MPSPride Monthly

Verplanck Edition December 2015

MUSIC

... And So Much More

Sarah Jordan is the orchestra teacher at Verplanck. To learn about her and other music teachers here at Verplanck, please turn to Page 3.

There are 30 music teachers here in Manchester, and they have a wide range of talents. Some are gifted pianists. Others have amazing voices. Many play multiple instruments. All have performed publicly, some in front of huge crowds.

You can read inside this newsletter about the teachers working with students here at Verplanck Elementary School -- about their different backgrounds and talents.

And yet all of these music teachers and their colleagues from throughout town have one thing in common: They share the belief that music education is about a lot more than, well, music.

"The biggest benefit our music students have is being able to work together to create something beautiful," said Erienne Grieco, the general music teacher at Robertson Elementary. "Through music making they learn the importance of teamwork, practice, patience, and compassion among many other key values that they will use throughout their lives."

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INSIDE

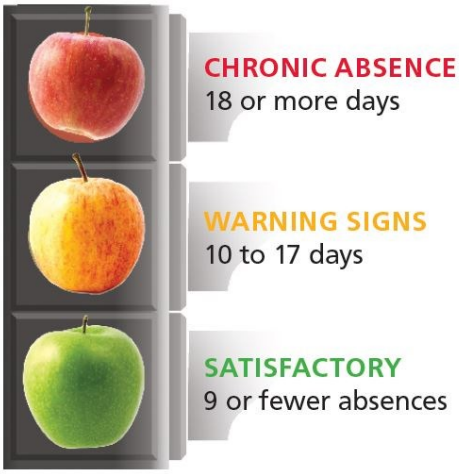
Roll Call

Superintendent Matt Geary has a message about the importance of regular school attendance. ***Page 2***

Later This Month: Vacation Stations

The Parks and Recreation Department has designed an exciting new program that will give kids something to do during the holiday break. We have all the details, including where everything is happening. ***Page 4.***

When Do Absences Become a Problem?



Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.

Be Careful — Absences Add Up!

As the days get colder and the roads become slick from snow and ice, absenteeism tends to become more of an issue in school. With that in mind, I'd like to remind our students, parents and guardians that regular attendance is essential to academic success.

As the chart shows, chronic absence is described as missing 10 percent of the school year—or about 18 days – for any reason, *excused or unexcused.* Think about it: just two absences a month adds up to 18 days missed in a year. That's the rate at which absenteeism begins to seriously affect student performance. Starting as early as preschool, chronic absence predicts lower third grade reading scores. By middle school it's a warning sign that students will fail key classes and drop out of high school.

We understand that students get sick and that emergencies come up. In such cases, please contact your school that morning and let us know. But please also make every effort to attend school regularly. Parents — there is no greater gift you can give your child than the opportunity for a first-rate education — and when they are in school, that's just what they are getting.

— Superintendent Matt Geary

Music Teaches Discipline, Perseverance

Continued from front page

December is a special month because all of our schools have concerts, giving students a chance to perform in front of classmates, parents and community members. And this year, the district is renewing the tradition of having evening concerts at every elementary school.

Keith Berry, who is the head of the music department, said the key to a healthy music program is strong roots in the elementary schools.

"That's so important," Berry said, adding that he is proud of the many awards that are won by our high school students when they perform at state, regional and even national events. The MHS Roundtable Singers, Chamber Orchestra, marching band and other ensembles all have stellar reputations.

But Berry said the foundation is built while the students are young. "And I'm not talking about discovering prodigies," he said, referring to students who are naturally and exceptionally gifted.

No, Berry said the goal of the elementary instruction is simple: make sure that young students are exposed to the joy of music-making, encouraged to do their best, and hopefully be inspired to make music a significant part of their lives.

Here's an overview of how things unfold:

Every student from pre-K to grade 7 takes music classes.

In addition, starting in fourth grade students can also get extra instruction in school, either in band (choosing from trumpet, flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, trombone, baritone or French horn) or orchestra (violin, viola, cello or bass).

> *"Studying music helps make well-rounded children, who later become well-rounded adults."*
>
> *Lisa Kerkin-Bundy*
> *general music teacher*
> *Waddell Elementary*

(Incidentally, students can either purchase or rent instruments and financial support is available.)

Starting in grade 8, music is an elective -- and there is an array of classes for credit during the school day as well as ensembles that practice before and after school at both the middle and high schools.

Berry said that he gets especially excited in the spring, when the district holds separate band, orchestra and choral concerts at Bailey Auditorium showcasing a town-wide grade 5 group, then grade 6, then eighth-grade and finally high school.

"It's really magical," he said. "I call it the 'What's Next' concert, because the younger students and their parents can see how the quality of the performance evolves as they get older."

Practice. Patience. Perseverance. Discipline. Berry and others in his department say those are attributes and life skills that students develop when they

Music Provides Valuable Lessons

Continued from front page

study music.

"I think studying music helps make well rounded children who later become well rounded adults," said Lisa Kerkin-Bundy, a general music teacher at Waddell.

Abigail Baker, who teaches at Martin Elementary, added that being part of a musical ensemble stretches students in other important ways.

"Each student must know their own part and how they fit in with the group as a whole," she said. "Unlike many other teams, however, their participation is nonverbal and relies heavily on the mutual trust and respect built between performers and the teacher/conductor. There are very few opportunities for students to experience this deep level of trust and respect beyond music studies."

Added Berry: "When you study music, you learn so much more."

HUMANS
of
Manchester
Public
Schools

Someone new is featured every school day.

Check it out at ….

www.MPSPride.org

The Verplanck Team

Mrs. Nicole Stickle — Band

Mrs. Stickle has been teaching in Manchester for four years, but taught in Sharon, Connecticut six years before. She has been playing the saxophone since fifth grade and was inspired to become a music teacher because of her amazing saxophone instructor and High School band director. Mrs. Stickle is a graduate of the University of Hartford, Hartt School Music and has Bachelors of Music degrees in Music Education and Saxophone Performance ('06) and a Masters of Music Education ('13). Mrs. Stickle loves running and trying to keep up with her energetic son.

Sarah Jordan — Orchestra

This is her third year teaching in Manchester, and her ninth year teaching, Previously she taught in Massachusetts as well as in Connecticut. Ms. Jordan graduated from UConn where she was in the Orchestra as well as the Marching Band. She started playing viola when she was in fourth grade and has been playing it ever since. In addition to playing and enjoying music, she also loves to go to the gym and to cook.

Mr. Michael Dunning — General Music

Mr. Dunning teaches general music at Waddell and Verplank, and has taught music in Manchester for 20 years. He has also taught general music at Illing, and chorus and general music at Bowers and Bennet Academy. He previously taught band, chorus and general music in Hartford and Litchfield. Mr. Dunning graduated from the Hartt School of Music with a Masters Degree in Piano Performance. He also attended Stetson University and Texas Tech University. He started piano lessons when he was 8 and his father taught him organ lessons when he was 5. He spends a lot of time at the gym and bowls in a league year round .He also practices the piano everyday. "Bowling is like playing an instrument. If you practice it correctly the first time you are always consistent."

Elizabeth Oman — General Music

Ms. Oman teaches general music at Verplanck Elementary, where this is her first year teaching. She graduated from the Hartt School of Music with dual bachelor degrees in Music Education and Classical Voice Performance. In addition to her studies, Ms. Oman sang major roles in the opera productions at Hartt, as well as sang for five years with a co-ed a cappella group on campus. She is grateful to be part of Manchester's rich music community. When not teaching Ms. Oman enjoys running long distances, yoga and singing in a folk group with other music teachers from the Hartford area.

Check This Out!

The Parks and Recreation Department has designed an exciting new program that gives children something to do during the holiday break later this month.

Department of Leisure, Family and Recreation

ALL ABOARD THE

Vacation Station

December 28th-30th

Free Multi-Site Winter Vacation Activities for School-Age Children, Youth and Families

RESERVE YOUR TICKET TODAY

GET YOUR TICKET STAMPED AT ANY THREE OF THE SIX VACATION STATIONS AND REDEEM IT FOR A FREE GIFT.

CALL (860) 647-3164 TO REGISTER (Pre-registration is encouraged for all stations but not required. (Supplies, materials and space may be limited.)

Station Details

1 Mahoney Station

Sports and Games 3v3 Tournament Style

Location: 110 Cedar Street

Mahoney Station will offer tournament style activities. Teams of 3 participants will rotate through a variety of score-based activities. Earn more points by rotating through all activities.
Grade Range: Grades 1-8 (supervision under 10 years)
Dates and Time: December 28-30, 12:30-3:30 p.m.
Monday: Knockout, Dodgeball, Connect 4, Team Building
Tuesday: Hotspots, MatBall, Uno, War, Bingo
Wednesday: 3v3 Soccer, Capture the Flag, Charades, Spoons, Arts and Crafts

2 Nathan Hale Station

Family Fun: Space, Time Travel and Dinosaurs

Location: 160 Spruce Street

Nathan Hale Station will host three science-themed Family Fun Days, each featuring Lego building, painting, origami, and a movie. The station will also feature Building Healthy Families' Imagination Playground. Drop-in creative activities from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and Movie from 10:30 to noon.
Grade Range: Families (supervision under 10 years)
Dates and Time: December 28-30, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Monday Theme: Space, Movie: *Buzz Light Year of Star Command*
Tuesday Theme: Time Travel, Movie: *Peabody and Sherman*
Wednesday Theme: Dinosaurs, Movie: *The Land Before Time*

3 Community Y Station

B'Wana Iguana Reptile Adventure

Location: 78 North Main Street

Community Y Station will offer B'Wana Iguana Reptile Adventure, an exciting program that entertains and educates children of all ages about the mysterious world of reptiles and amphibians. Join Ray as he introduces you to an assortment of snakes, Shelly the Flapping Turtle, Mrs. T the Tortoise, Chunky the Dancing Lizard and Squiggy the Wonder Boa and more. The program is interactive with lots of participation.
Grade Range: Family (supervision required under 10 years)
Dates and Time: One day only, December 30, 1-2 p.m.

4 MHS Pool Station

Family Open Swim

Location: 134 East Middle Tpke.

It may be cold outside, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy some warm water and a fun afternoon of swimming at the MHS Pool. Grab a friend or bring your family and enjoy some time splashing, jumping and diving during open swim time. No pool pass or Rec pass required.
Grade Range: Family (supervision under 10)
Dates and Time: December 28-30, 1-3 p.m.
Monday: Open Family Swim
Tuesday: Open Family Swim
Wednesday: Open Family Swim

5 Teen Center Station

Tournament Style Games for Teens

Location: 63 Linden Street

Teen Center Station at the Manchester Youth Service Bureau will offer in-house tournaments. Gift certificates will be awarded to the winner of each tournament. Tournaments are for all Manchester students in grades 9 through 12.
Note: Spaces limited for this station. Pre-registration is required.
Grade Range: Grades 9 through 12
Dates and Time: December 28-30, 3-6 p.m.
Monday Tournament: Ping Pong Tournament
Tuesday Tournament: Pool/Billiards Tournament
Wednesday Tournament: 2K Tournament

6 Youth Service Station

Create, Paint and Build

Location: 63 Linden Street

The Youth Service Station will offer creative opportunities for middle school students to paint and create. Art Lab will conduct a painting party and teach you how to paint a Snow Tiger and Pete from the Journeys program will teach participants how to build a bird feeder. **Note: Spaces limited for this station. Pre-registration is required.**
Grade Range: Grades 7 through 8
Dates and Time: December 28-30, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Monday: Art Lab Paint Party, *Paint a Snow Tiger*
Tuesdays Activities: Journey Build, *Build a Bird Feeder*

CALL (860) 647-3164 TODAY TO REGISTER FOR ANY OR ALL OF THE VACATION STATIONS