

MPS NEWS ONLINE



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December 3, 2013

IMPORTANT DATES:

Dec. 3rd—BOE/BOD Joint Meeting, Hearing Room, Lincoln Center 7:00 p.m.

Dec. 9th—BOE Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Lincoln Center

Dec. 17th—Policy Committee Mtg. 6:00 p.m.

Dec. 18th—Personnel & Finance Committee Mtg. 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 23—Jan 1—Vacation period



Schools Receive Grant to Improve Classroom Technology

Manchester's grant proposal was one of 128 technology applications received by State Department of Education for a 10 million dollar grant allocation. Manchester received the twelfth-highest level of funding of all applications with an award amount of \$394,152. The grant award will be used to replace and/or retire computers that do not meet these minimum requirements.

In addition to online state testing, the new computers will also be used for other instructional initiatives including the use of Lexia online instruction to improve reading, administering online assessments of the Northwest Evaluation Association to inform and differentiate instruction, and the formation of professional learning communities dedicated to unit planning and performance tasks in support Manchester's Common Core aligned curriculum.

As part of the grant application, districts were required to submit data from a standardized "Technology Readiness Tool" that compared the district's technology preparedness for on line assessments to recommended

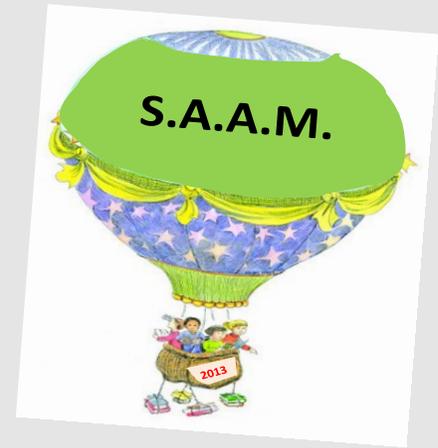
Manchester was in the top quarter of all reporting districts in two categories: network bandwidth and ratio of computers to students. In the third category, quality of computers, 15% of the computers in Manchester's inventory did not meet the minimum requirements for use in the national on-line tests that will be field tested in the spring of 2014. The grant funds will be used to replace these computers.

The district is currently using computers to assess student progress throughout the school year. The new online assessment, the Smarter Balanced Assessment System, which will be field tested this coming spring, will replace the traditional paper-and-pencil CMT and CAPT assessments. This assessment transition increases the significance of purchasing new computers and upgrading network technology.



Summer School Pilot Program A Success

In a recent report to the Board of Education, Linda Cavanaugh the chief program planner for the 2013 Summer Advantage Academy of Manchester (S.A.A.M.) presented test data that showed that most of the 500 students who enrolled in the six week program maintained their achievement levels reading and mathematics during the summer. The summer program provided literacy and numeracy instruction in the morning followed by enrichment programs in the afternoon, which supported student work in the morning. The program was fully funded by a state Alliance Grant. Parents reported in a survey that students benefited academically. A district team, including members of the town's recreation program, is currently planning next year's program.



Human Resource Department Posts High School Principal Position

The district's human resource department has posted the vacancy for the high school principal position. The internal posting closes on December 13. The application deadline is January 21, 2013. The Superintendent, Dr. Kisiel, Human Resource staff, and Mr. Geary will review all applications and select candidates for an interview with an interview committee. This committee, composed of the Board's Personnel & Finance Committee, Human Resource staff, administrators, high school teachers, and parents, will complete an interview with selected candidates during the week of February 10.



The selection process also includes an interview with selected finalists by district level administrators and Mr. Geary, and a school site visit. The Superintendent expects to make an appointment on or about March 3, 2014.



District Improvement Team

To promote excellence in education for all Manchester students, a District Improvement Team (DIT) is being established. The DIT will be comprised of broad-based district and community representation. Members will be asked to join based on their varied roles, backgrounds and expertise.

The purpose of the (DIT) is to build a district-wide improvement plan for communication, curriculum and instruction, assessment, professional learning, and support and to monitor the district-wide plan as it relates to all school-based work.

To create a positive culture to build and share this important work and ensure continual feedback the DIT will work with other constituent groups including, but not limited to PTA, School Governance Council, and community members



March Assessment Update

As part of a federal waiver request the Connecticut State Department of Education provided all districts with a testing choice for March 2014. Districts could continue administering the CMT, now being called the Legacy Test, or migrate to the Smarter Balanced (SB) Field Test. Manchester opted for grades 3-8 and 11 to take part in the SB Field Test in English language arts and mathematics.

Though Manchester was able to opt into the SB Field Test grades 5 and 8 are still required to take the CMT Science and grade 10 is required to take the CAPT Science.

Testing schedules are as follows:

Assessment	Grades	Testing Windows
CMT Science	5 and 8	March 2014
CAPT Science	10	March 2014
SB Field Test	3-8	March 18-April 4, 2014
SB Field Test	11	April 7-April 25, 2014

Further specifics regarding the SB Field Test will be provided as it becomes available.



Manchester Re- ceives Grant to Support Science Education

Manchester Public Schools were fortunate to be awarded a grant from the Savings Bank of Manchester's SBM Foundation, enabling students across the district to participate in the Science in Nature program run by the CT Audubon Society in Glastonbury.



All students in Grade 4 will be able to participate in the program, which investigates weather and climate, rock and soil ecology, and adaptations in nature. Students will sharpen their skills as citizen scientists observing, collecting data, conducting investigations and developing conclusions.

Students will participate in one of the three programs. Those in the Weather and Climate program will study weather and climate trends and how they interact with the natural



and human worlds. The program seeks to inform students about the systems affecting climate and weather and how we can play a role in leaving a smaller footprint on the environment. Students in the Rock and Soil Ecology group investigate the cycles and trends in local geology and what threatens the natural cycles and balance in order to inform them about their part as stewards of the environment. Finally, the Adaptation program will take students on a journey through the world of evolution and adaptation. Their exploration will take them through a close study of invasive species and how they can upset the natural balance.



Manchester students and teachers are excited about this opportunity. The superintendent expressed gratitude to the Saving Bank of Manchester and the CT Audubon Society for their support of our schools and the development of our students as citizen scientists. "This grant," said Dr. Kisiel, "will not only support and enhance our fourth grade science curriculum but assist the district in striving to achieve our district goal of improving student thinking and problem solving skills."

