Special Bennet EDITION

MPSPride Monthly

www.MPSPride.org

October 2015

INSIDE:

Manchester students benefit by being part of a "Google District."

Mandarin Chinese is the most popular language in the world — and is being taught in Manchester.

Learn about enVision Math 2.0 and how you can support your child.

News from our Community and Family Partnership office.

'Listening Larry' has a message about Social Thinking.

STEM Matters

K-5 Students Immersed In Inquiry

When people hear about STEM and think about what it stands for – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – they might be a bit intimidated. And it's true that STEM subjects appeal to some of the smartest, most ambitious, most successful people in our schools, and in our world.

"And that's why we are so determined to educate all students in science and engineering, from a very young age," said Dr. Santosha Oliver, who oversees the rapidly expanding STEM education program in Manchester. "Our goal is to provide the foundational knowledge and skills for those who will become scientists, engineers, or

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Rick Rossi is the STEAM instructional specialist serving Bennet Academy as well as Illing Middle School.

Manchester A Model Google District

Every student at MHS is given a Chromebook computer.

Every Manchester student in grades 5 to 12 has daily, personal access to a lightweight laptop called a Google Chromebook, and students at the high school are even able to take theirs home every night to help them with their schoolwork. In addition, students have school-issued Google accounts which provide access to an entire suite of computer apps. The most popular might be Google Drive which allows students and teachers to create and share files -- and even collaborate in real time!

Last fall, MHS hosted the first annual Google Summit based in Connecticut that attracted experts from throughout the country as well as hundreds of local educators interested in the many benefits that come with investing in technology. This year's summit was held the weekend of Sept. 26-27 with a new theme, Moonshot Thinking, which encouraged innovative and creative use of Google tools to help students think, learn and do.

Among the rising stars in this national field is our own Jessica Loucks, a Tech Integration Specialist at Illing Middle School. If you'd like to follow Ms. Loucks — who was recently named one of the top 51 Google Apps for Education Gurus to follow on twitter — you'll find her @jlenore24. Follow us @mpspride to see where "Moonshot Thinking" takes students throughout the year!

Jessica Loucks (a Tech Integration specialist at Illing) was recently named one of the top 51 Google Apps for Education Gurus to follow on Twitter!

Mandarin Instruction Begins

For the first time starting this fall, Illing seventh-graders spend time in both exploratory Spanish and intro to Mandarin classes. Those students can then elect to take Spanish or Mandarin the following year in eighth grade. That's teacher Na (Anna) Qin in her classroom adjacent to the media center at Illing. We also are offering Mandarin instruction at the high school for the first time this year, with two sections of Intro to Chinese being taught by Jing Cheng. "We hope that this new partnership with the Confucius Institute will grow and that we will be able to offer Chinese for years to come," said Rosemary Stoner, the world language department head at MHS.

It's Here ... enVision Math 2.0

We are excited to announce our adoption of the enVision Math 2.0 program by Pearson Education in grades K-6! The enVision Math 2.0 program is a resource used to teach our Manchester math curriculum. It includes online access that is safe and appropriate for students. It offers helpful tools for online student work and helps support teachers so they have flexibility with their planning. We encourage you to support your child using the enVision Math 2.0 program while at home. Please be on the look out for letters sent home by your teacher. These letters have helpful tips that can help your child as they work at home. If you have a home computer or tablet with internet access, you can use your student's personal login and password to access the resources we utilize in the classroom. Contact your school if you have any questions about this exciting new program!

Big Crowd at Back-to-School Barbecue

School officials Latasha Turnquest and Scott Ratchford, and Capt. William Darby of the Manchester PD.

Approximately 600 people from across Manchester turned out on Thursday, Aug. 27, for a community back-to-school barbecue at the Squire Village apartment complex co-sponsored by school district and town agencies.

"It was affirming of what a strong community we have," said Scott Ratchford, director of the school district's Community and Family Partnership office -- which organized the event along with the town's Office of Neighborhoods and Families.

The police department also had a hand in sponsoring the event. And the police, who had been hosting smaller community events at Squire Village on Thursday nights all summer, distributed more than 200 backpacks filled with school supplies to children who arrived early.

Ratchford said the cookout was designed "to show our children and families the strength that is possible when the community we call home works together."

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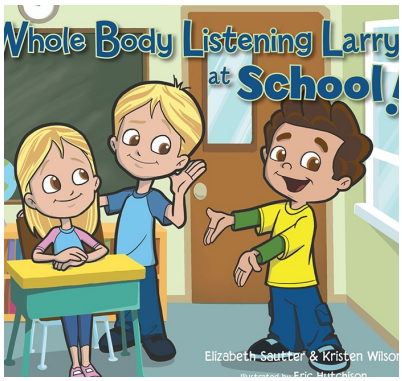
Lessons From 'Listening Larry'

During the first week of the school year, all of the district's kindergarteners and first grade students were introduced to "Whole Body Listening Larry" – a character in a popular book that is part of our new Social Thinking curriculum. The message of this book is that to be a good listener means you have to use your eyes, ears, heart, brain and more! Social Thinking is designed to help students acquire the basic skills of working and thinking in a group – skills that are sometimes overlooked or taken for granted but are essential for even some of the brightest, most advanced students in our schools. Look for more updates on this exciting work throughout the year.



Attendance Remains A Top Priority

September was "Attendance Awareness" month in Manchester and school officials say they will continue to emphasize the importance of regular school attendance throughout the year.

"A student who misses just two days each month – whether these are excused or unexcused – will miss 20 days in a year and be considered chronically absent," said Superintendent Matt Geary.

"Missing that much school often negatively affects a student's academic performance."

He urged parents to please let school staff know if there are issues we can help address.

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STEM Exposure Benefits Young Students

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technologists. This foundation will prepare students to observe, explore, ask questions and think critically, allowing our elementary students to compete for jobs that have yet to be created."

Manchester schools are heavily invested in STEM, and for this school year we have hired two STEM specialists for each of its nine elementary schools. Each elementary school in town has one STEM specialist assigned to students in K-2, the other in grades 3-5.

Superintendent Matt Geary said that giving students steady exposure to STEM instruction starting in kindergarten is essential if the district is to achieve its goal of ensuring that every student leaves our school system as a lifelong learner and contributing member of society.

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"By giving our students the tools they need to succeed in STEM, we are giving them the tools they need to be successful in life,' Oliver said.

Samantha DeSantis, who works at Waddell, said she learned right away that some of her students had preconceptions about STEM.

"They thought that scientists are simply smarter than most people," DeSantis said. "Now, however, they are beginning to question and wonder and see that that is all it takes to be 'scientists.'"

John Niemann, who is at Martin, is likewise excited about the way students are responding. As a sort of introductory lesson, he had students conduct an experiment -- observing and collecting data as salt and sugar interacted with ice.

"Teaching students to be lifelong learners and using the scientific method and/or engineering process will have much greater benefits than just the science content they learn," Niemann said. "It's the blend of logical thinking and creativity that will enable them to learn new content more easily."

Oliver said teachers throughout the district are working together, and that expansion of the STEM program is part of an integrated approach to support all students in all disciplines.

For example, she said that other teachers – in core classes as well as those in non-core subjects like music and art – are consciously using vocabulary and questioning strategies that are consistent with the STEM approach.

"We want students to solve problems, to make connections, and to develop healthy habits that they turn to when they face challenges," Oliver said. "Students with that kind of foundation can push themselves and do amazing things."

Manchester's

STEM

Specialists

Bowers
Laura Becker
William McDougal

Buckley
Sarah Patrylak
Chanel Curtin

Highland
Sheryl Delissio
Elizabeth Klemonski

Keeney
Jodi Soloperto
Kara Seaha

Martin
Amanda Paradis
John Niemann

Robertson
Laurie Gardner
Alejandra Munoz

Verplanck
Cynthia Woods
Colleen Deacon

Waddell
Danielle Brodeur
Samantha DeSantis

Washington
Melissa Knight
Mila Zadrozny

Please visit www.MPSPride.org for more information and insights from our STEM team!

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