# Bright Spots and Big Moments in Mapleton

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### Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025

Welcome to **Spark! Bright Spots and Big Moments,** your biweekly roundup of feel-good stories, standout moments, and celebrations from around Mapleton. From student achievements to staff highlights, this community newsletter is all about what makes Mapleton shine.

***Spark* stories:**
**Bright Spots:** Shout-outs and recognitions
**Big Moments:** Experiences, milestones, and celebrations
**Behind the Spark:** Staff profiles or features
**Community Connections:** Events, partnerships, family highlights
**High Fives!**

Share your good news!
Send a "High Five"!

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## Bright Spots

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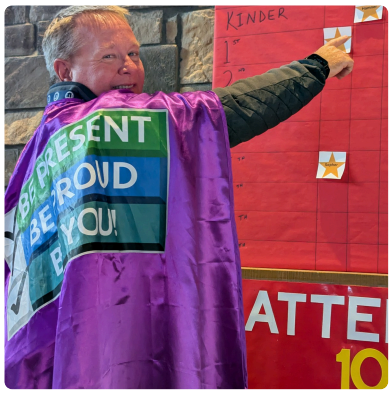
## Explore PK-8 and Global Intermediate Academy earn Attendance Superhero honors




Two Mapleton schools are proving that when attendance is visible, celebrated, and connected to meaningful learning, students show up. Explore PK-8 and Global Intermediate Academy (GIA) were named Mapleton's most recent Attendance Superheroes, each earning the district's traveling purple cape for their standout efforts.

At Explore PK-8, attendance is impossible to miss. A large tracker in the cafeteria displays each grade's daily attendance, and classes earn stars, certificates, and rewards when they reach 100%. Students with perfect attendance enter drawings for prizes, including a chance to win an electric scooter. Families see the message the moment they enter the school, where banners and posters make it clear that every day matters.

Down the road at GIA, the focus is on designing school days students *don't want to miss*. The school has reimagined its morning schedule to include advisory and choice-based career and technical education classes, giving students engaging and hands-on learning first thing in the day. With clearer communication to families and personalized support when barriers arise, their attendance has increased to 94.2%, with truancy nearly cut in half.

Read the full stories for each school in our "News from the District" section here.

**Tell us why your school is Mapleton's next Attendance Superhero! Email Communications@mapleton.us.**

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## Academy science teacher moves closer to zero-gravity research flight

Academy High School science teacher Dr. Mellissa Pfaff is one step closer to her upcoming microgravity mission. She recently completed four days of intensive training at the University of Texas's Center for Space Research, where she met with scientists, learned more about zero-g physics, and practiced procedures using a drop tower to simulate brief moments of weightlessness.

Pfaff is one of only 12 educators nationwide selected for the Embedded Teacher Program, giving her students the rare opportunity to design a real experiment that will be tested in microgravity. This spring, Pfaff will travel to Bordeaux, France, to conduct the research with the European Space Agency.

Read the full story on Academy's website in the "News and Events" section.

**Read the full story in our "News from the District" section**

## Big Moments

### Seventh graders use "The Outsiders" to explore identity and community

Seventh graders at Meadow Community School recently took a closer look at friendship, loyalty, and belonging through the young adult classic "The Outsiders," by S. E. Hinton. The novel follows a teenage "greaser" in the 1960s as he tries to figure out who he is while caught in a conflict with the wealthier "Socs."

In Ms. Jeannine Stout's English class, students studied the characters' thoughts, strengths, and struggles, then connected them to groups they know in real life, like sports teams, clubs, and friend groups. Through discussion and art, they explored how groups influence what people believe, how they act, and how they support one another.

For example, students compared the Greasers' loyalty to the teamwork and trust they see in real life, like the way a group of friends helps each other through tough times.

### GIA students explore surprising career paths through hands-on CTE courses

Global Intermediate Academy has transformed traditional specials into rotating Career and Technical education classes, giving middle schoolers hands-on experiences in real industries. Students now explore courses like construction basics, coaching, forensic illustration, and glass fusing, all of which can help them discover new interests, build practical skills, and see how classroom learning connects to future careers.

From sketching facial reconstructions to leading sports drills and wiring electrical projects, students are uncovering passions and possibilities before they even reach high school.

**Read the full story in our "News from the District" section**

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## Behind the Spark

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### CDE reviews Mapleton's gifted programming

Last week, Colorado Department of Education representatives visited Mapleton to review how the district supports gifted learners through its Gifted Education Monitoring process. The visit, which occurs every five years, helps districts celebrate strengths and identify areas for growth.

Over three days, the review team observed classrooms at Adventure Elementary, Valley View Innovation School, Academy High School, and York International School; met with teachers and gifted leads; and gathered feedback from students. Classroom visits showcased a range of advanced learning experiences, from playwriting revisions at Valley View to collaborative, project-based challenges at Academy.

CDE's final report is expected in the coming months and will help Mapleton strengthen gifted programming that supports teachers and meaningfully challenges students.

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### It's time to complete the Annual Update!

To prepare for the upcoming school year, all Mapleton families need to log onto the **Infinite Campus Parent Portal and complete the Annual Update.**

The Annual Update is how current families confirm important student information, like phone numbers, email addresses, and emergency contacts. The Annual Update is also how current families **enroll a new student, such as a sibling, or select a new school for the upcoming year, if needed.**

**Who needs to select a new school for the 2026-27 school year?**
Current families who need to use the Annual Update process to select a new Mapleton school for the 2026-27 school year include:

- **All preschool students moving on to kindergarten.** Preschool students are not automatically enrolled in kindergarten if it is offered at their current school.
- **6th grade students attending Adventure Elementary and Welby Community School of the Arts that are moving on to 7th grade.**
- **8th graders attending Achieve Academy, Clayton Partnership School, Explore PK-8, Meadow Community School, Monterey Community School, or Trailside Academy moving on to 9th grade.**

Families choosing a new school for the 2026–27 school year will receive their school placement notifications at the end of February.

**When does the Annual Update open?**
The Annual Update is open! Families are encouraged to complete the Annual update by **Friday, Feb. 13.**

**How do families complete the Annual Update?**
The Annual Update is located in the Infinite Campus Parent Portal. Step-by-step instructions and a detailed video are available on the Mapleton website.

**If you need help accessing the Infinite Campus Parent Portal, please contact the main office of your child's school.**

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## School Tours and Discovery Fairs

**School Tours**
From **January through March**, all Mapleton schools will be hosting tours to help families see classrooms, meet staff, and learn more about each campus. A **full calendar of upcoming tours is available on our website.** Families are also welcome to contact any Mapleton school to arrange a visit.

**Mapleton Discovery Fairs - two opportunities to attend!**
Mapleton's new district-wide Discovery Fairs will help current and prospective families learn about their school options and feel confident in choosing the right fit. Find resources, information

stations, and helpful workshops, all designed to support you through the enrollment process. Attend one of our two upcoming events!

**Wednesday, January 14, from 5 to 7 p.m.**
Global Campus, John Dewey Student Center
7480 Broadway, Bldg 2, Denver, 80221

**Wednesday, January 28, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.**
Skyview Campus, Student Center
8990 York St., Thornton, 80229

**Learn more about upcoming enrollment events!**

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## Preschool Enrollment

### Now enrolling preschool!

**Universal Preschool applications now open!**
Children in Colorado can register for up to 15 hours per week of free, high-quality preschool in their year before kindergarten through Colorado's Universal Preschool Program, also known as Universal Pre-K (UPK). Families may qualify for more free hours based on a number of qualifying factors, per available funding, described further here.

**Mapleton and UPK**
We're pleased to once again be participating in UPK and we would be honored to serve your family for in 2026-27!

**Families with children currently enrolled, children with siblings currently enrolled, or who have a parent or guardian currently employed at Mapleton can "match" with Mapleton directly! Learn more!**

**Families new to the Universal Preschool program will be matched with one of their top 10 preferred providers during matching rounds in February and March. Learn more!**

For questions or more information, please contact Mapleton's Early Childhood Education Department, at Preschool@mapleton.us or 303.853.1784

**Learn more about Preschool/UPK enrollment!**

### Explore Primary is going vertical!

What began as an exciting vision for Mapleton's youngest learners is now taking shape on the Explore PK-8 campus. Construction recently began on the new Explore Primary, and crews have started laying the foundation for a 45,000-square-foot building designed specifically for early childhood and primary students.

The project, led in partnership with JHL Constructors, Hord Coplan Macht, and Accenture, reflects a shared commitment to building imaginative learning environments where curiosity and creativity can grow.

Once Explore Primary opens in August 2027, the current Explore building will be thoughtfully renovated to serve grades 2–8. Together, the two schools will support students from their earliest steps in education through their middle school years.

## Community Connections

### Thank you for your support of the Mapleton Holiday Shop

The Mapleton Education Foundation and Mapleton's Integrated Services team partnered once again to host a successful Holiday Shop last Saturday, serving about 60 families and 130 children. Thanks to the generosity of Mapleton employees, community members, and A Precious Child, roughly 225 toys were donated and made available for children of all ages.

While families selected gifts, students enjoyed hands-on holiday crafts. The Kiwanis Club also joined the event, providing winter weather gear and additional personal resources to support families.

We are especially grateful for the 35 volunteers who helped make the event possible. Thank you to our caring community for bringing joy, dignity, and warmth to Mapleton families this holiday season.

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### Denver Broncos feature Skyview's new smart helmets

A Denver Broncos video crew visited the Skyview Campus last week to spotlight the Wolverines' new high-tech football helmets, part of the Broncos Foundation's ALL IN. ALL COVERED. initiative. The statewide program is providing more than 15,000 Riddell Axiom helmets to Colorado high schools at no cost.

The helmets include internal sensors that track where and how hard players are hit, helping coaches identify unsafe habits and teach safer tackling techniques. Head Coach Norm Maestas said the technology supports one essential goal, keeping young athletes safe.

"Football is a contact sport, but if we can teach them better technique and reduce the chances of serious injuries, that's what we want to do," Maestas said.

Skyview will receive 70 total helmets over four years, including 17 this season. Maestas issued the first set to juniors and sophomores who trained consistently in the offseason.

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## High Fives!

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**Submit a High Five!**

**"High Fives" are a quick and fun way to celebrate the people who make Mapleton shine. From kind gestures and creative ideas to everyday excellence, these shout-outs recognize those who go above and beyond and remind us of the many ways our community makes a difference.**

[If you know someone who deserves a "High Five", submit your appreciation using this form.]

**Murray Roberson, Maintenance**
"Murray worked tirelessly to get the HVAC system in my classroom fixed. My class and I are beyond grateful for all his hard work to help us have a comfortable learning environment!"
*Submitted by Sara Kitchen*

**Carma Bauderer, York International School**
"Thanks for being a huge part of the success of our classroom! Your creativity and dedication are truly outstanding!"
*Submitted by Welby Community School Preschool*

**Enid Nieves, Integrated Services**
"Where do I even start? Enid is a pretty awesome human and she deeply cares about our students. If a student is hungry, she'll find a way to help them get what they need. If a student needs information about Medicaid, she knows who to reach out to. And if I need someone to help with a potential McKinney-Vento situation, she's always ready to answer my questions. She's not only knowledgeable about social services in our area, but she's also a great person with a big heart and a great sense of urgency that truly helps kids in times of need. ¡Gracias por tu ayuda, Enid!"
*Submitted by Edgar Torres*

**Layli Schultz, Carlee Smith, Marisol Sanchez, Peggy Beard, and Jessica Rodriguez; Global Primary Academy**
"I had the privilege of shadowing Layli in her ILC classroom for an entire day in late November. Her and her team were welcoming and supportive of my visit and very giving of their time. It was evident that these five amazing professionals care deeply about their students well being and success. I greatly appreciated their kindness, compassion, and calm demeanor when supporting students with their unique needs. I appreciate how you show up with positivity and energy for your students each and every day. Thank you for all you do! "
*Submitted by Erica Branscum*

**Zach Page, Explore PK-8**
"Zach is the best! He has created clubs for staff members and set up staff activities that make our school a more fun, inclusive, and happy place to work! Thanks Zach, we appreciate everything you do for our Crew!"
*Submitted by Rachel Dickson*

**Alex Buck and Mandie Lavery, York International School**
"Alex and Mandie opened their doors to the CDE Gifted Education Monitoring team. The team learned from their practices and students, and saw their great work in action. Thank you, Alex and Mandie!"
*Submitted by Jennifer Snodgrass*

**Brie Shoemaker, Sarah Kopperud, and the teaching staff at Adventure Elementary**
"Brie and Sarah passionately explained the dual-language programming at Adventure Elementary to our CDE Gifted Education Monitoring team! They gave us context and then took us around to visit classrooms where we were able to see students engaged in learning. Thank you to the Adventure team!"

*Submitted by Jennifer Snodgrass*

**Justine Bickford and Julianne Hazah, Valley View Innovation School**
"Justine and Julianne's passion for high-quality gifted education shone through during CDE's Gifted Education Monitoring visit to Valley View. They explained their passionate approach to gifted education and then took the team around to see their program in action. Thank you to Justine, Julianne, and the entire Valley View staff for all you do for gifted students in Mapleton!"

*Submitted by Jennifer Snodgrass*

**Jennifer Olsen, Melissa Pfaff, Kristy Vazquez, Kim Adams, and Matt Coates; Academy High School**
"The Gifted and Talented and administrative teams at Academy opened their doors to CDE's Gifted Education Monitoring team to provide insight into gifted education at the high school level. The students assembled for the high school focus group shared their hopes and dreams, which have been nurtured and supported by the Academy staff. Thank you for all you do for gifted students in Mapleton!"

*Submitted by Jennifer Snodgrass*

**Karina Kucherova, Communications**
"Karina provided translation services for parents during our Gifted Education Monitoring parent listening sessions. Her warm demeanor and exceptional translation skilled helped provide families with access to the listening session and helped the monitoring team gather critical data to support students. Thank you, Karina!"

*Submitted by Jennifer Snodgrass*

**Submit a High Five!**

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## Spark! Bright Spots and Big Moments – Call for Submissions

**Do you have a bright spot or big moment to share?** Email communications@mapleton.us, or call 303.853.1020 to share your ideas!

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Mapleton Public Schools

www.mapleton.us

Contact