funded in large part by grants, are the next stage of the overall improvements to the school. Renovations to MMS air quality systems, front entrance, elevator, and main office spaces are underway, a construction project which will pay great dividends for years to come.

The Town of Mansfield received a School Security Grant for the renovations to the entrance at the middle school to relocate it through the main office where visitors can be greeted. This design involves installing a new entry ramp and stairs from the main walkway and canopy down into the existing courtyard, and interior redesign of the main office area.

A school construction grant through the Department of Administrative Services will fund improvements to the air flow systems with the goal to improve indoor air quality and optimize the comfort level of students and staff in all seasons. Air conditioning will be installed to service the third floor classrooms and the gymnasium, areas currently without this feature.

"The middle school building has some fine features we could never replace if we built a new school today," says Superintendent Peter Dart. "The 690-seat auditorium is well-used by the district and the town, and stage lighting improvements were installed last year. The gymnasium has a new floor. The solar array on the roof is producing well. The campus offers us outstanding learning spaces inside and outside. Therefore, it makes financial sense for us to invest and improve these outstanding spaces. We appreciate the Town Council's willingness to make these capital improvements. Once these projects are complete, the cafeteria should be the next area of focus," adds Superintendent Dart.

Parting Words from Supt. Peter Dart

In my final weeks before retirement I wanted to share my gratitude for an amazing 38 year career that closes in Mansfield. In these past seven years, from Goodwin Principal to Superintendent, I have been blessed to be in a community that cares about education, sustainability, human rights, and promoting diversity. As advocates, you have inspired me to boldly lead our district through change, consolidation, and challenge with empathy, compassion, and conviction.

Within the past three years, our district has deepened our practices that continue to embolden our mission and core beliefs. We have been steadfast in using data to help us improve and address needs by

implementing new curriculum and programs, onboarding a broader student mental health team, hiring a Food Service Director to promote wellness and farm-to-school endeavors, and seeking out grants and local funds to invest in our middle school building so that it meets the standards of 21st century teaching and learning. We have expanded ways to support professional learning, promoted our diversity, and found new ways to support families through voice and action.

As I prepare for my final days here, I leave knowing that I kept my promise to keep our students at the center of our work while learning from this community of care givers. Truly, my tenure in Mansfield will forever be a part of who I am as an educator.



*"I am a part of all that
I have met..."*

-Alfred Tennyson

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.



Knowing Students
Supporting the Whole Child
Ensuring Deep Learning

A Message from the Board of Education

The district adopted the strategic plan, what we call the District Development Plan, in 2022. The plan articulates our Core Beliefs and emphasizes how to advance our work by focusing on three key strategies: **Ensuring Deep Learning, Supporting the Whole Child, and Knowing Students.**

Each year since we adopted the plan, administrators and teachers share Reports of Progress on these three strategies with the Board of Education. These reports are a combination of metrics on who we are and our progress, a recounting of current challenges, and stories of action that provide context of what this work looks

Core Beliefs



Lead with **EQUITY.**



Develop the whole **CHILD.**



Ensure **ACTIVE** learning.



Build **PARTNERSHIPS.**



Prepare **GLOBAL** citizens.



Grow **EDUCATORS.**

like in our schools. This past year we learned about the equity impact of our instrumental strings program at MES, an increasing focus on play-based learning at MES, and how social workers and staff are engaging families to avoid absenteeism. We also learned details about the “What I Need” (WIN) Block at MMS designed to meet students’ individual needs in math and reading, and the MMS Youth Employment program created so students earn cash and learn valuable accountability skills by assisting staff with regular tasks.

Reports of Progress remind us that the work we do is all about 960 individual students. Not desks and chairs. Not bus schedules. Young scholars are our most valuable assets in Mansfield.

To read more about the work in our schools, and to review the District Development Plan, please visit our website at:

www.mansfieldct.gov/1489/District-Development-Plans

Physical Education Teaches a Love of Movement

Students at Mansfield Schools are provided extraordinary opportunities in their PE classes. When there is sufficient snow on the ground, classes at Mansfield Elementary School strap on cross-country skis and explore Southeast Park. In collaboration with the efforts of community partners Bike Mansfield and the Eastern Highlands Health District, grade 4 students learn to ride a bicycle including how to ride safely in a group and service a flat tire. In winter, a climbing apparatus called a Trestle Tree grows in the gymnasium so students can build skills in balance, strength, and flexibility. At Mansfield Middle School, ping pong is an optional activity, and the climbing wall is also a popular spot at both schools.

Yes, students still tumble, learn to dribble a soccer ball, practice track and field events, and run. But the variety of physical activities offered is intended to help each student try new ways to move, stay healthy, promote wellness, and have fun for years ahead.



Grade 4 students enjoyed a field trip this winter to the rink to try out ice skating. They also experience safe bicycling during Bike Week in the spring.



Knowing Students
Supporting the Whole Child
Ensuring Deep Learning

Mansfield Board of Education
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Coming Soon—a We-Go-Round for inclusive merry-go-round fun will be installed at the elementary school playground after school closes, along with safe rubberized surfaces. Please anticipate that both playgrounds will be closed during the summer for these improvements. Watch for updates on our website in the coming weeks.

Important Dates

June 10	Grade 4 Promotion Ceremony at MES
June 13	Grade 8 Promotion Ceremony at MMS
June 16	Last Day for Students (early dismissal)
July 7-31	Summer Student Learning (M-Th)
August 28	Start of School for Students

Just a reminder to our community—

This summer, and every day, it's important for us ALL to **Make Time for Offline!**



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Mansfield Public Schools

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