MANSFIELD
CONNECTICUT
Public Schools

2025-2026

District Development Plan

Introduction to Development Plan

In spring 2021, Mansfield Public Schools developed a comprehensive Development Plan in collaboration with the Board of Education, District Leadership Team, including essential contributions 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.

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Portrait of the Learner

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
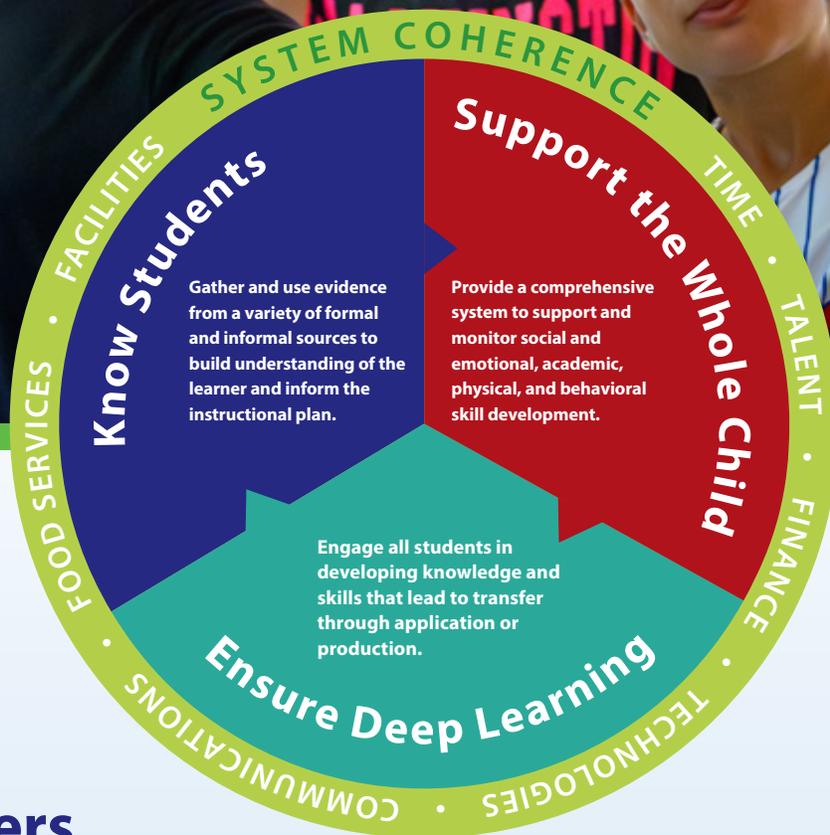- Work toward consensus

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

The diagram shows a circular figure with four Key Drivers:

- **SYSTEM COHERENCE** (outer ring, green): FACILITIES · TIME · TALENT · FINANCE · TECHNOLOGIES · COMMUNICATIONS · FOOD SERVICES

- **Know Students** (blue): Gather and use evidence from a variety of formal and informal sources to build understanding of the learner and inform the instructional plan.

- **Support the Whole Child** (red): Provide a comprehensive system to support and monitor social and emotional, academic, physical, and behavioral skill development.

- **Ensure Deep Learning** (teal): Engage all students in developing knowledge and skills that lead to transfer through application or production.

Key Drivers

Our four Key Drivers, Know Students, Support the Whole Child, Ensure Deep Learning, and System Coherence, have been created to advance the work of the District in an effort to lift continuous improvement and meet the needs of "each and every child." The drivers provide a focus and build coherence across our six Core Beliefs and the Mission of the Mansfield Board of Education. To ensure our work fully embodies the District's Vision, the actions and indicators for each Key Driver are directly tied to our Core Beliefs. They evoke our commitment to Mansfield's "Portrait of the Learner" and the 5 C's that teach the skills and dispositions needed in the 21st century. We proudly share this work throughout the year in our Reports of Progress to the Board of Education and community. And while each of these reports focus on one Key Driver, all four are present each and every day in our work with students, staff, and families.

A smaller circular diagram showing seasons:
- **Know Students** — Autumn (blue)
- **Support the Whole Child** — Winter (red)
- **Ensure Deep Learning** — Spring (teal)

"Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it."
— Hannah Arendt

Stories inspire and are powerful as they evoke emotion and connection. The following "Key Driver Stories" come from our Mansfield Public School classrooms, educators, students, and staff and illuminate the importance of these strategies and their interconnectedness. As you read these narratives, you will see overlapping circles that tie the Key Drivers together in an effort to best support our six Core Beliefs. For example, the Core Belief to "Lead with Equity" is lifted in using what we know about students to support them and ensure deep, joyful learning. The following stories are meant to further define each driver and give the reader a chance to better understand what this work looks like.

Know Students

Knowing Students means that teachers each year take time to acknowledge each child by name, talent, need, hopes and dreams, and their lived experience. Through interest-inventories, surveys, team building games, and carefully crafted lessons, educators help students make connections to their lives, their world, and the content standards we teach. Knowing Students requires us to use assessment data, work portfolios, conferences, and observations to ensure that we are meeting the needs of each and every student. Writing activities such as "Where I come from" provide students a chance to curate memories and reflect on lessons learned.

As one Mansfield Middle School (MMS) teacher shared, "When you walk in Room 207 all the tables may look the same. But for the students in Math Class 2, this was not the case. Early on in the year, students determined that Table 3 had supernatural qualities that allowed anyone sitting there to become a math superstar. Yeah, the problem up on the board may look tough… But you're sitting at Table 3 so you'll solve it in no time! Having a tough day? Maybe a little time at magic Table 3 could recharge your battery.

"One goal of knowing students is that students feel known. Even small moments in the classroom can help build a community where everyone feels seen. As educators, we believe it is our role to both create the structures for these communities to grow but also to model appropriate participation within them. It's in

these personalized learning hubs where students feel safe to take risks and experiment with new strategies and ways of thinking. Table 3 may at one point have been the same as all of the others in the room. But by the end of the year, its effect on the confidence and collaboration of our math community was nothing short of magic."

- • Student Portfolios
- • Student-Led Conversation & Celebration Conferences
- • Surveys
- • Assessments
- • Self Reflections and Peer Reviews
- • Family Conferences
- • Progress Reports

Support the Whole Child

Supporting the Whole Child means that we understand that students need a constellation of experiences that include music, arts, movement, sports, performance, competition, interest-based clubs and activities, and a chance to transfer core academic skills, knowledge and dispositions to the real world. It also calls us to provide tiered supports in academic, social, and behavioral endeavors. Supporting each and every child requires us to know students and use child-centered approaches to planning, teaching, and working with students and families. To achieve this, we build out clear and consistent structures while using research-based strategies, theories of action, and practices. Tiger "PAWS" and MMS' "Habits of Character" help us create safe spaces and communities that support all students.

Mansfield Elementary School (MES) Music Educator Julie Frascarelli shared, "The choir is performing, and front and center is a student who traditionally might not be included in these types of programs, watching the conductor, engaged and attentive. What might not be noticed are the many moments when they were so excited to be performing that they were joyfully jumping up and down from stage to rise step in time with the music, singing and smiling. This mental picture does not show the happy parents and grandmother who gave me the longest hug, grateful to see her grandchild participating successfully with their peers. The picture does not show any academic and social struggles, and the things they cannot do that their peers can. I think this picture shows a small, but powerful moment that illustrates our Core Beliefs in action – ensuring that all students are supported and provided opportunities, offering arts learning to develop the whole child, offering ways to joyfully engage with learning, inviting families to celebrate that learning, and giving children collaborative experiences to work with others and build community."

A MES kindergarten teacher shared that Supporting the Whole Child means that, "Mansfield Public Schools believes that our youngest students need time to learn school. They need time to explore, play, create, and discover while also learning how to socialize, interact within a community and share ideas." This year, because of the change in the entry age for kindergarten, we gifted seven students another year to learn school. Instead of going to first grade as the youngest students they remained in kindergarten and became ambassadors for the other students. For just one special year, these students had a chance to lead and show the new kindergarteners how to try their best, follow school expectations, and be a friend all while developing their own academic, social and emotional skills. They will enter first grade as the oldest students. "Giving students the right support at the right time is an investment in their long-term success."

- **Enriching Programs During School**
- **Academic Supports**
- **Social Workers and Special Education Services**
- **Extracurricular Activities and Sports**
- **Music, Art, and Drama Programs**
- **World Language**
- **Recognitions and Celebrations**
- **Attendance and Participation Data**
- **Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)**

Ensure Deep Learning

In Mansfield, we define **Deep Learning** as an approach where students own their learning through choice, reflection, revision, and passion. It's when students move beyond surface-level knowledge to solve authentic, relevant problems and share their work with real audiences. These experiences are joyful, noisy, and layered, empowering students to create, direct, and assess their own learning.

As our Mathematics Consultant Michael DiCicco explains, this approach requires us to "get off the train." It means "intentionally pausing the relentless march of the curriculum to foster a real-world experience that promotes understanding and mastery." The seventh grade Math team's project on "scale factor" is a perfect example. When students struggled, the teachers "got off the train" for a week-long project. Students applied scale factor to enlarge small cereal box images onto ceiling tiles, turning an abstract concept into a tangible, hands-on experience. The project incorporated opportunities for critique and revision, allowing students to refine their understanding through an iterative process. The culminating reflection phase further deepened learning as students articulated their insights and recognized their growth. While we must adhere to our curriculum, DiCicco reminds us it is crucial to "get off the train" periodically to explore topics with depth, craftsmanship, and intensity.

A MES third grade teacher added, "This year, the third-grade team embarked on a deep learning journey exploring the Connecticut River. Students dug into the historical and ongoing impact of diverse groups—from Indigenous peoples and early settlers to industrialists, farmers, engineers, and conservationists—on the river. A joy-filled learning experience at the Connecticut River Museum included a boat ride—a first for many students! The smiles on their faces throughout the trip were contagious. At the end of the school year, we transformed our hallway into an immersive Connecticut River timeline. It was amazing to see students sharing their stories and research with such passion and confidence. Their projects and presentations weren't just assignments; they were proof that deep learning had taken hold."

- Performances and Exhibitions
- Portfolios & Student-Led Conversation and Celebrations
- Field Trips
- Portrait of the Learner and the 5 C's
- Project-Based Learning
- Student Agency and Voice

System Coherence

Our fourth Key Driver, **System Coherence**, was added recently to the Development Plan given the importance of district services and providers that support our core work with students. System Coherence captures how time, talent, finances, informational technologies, facilities, communication, and food services lifts our Core Beliefs and Mission. The actions and indicators of these systems demonstrate that the Directors and Teams that lead this work align to our strategic vision of 21st century teaching and learning. For example, Chef Maraiah Popeleski-Tilley's work as the Director of Food Services is guided by the System Coherence action of, "Increase and leverage the use of local products in Food Services to reflect the community's values on sustainability, wellness, and diversity." So the procurement of ingredients, creation of menus, and the cooking of each meal illuminates the importance of System Coherence.

Hope Mulholland, Technology Integration Specialist, shares that this same principle guides all of our technology initiatives. "In Mansfield Public Schools, learning isn't confined to the building. We believe in unlocking the world for our students, whether through the pages of a book, the stroke of a paintbrush, or the lens of a virtual reality headset. This year, the Information Technology department collaborated with our World Language and seventh grade Science programs to do just that. Students took incredible journeys without ever leaving their

classrooms! They explored the vibrant streets of Puerto Rico, stood in the heart of ancient Guatemalan ruins, and even walked the red plains of Mars. This powerful technology transported students to new and enriching environments, building real-world knowledge and sparking incredible curiosity. By offering a virtual passport to places they might never physically visit, we are not just teaching subjects; we are creating lifelong explorers."

- **Diversifying Staff**
- **Developing Healthy Menus**
- **Aligning Resources to District Development Plan**
- **One to One Technology**
- **Use of AI and VR**
- **Security and Building Improvements**
- **Use of Sustainable Practices and Energy**

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 and practices that 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, artifacts, and evidence across multiple grades and content areas.

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

- Implement and support differentiated instruction through flexible, responsive small group instruction that uses data, targeted instruction, and team collaboration by grade level and/or department.

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.

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

Actions

- Elevate Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for academic, behavioral, and social and emotional skills.

- Integrate the use of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices within classrooms, teams, and buildings.

- Ensure opportunities and access that are aligned to student interest and needs during and beyond the school day.

- Engage all families with effective and accessible communication outreach that acknowledges and removes barriers that include language, access to technology, culture, and/or ability.

- Implement Universal Design for Learning teaching practices that are relevant to our community and students.

- Create and implement structures that elevate Safe School Climate policy, practices, and teams in order to support the whole child.

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

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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 self-reflection, peer review, and revision.

- Increase student ownership, agency, and leadership in the classroom through student-to-student discourse, peer feedback and revision, and self assessment.

- Define and implement practices that assess deep learning and the Portrait of a Learner 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 Learner

- The development and pilot of a progress reporting system that aligns to deep learning, Mansfield's Portrait of the Learner, 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

- **Lead with equity.**
- **Develop the whole child.**
- **Ensure active learning.**
- **Build partnerships.**
- **Prepare global citizens.**
- **Grow educators.**
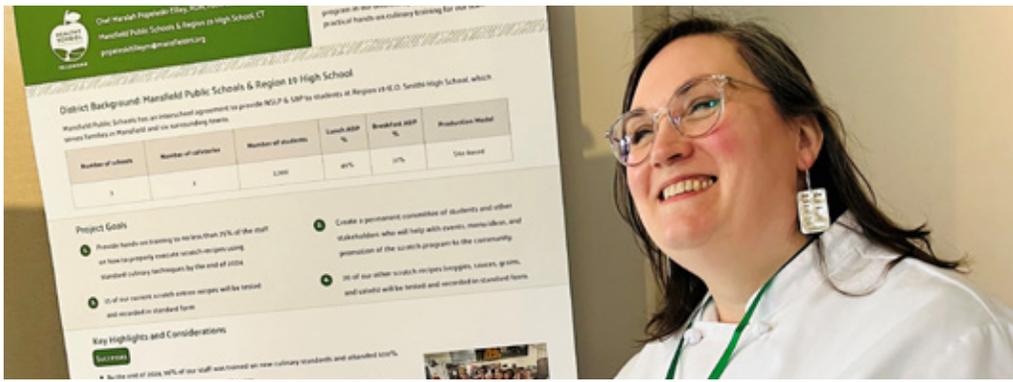
System Coherence is defined as the Time, Talent, Funding, Facilities, Information Technologies, and Food Services that serve and support our schools while aligning to the District's Mission, Core Beliefs, and Key Drivers.

Actions

- Implement structures and systems that increase staff engagement and attendance.

- Recruit diverse candidates and retain talented staff.

- Implement and monitor energy-saving practices, technologies, and zero-waste initiatives.

- Increase and leverage the use of local products in Food Services to reflect the community's values on sustainability, wellness, and diversity.

- Develop and implement a plan to ensure that all Mansfield schools support safe, 21st century learning.

- Build understanding through increasingly effective communication and technology practices, including story-telling, that illuminate the District's Mission, Core Beliefs, and Key Drivers.

- Develop structures and systems that improve how we align, manage, and communicate fiscal resources that support the district's Core Beliefs and Development Plan.

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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