



Message from the Interim Superintendent

Watching the leaves change each year reminds me of the winter season to come. While I can do without the snow, I do love the winter because, from birthdays to holidays, it brings so many reasons for my family to gather. This time of year is a constant reminder of all that I have to be grateful for in my life.

Kicking off this string of celebrations with Thanksgiving, I want to take a moment to share what I am thankful for and remind each of you to do the same. I am grateful for the opportunity to lead the Millbrook Blazer school community. I thank each and every one of your families for sharing your children with us each day. The pitter-patter of little feet and the hustle and bustle of our big kiddos in the hallway are heartwarming. Watching your children grow and change each year is a true delight. I thank you all for this privilege that I take very seriously.

To the colleagues that I work with each day, I thank you for sharing the joy of being an educator. I appreciate working alongside each of you on a daily basis and look forward to many more memories this year and in the years to come. Thank you to our community for supporting education and being a part of what makes Millbrook truly the best school community.

Thank you!
Caroline Hernandez Pidala,
Interim Superintendent of Schools

District seeks community input on strategic plan

Millbrook Central School District's strategic plan has now identified core values and four pillars to guide the district into the future.

The Millbrook Central School District values **P.E.A.C.E.**:

Purpose:

We create comprehensive and diverse learning experiences for students to thrive in the pursuit of self-directed goals.

Ethics:

We model ethical behavior and a strong moral compass.

Acceptance:

We celebrate our differences and respect others' perspectives.

Community:

We foster a culture of understanding, belonging and advocacy.

Evolution:

We cultivate every student's evolution as responsible, global citizens.

The district's values create the acronym "**P.E.A.C.E.**" representing the four pillars: **Methods**, **Connectedness**, **Sustainability** and **Discourse** create an acronym of **MCSD**, Interim Superintendent Caroline Hernandez Pidala points out. The pillars are focus areas, and will be the foundation of the district, hence the MCSD.

Millbrook's strategic planning process began in Fall 2021 with help from national K-12 consulting firm Education Elements. Through community responses to the question, "What vision do you have for Millbrook Central School District's future?" and focus groups with students at each school, four key themes emerged from work in the early stages:

- **Academics** - innovative academic experiences and student voice and choice.
- **Communications** - pathways to make it more effective.
- **Structure and schedules** - rethinking the traditional school day.
- **Interpersonal relationships** - how students and staff interact.



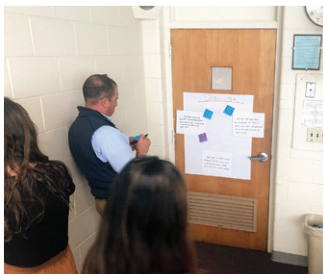
Middle School Principal Steven Cabello said the process has been positive. "It has been a true pleasure to sit in a room with all of our district's stakeholders and have open and honest conversations about who we are and more importantly who we want to be. The voices of our students, teachers, faculty, staff, board members and parents have truly made a difference in creating a mission, vision and cohesive plan that will guide this district for years to come,"

Alden Place School psychologist Tonya Pulver agreed. "I am proud to be a part of a team that recognizes that the MCSD must reorganize priorities and goals to meet the ever-changing needs of our students and stakeholders."

Specialized math teacher Matthew Miller said the process is "an organized and thoughtful approach in search of solutions and measurable outcomes."

Hernandez Pidala said that the District asked members of the school district and at-large community to contribute answers to a series of "How might we..." questions that will help identify action items designed to make our pillars a reality.

For example, "How might we articulate and distribute information that allows for community involvement and support in preparing our students for the future they choose?" or "How might we support diversity, equity, and inclusion education so that staff, students and the community feel safe?"





Highlights of social emotional learning efforts

Millbrook district staff held the first in its five part Family University series on October 18 to showcase what social emotional learning, or SEL, looks like for MMS. The series was offered over Zoom with families invited to attend in person at school if they wished.



Steven Cabello explains about Social Emotional Learning, while Executive Director of Instruction and Community Relations Dr. Amy Watkins looks on.

According to Castle Learning, SEL is the process where children and adults manage emotions, set and achieve goals, feel and show empathy and establish positive relationships while making responsible choices. Creating an environment at Millbrook where this type of learning all starts with relationships.

"It's the idea that relationships are at the center of everything we do and that's something we value here," MMS Principal Steven Cabello said. "Relationships are always connected to social emotional learning and the wellbeing of everyone involved."

A person's attention, memory and learning is always attached to their

emotions. Cabello noted that when quality SEL is integrated with academic curriculum, students are more engaged in their classes, allowing them to learn techniques about managing their emotions.

"This is going to go well beyond the classroom," Cabello said. "It's going to go with them everywhere they go in life."

Cabello encouraged parents to start a dialogue about emotions by asking their children when watching a TV program or witnessing an interaction in public, how the people involved feel. He added that parents being aware of their emotions at home is crucial as children are influenced by them.

"You set the tone for the way of which they are going to act with their emotions for the rest of their life," Cabello said. "Our interactions at home are the greatest tool we have for emotions."

In a video message, MMS sixth grade science teacher Sabrina Laurino explained how being kind to one another sets students up to be good

learners. Some SEL techniques she implements in class include a stoplight system where green means students work independently with calming music played and red where they stop and share their work

"The quiet music in the background is calming and sets the tone for the classroom," Laurino said. "I like to do check-ins to see how they're feeling and if they need more time."

[The session was recorded for families to watch at a later time if they couldn't attend.](#)

"What's important is that we're getting the message out," Cabello said. "We have a very responsible community and they will be responsive to it."

The next sessions will focus on social emotional learning initiatives at Millbrook High School, Elm Drive and Alden Place along with the efforts of the district's Pupil Personnel Services department.

The next dates for our social emotional learning initiatives:

Dec. 13, 2022:
Elm Drive
Jan. 17, 2023: TBD
Mar. 14, 2023: TBD
May 9, 2023: TBD

Send Sunshine) Support your schools



You can eat healthier and help your school district thanks to a Millbrook PTO fundraiser featuring fruit from Florida Indian River Groves.

You can purchase fresh fruit for yourself, family members and friends to enjoy over the holiday by visiting <https://shop.floridaindianrivergroves.com/ecommerce/1026481/preview> and choosing from a variety of fruits, soups and baked goods ranging in price from \$20-\$45. One site services all the schools and the sale runs through **Dec. 11**.

After you place your order, you will receive a receipt for your purchase via email. All products are shipped directly to the recipient, so please keep a copy of the receipt for your records.



The Millbrook PTO funds programs in the district to help our students socially, emotionally and educationally.

If you have any questions, please call one of the PTO fundraising chairs:

Magda Glazer, 646-229-7660;
Heather Ostman, 914-380-2096;
Dawn Tompkins, 845-527-8087.

Girls soccer, x-country runner make State Final Four

For the first time in Millbrook's history, a soccer team has reached the New York State Class C Final Four competition.



Standing from left to right: Elizabeth Taylor 9; Hannah Ross 11; Lilly Kozera 8; Vivian Eglinski 8; Charley Moore 9; Sailor Heitmann 9; Courtney Kaan 9; Maddy Krueger 10; Kneeling from left to right: Ella Wilson 12; Emily Grasseler 12; Hudson Heitmann 12; Sadie Krueger 12; Jordyn Kaan 12; Beth Bosan 12. Not pictured are Jerome Canzoneri, head coach and Adam Peek, assistant coach.

The Millbrook Varsity Girls Soccer team competed at the NYSPHAA Girls Soccer Championships in Cortland Nov. 12. The team lost a hard-fought semifinal game to Waterford-Halfmoon 3-0.

They earned the spot by defeating TriValley High School 8-1 in the Section 9 Championship Nov. 1, and by defeating Haldane High School 4-0 in the Regional Final on Saturday, Nov. 5. The team's record is 14 wins and 2 losses.



Soccer seniors: Seniors Sadie Krueger, Ella Wilson, Hudson Heitmann and Emily Grasseler pose for a photo with the Section 9 Class C plaque. Not pictured are seniors Jordyn Kaan and Beth Bosan.

Heitmann, Grasseler, Krueger and Wilson were all named Section 9 All-Stars this year, and Heitmann and Grasseler were both named to the All-Section team.

The team is led by six outstanding seniors, forwards Hudson Heitmann and Beth Bosan, midfielders Sadie Krueger and Emily Grasseler, defender Jordyn Kaan and goal keeper Ella Wilson.

"We only have 13 players, which should be a problem, but it hasn't been," Athletic Director Al Hammell said. "Physically, their fitness is at a high level, and the players are used to playing a lot of minutes. Most important is the attitude of the team. The team's mantra is 'Everyone Matters,' because they HAVE to in order for us to succeed." Everyone understands the importance of their role and contributes accordingly.

Cross country

The Millbrook Girls and Boys Cross Country teams had successful seasons this year.

Ninth grader Dylan Vasquez qualified for the NYSPHSAA Cross Country Boys Championships for the second year in a row. Vasquez qualified for this meet as an individual by coming in 10th place at the Section IX Class D Championship with



Dylan Vasquez: Dylan Vasquez after qualifying for states at the Section 9 meet.

a time of 17:37 for the three-mile race. This is an improvement of 33 seconds compared to his time at last year's sectional meet.

"Dylan has an incredibly strong work ethic and thrives in competitive and close races where he can utilize his phenomenal kick at the end of the race," Hammell said.

Vasquez placed 64th in the state at the NYSPHSAA Cross Country Championships in Verona, NY, with a time of 19:28 against the best runners in the state, Hammell said.

Athlete sendoff

To celebrate the accomplishments of the girls team and Vasquez, they walked the halls of the school buildings Thursday afternoon Nov. 10 from 1-2:30 p.m., starting at the high school, moving to the middle school and then Alden Place and Elm Drive, Hammell said.

Superintendent's Conference Day WORKSHOPS

Millbrook's teachers and staff discussed various initiatives ranging from safety to science during Superintendent's Conference Day, Oct. 11, 2022.

Branching Minds

Teachers from across the district, received an introduction to Branching Minds, a P-12 services and technology web application which leverages the learning sciences and technology to help districts personalize learning by enhancing their response to intervention and multi-tiered system of support practices.

Branching Minds Educational Consultant Samantha Mitchell showed an example of a student's profile in the platform which

includes their reading, math and behavior information that can be adjusted or added in as needed.

"All of this information will be at your fingertips," Mitchell explained. "We want to know how to help our students."

Branching Minds helps teachers identify students' academic, cognitive, social emotional and behavioral needs and related supports.

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Superintendent's Conference Day WORKSHOPS

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It's crucial to see which students will need support early on and their plan can be adjusted after teachers evaluate the data available. The type of help students need is based on three tiers, with the third tier being for those who need additional targeted instruction and intensive support. Mitchell added that the platform emphasizes working collaboratively with students through its actions.

"We can identify who is receiving support in a specific area and how to help," Mitchell said. "Everything we do is evidence based."

Many tools Branching Mind offers such as an intervention library will be available for teachers to use. District leaders will discuss it further to see what a specific roll-out of the platform will look like.

"This today, is just to talk about what is possible," Mitchell said. "We want to work smarter, not harder."

Connecting STEAM Across the disciplines

MMS Library Media Teacher Cathie Morton talked with teachers about incorporating Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math elements into their lessons and what it entails.



MMS & MHS teachers talk about STEAM initiatives they can implement into their classes.

Printing Club at MMS and members of the MHS Girls Varsity Soccer Team using the school's makerspace to design and create t-shirts in early October. "There's always fun stuff going on," Morton said.

The teachers later brainstormed ideas and discussed potential obstacles with Morton noting that teachers may already be incorporating STEAM initiatives but didn't realize it.

"It doesn't have to be all the big flashy stuff – it can just be arts and crafts," Morton said. "We're just filling in our ideas for what we do and what we want to do."

It is crucial for students to learn about STEAM, as many careers feature one or more elements of it.

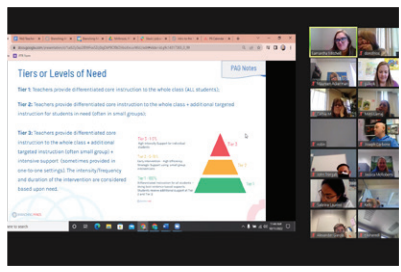
"Literally, almost every job you can imagine has one of those aspects," Morton said. "It's just so important that they are exposed to it."

Jillian Barnes, who teaches art at MMS and art elective classes at MHS, appreciated the chance to collaborate and bounce ideas off of her colleagues, especially those regarding technology.

"Almost everybody uses technology. It's good to use it in more creative ways and let the kids explore the materials," Barnes said. "Just saying that you use a Smartboard is not OK anymore."

In Barnes' classes, students can use computers and traditional art tools to manipulate photos, melding two mediums.

"We get a little bit of the 21st century, but we're not abandoning the traditional art materials," Barnes said.



Branching Minds Educational Consultant Samantha Mitchell explains to Millbrook teachers the platform's tiers of need.

Health & PE standards, alternate assessment

MMS & MHS Health Teacher Jessica Gilmour has been testing the waters of an alternative way for students not cleared by a doctor to participate in physical activities, to still receive physical education credits.

While the district offers an adaptive PE course for select students, this alternative method will not be separate from the regular PE classes.

"They will be with their physical education class," Gilmour said. "We're just starting this phase."

Gilmour started looking into this idea in late September. The District notified families whose child needed to participate in this alternative to allow them to earn PE credits toward graduation.

"We are compiling written assignments relating to physical education, sports and recreation for those students who are unable to participate," Gilmour said.

While the physical education program emphasizes movement and activity, Gilmour noted that students knowing the skills of what they are doing is equally important. "If they can't actively participate, at least they're still learning in some capacity," she said. "That's the goal."

Situational awareness

Jackie Fama, Regional Safety Technician for Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES, went over with teacher aides and assistants the proper way to behave in tense situations.



Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES Regional Safety Technician Jackie Fama speaking to MMS teachers about situational awareness.

"As soon as something seems off, make sure we say something," Fama said. "Communication in a crisis is the first thing that gets broken down."

Fama emphasized the importance of employees planning out and rehearsing what they should do in a potential crisis, both individually and as a part of a team. For example, all teachers shouldn't leave their post to attend to one student in crisis because that leaves open a possibility for further issues.

"If now I have to talk to one kid, I make sure someone is managing the zone here," Fama explained. "You have to know your role, but your role as a team too."

For teachers, it is crucial to know their students well and what their potential hazards might be. Fama added that teachers should respect students' feelings and not lash out when they behave badly, as it can make matters worse.

"Sometimes, unfortunately in these situations, we get stressed, we get frustrated, we panic and we do and say things we don't mean," Fama said. "We're not putting students' feelings aside because what could be a panic situation for one kid may not make sense to us."

Teacher Aide Janice Murray appreciated the session and Fama's knowledge.

"I thought she is very good at what she does," Murray said of Fama. "We should all have a plan of action when we're out there."



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