



December 2023

Newsletter

# MANKATO AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT PETERSON



Paul Peterson, Ed.D.,  
Superintendent

Happy Holidays from Mankato Area Public Schools! The 2023-2024 school year has been incredibly rewarding, and the holiday season is a perfect time to express our gratitude to the MAPS community for entrusting the public school system with the community's most treasured asset—our children.

The November 7 referendum may be in the rear view mirror, but we continue to be thankful to the community for once again affirming its support of public education. It won't be long before we break ground for the various projects across MAPS.

This fall's successful referendum is just one highlight of the positive momentum across MAPS. For example,

- MAPS enrollment continues to increase post-pandemic. This has occurred because of staff's commitment to providing a high quality education to each child that comes through our doors, no exceptions and no excuses. Parents are seeing and hearing what's happening in our classrooms and want to be a part of it. We're grateful to welcome new and returning students and families.
- Student attendance and achievement rates are up. We know that regular and consistent school attendance is directly linked to student success. This is why school teams have implemented detailed plans on these fronts simultaneously. We're thankful for teachers and support staff who have motivated kids back to school by designing high-interest and relevant learning experiences. Achievement data collected in the first few months of the school year shows that the work by teachers and students every day is leading to accelerated learning across the system. We appreciate our partnerships with parents and caregivers, and their support for student success.
- We're thankful for the community's support as MAPS commits itself to providing safe and welcoming school environments for all. Behavior expectations have been reset and staff remain consistent. You may have heard that cell phones are now prohibited during the instructional day. And guess what? Students are following the rules. Disruptions continue to go down across the system, including fewer fights and less reports of bullying.

As the second half of the school year approaches, we look forward to continuing to build strong relationships with the greater Mankato community and working together for the benefit of our public school students and families.

## WALKING TRAILS

*Walk with us!*

### COMMUNITY MEMBER 62+

We are happy that our school spaces (DMMS, Lincoln, & Eagle Lake) can be utilized to assist you in staying well. The service is **free** to community members 62+, advance registration required. January 3, 2024 through March 28, 2024.

**Dakota Meadows Middle School**  
1900 Howard Drive W., North Mankato  
Monday and Wednesday 6-8PM  
January 15 and 22 1-3PM

**Lincoln Community Center**  
110 Fulton Street, Mankato  
Tuesday and Thursday 6-8PM

**Eagle Lake Elementary School**  
500 LeSueur Avenue, Eagle Lake  
Monday and Wednesday 6-8PM  
January 15 and 22 1-3PM



### THIS ISSUE:

- SHOVEL READY PROJECT UPDATE
- HOPE SQUAD
- WINTER ACTIVITIES
- ENROLL NOW!
- SCHOOL BOARD STAFF & STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

### Find Calendars Here



### CALENDAR REMINDERS:

- December 25th through January 2nd - No School K-12
- January 10th - 2 hr Early Out
- January 15th - No School K-12 in observance of MLK Day
- January 19th - End of Quarter 2
- January 22nd - No School K-12

**\*\*2024-25 and 2025-26  
Calendars Coming Soon!**

[www.maps@isd77.org](http://www.maps@isd77.org)

ADDRESS/POSTAGE HERE

For more information, please contact: Community Education 507-387-5501



# SHOVEL READY PROJECTS



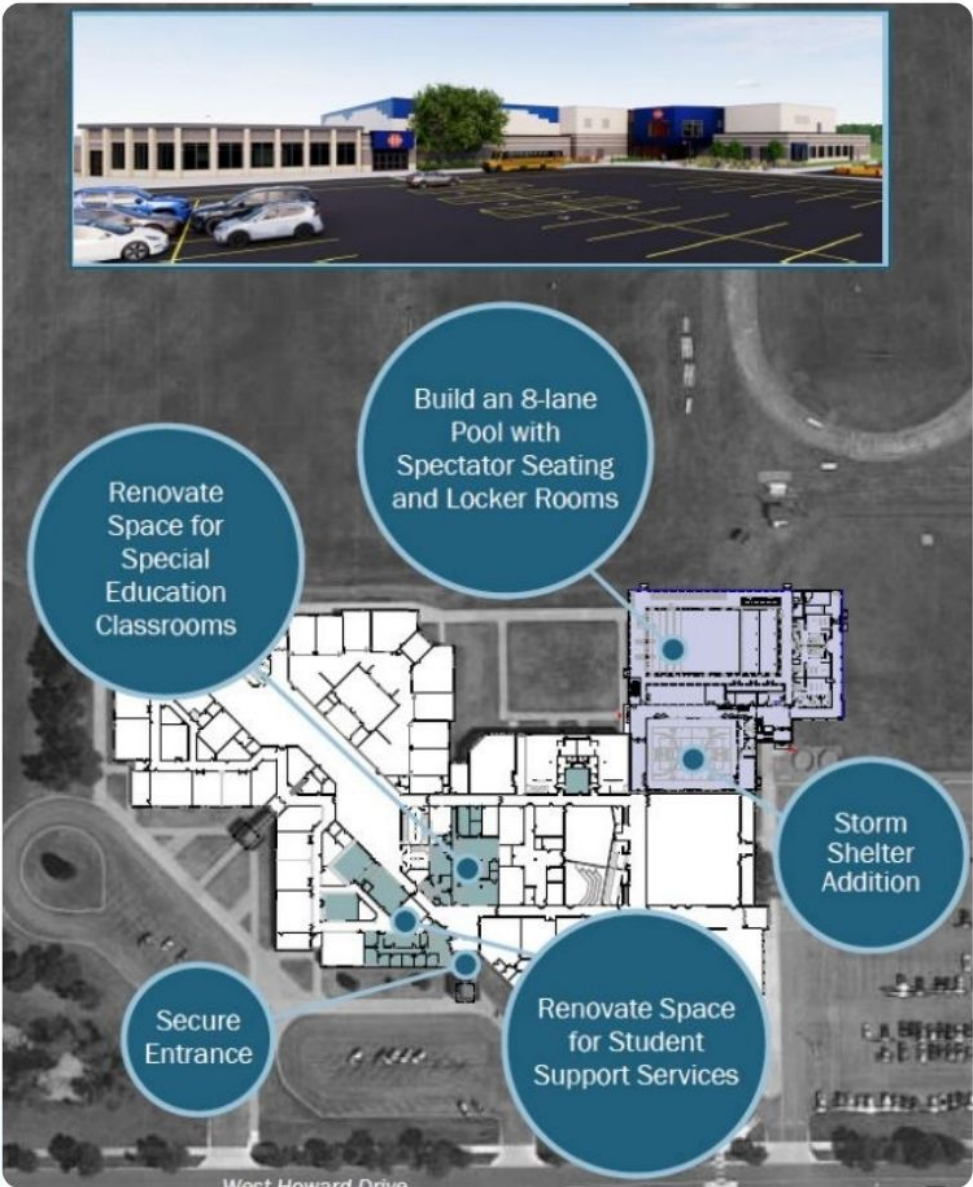
The district's Shovel Ready Committee has been working for the past 10 months in preparation for the bond passage. Out of the twelve construction projects, six projects are ready for contractors to bid on at the following sites: Bridges Community School, Roosevelt Elementary, Washington Elementary, Eagle Lake Elementary, Center for Learning and Dakota Meadows Middle School.

What is "Shovel Ready?" Shovel Ready means the construction drawings, project specifications, and bidding documents are completed. The district will start the building permit and bidding processes in November and December of 2023, award contracts in January and February of 2024 so materials can be ordered, and construction could start as soon as March at several of the sites.



Dakota Meadows Middle School is one of 6 "shovel ready" sites. The plans for the secure entrance, special education classrooms, new pool and auxiliary gym/storm shelter are completed, allowing the district to host a pre-bid walk-through with contractors in early December and award contracts in January. Weather permitting, work is planned to start as early as March.

Sites receiving secure entrances will have small additions added to their updated main entrances. Washington Elementary, shown below, is one example of a building that will have their office space bumped out allowing their entrance to be secure. This bump out and extension will allow for more student support services space in the building.



Sully Jacobs swims the breast stroke in the 200-meter medley relay. Jackson F. (2023).Free Press





# MAPS - HOPE SQUAD

## What is Hope Squad?

Hope Squad is a program that focuses on peer-to-peer intervention to help prevent youth suicide. Hope Squad is made up of students who are nominated by their peers because they are good listeners, easy to talk with, and people who are able to bring a struggling peer to a trusted adult. Over the course of the school year, Hope Squad leaders will learn skills and lessons to help build a community, but more importantly, build their school community. "Hope Week" is also being planned by leaders and will bring awareness and activities to buildings continuing to bring focus to suicide and suicide prevention.

### Why Hope Squad?

Students are still going to talk about things surrounding youth suicide, so why not give our Hope Squad leaders the tools and resources to help their peers when they need it most.

*"As an advisor, I have seen the impact that these students are making; they truly are opening up and being vulnerable with each other to learn and help ALL students in our school."* - Emma Sill, West High School Teacher and Hope Squad Advisor



# HOPE

# SQUAD



## WINTER ACTIVITIES



Check out your high schools' activity page. Scroll down and click on "Conference Schedule" to see a full list of activities.



## January 1st Registration Opens

Registration for K - 12th grade opening for the 2024- 25 School Year



Register your student here

Future Focused



College and Career Readiness



Meet MAPS Staff



Ask Questions



Extracurricular Activities



## April 18th Kindergarten Connection\*

\*Formally Kindergarten Roundup

- Times and details will be communicated at a later date
- Registration is not required to attend Kindergarten Connection
- Come see what your neighborhood school has to offer





# SCHOOL BOARD SPOTLIGHT

Every month, the school board will again acknowledge students and staff members who stand out due to their leadership, achievements, determination, and/or academic resilience. This chance to spotlight the efforts and successes of others continues to be a remarkable opportunity the Board is excited to share with the community.



Shannon Sinning, Liz Ratcliff, Kari Pratt, Sherri Blasing, Mr. Sipe, Kristi Schuck, Erin Roberts, Chris Kind, and Patrick Baker

## September Staff Spotlight:

Mr. Sipe is a passionate educator who inspires his students to challenge themselves and grow as human beings. He not only provides interactive and creative lessons, he makes connections in the learning to real life, ensuring the learning is relevant to his students. Mr. Sipe's colleagues often seek his input when addressing curriculum and he shares his wisdom in a collaborative manner. His legacy will not just be measured in years spent in the classroom, but in the hearts and minds he has touched.



Shannon Sinning, Liz Ratcliff, Kari Pratt, Kristi Schuck, Heather Sellner, Julio and Family, Rebecca Zenk, Erin Roberts, Patrick Baker, Chris Kind, Jessica Waterstreet, and Liliana Cartagena

## October Student Spotlight:

Julio is currently a student at INSITE. He started at INSITE after completing four years at East High School. Julio decided to continue with his education in order to pursue working on independence in the community, at work and at home. He has started working at Goodwill and has shown initiative, a great attitude, and is a positive role model. Julio continues to work to break down barriers by showing initiative, being a positive role model and having a great sense of humor.



Shannon Sinning, Liz Ratcliff, Kari Pratt, Kristi Schuck, Melissa Brueske, Mrs. Olivo, Jody Rittmiller, Erin Roberts, Patrick Baker, and Chris Kind

## October Staff Spotlight:

Mrs. Olivo is an exceptional school counselor who makes meaningful connections with students, staff, and families. She delivers high-quality lessons that not only benefit the social and emotional growth of students and staff, but also contributes to a positive and supportive school environment. Her continued leadership has brought back peacemakers to both buildings she serves and she also created Social Emotional Lessons for teachers to deliver. MAPS is indeed fortunate to have Annika Olivo as part of its community, and celebrating her contributions is well-deserved.



Karen Wolters, Liz Ratcliff, Yunis, Farhiya, Kristi Schuck, Erin Roberts, and Chris Kind

## November Student Spotlight:

Farhiya has been a student at Adult Basic Education intermittently since the 2009-2010 school year. Her two children attended our Lincoln Logs Learning Center while she attended classes and eventually graduated from East High School. Both children are now attending South Central College, where Farhiya works part-time. Farhiya was instrumental in the start up of the student worker program at Lincoln Community Center where she spent two years as a student receptionist at the front desk. Her professionalism showed with the welcoming environment she provided and her positive relationships she built with her peers and staff. Farhiya recently took on the interim ABE Home-School Liaison position in addition to her work at SCC. Along with her hard work and dedication to her jobs, she is also attending advanced English as a Second Language classes and taking a professional leadership course through ABE as well. We want to recognize Farhiya's important role as both a student and staff member and honor her ongoing commitment to lifelong learning.