

MANCHESTER-SHORTSVILLE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

February 2026



EXCELLENCE

Challenge and learning are the goals and the rewards

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OUR MISSION

We will challenge all learners and work in partnership with students, parents/guardians and community members to achieve high standards.

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Be a
CARE-ing
Cardinal!

Message from the Superintendent



Dear Manchester-Shortsville School Community,

As we move into February, I want to take a moment to thank our students, staff, and families for the energy, commitment, and pride that continue to define the Red Jacket community. The winter months are often a time of steady, meaningful work across our schools, and it has been encouraging to see our buildings filled with focus, collaboration, and momentum as we progress through the school year.

Over the past several weeks, we have continued to celebrate the many strengths that make our District special—from student achievements in the classroom, on the stage, and in athletic competition, to the dedication of our staff who work each day to support the success and well-being of our learners. These moments of success do not happen by chance; they are the result of strong relationships, high expectations, and a shared commitment to doing what is best for students.

February is also a time of reflection and intentional planning. One important area of focus this winter has been our annual Cardinal Culture Survey. We are grateful to all students, staff, and families who took the time to share their feedback. This input is helping us both celebrate areas of strength across our District and drill down more deeply into areas where we want to gain a better understanding of opportunities for growth. Rather than viewing this feedback as an endpoint, we are using it as a starting point for thoughtful conversations at the District, building, and department levels about how we continue to improve and move our work forward.

As we analyze survey results, we are intentionally connecting what we are hearing from our community to our Strategic Action Plan and our Cardinals CARE values of Cooperation, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence. This process allows us to recognize what is working well, while also identifying where additional focus, support, or refinement may be needed to best serve our students and staff.

Looking ahead, the months to come will include continued dialogue, planning, and collaboration as we translate feedback into action. Our goal is to ensure that our decisions remain grounded in data, aligned with our strategic priorities, and reflective of the voices within our school community.

Thank you for your continued partnership, trust, and engagement. Your feedback, involvement, and support are essential to our success, and together we will continue to strengthen the learning environment for all Red Jacket students.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Christopher J. Barnard
Superintendent of Schools



Red Jacket Educator Selected for Prestigious NYS Master Teacher Program



Red Jacket Middle School science teacher Dale Carrigan has been selected as one of just 177 STEM educators statewide to participate in the New York State Master Teacher Program—a highly competitive, four-year professional learning initiative designed to strengthen STEM education across New York.

The Master Teacher Program is hosted at nine State University of New York (SUNY) campuses and brings together outstanding STEM educators to collaborate with university faculty, pre-service teachers, early-career educators, and local STEM industry experts. Participants receive a \$15,000 annual stipend from New York State and engage in intensive, content-focused professional development, peer mentoring, and regional leadership opportunities throughout the academic year.

The application process for the program is rigorous and multi-step. Candidates must have at least five years of teaching experience, with the majority of their workload in STEM instruction. Applicants complete a detailed written application, secure professional

references, and demonstrate how they have continued to grow their content knowledge beyond the classroom while supporting students and families in their community. Finalists are then invited to an in-person interview, where they are evaluated on classroom practice and collaboration with fellow educators.

For Carrigan, the process began last January and concluded with the official announcement on Christmas Eve, making it a year-long journey.



Carrigan is currently in his ninth year of teaching and his fifth year at Red Jacket. He has taught both middle and high school science, primarily at the middle school level, and has experience teaching life science and physical science. He earned his undergraduate degree from St. John Fisher University and his master's degree from Buffalo State College. Carrigan also received

tenure at Red Jacket last year.

“I’ve always been passionate about science,” Carrigan said. “I started substitute teaching while I was in college and quickly realized this could be a great career. I love teaching kids and helping inspire the next generation of science thinkers.”

That passion is what motivated Carrigan to apply for the Master Teacher Program. Through the program’s regional cohorts, he has been able to connect with STEM educators from across the state and gain access to meaningful professional learning that he is already incorporating into his classroom.

Participants in the program are required to complete 50 hours of professional development each year through presenting or attending sessions. Upon completion of the four-year program, participants officially earn the title of New York State Master Teacher.

Carrigan strongly encourages other STEM educators to consider applying. “It’s a great experience and an incredible opportunity to grow as an educator,” he said.

Red Jacket congratulates Dale Carrigan on this outstanding achievement and looks forward to the continued impact of his work in the classroom and beyond.

Welcome to RJ's Birdhouse! Bringing Cardinals CARE to Life!



Red Jacket is getting a little more animated this year with the debut of "RJ's Birdhouse," a new video series created to help the district's youngest students learn what it means to be a Cardinal.

The series features Little RJ, a baby cardinal mascot who serves as the program's narrator and guide. Through

a blend of animation and real-world footage, the episodes explore the four pillars of the CARE acronym: Cooperation, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence.

"We wanted a way to make our CARE values move beyond the classroom walls and really stick with our students," said Red Jacket Elementary Principal Jeffrey McCarthy. "Little RJ brings a sense of wonder and fun to these lessons. Seeing our students recognize themselves in these stories and then seeing them practice that same

cooperation and respect on the playground is exactly what we hoped for."

By bridging the gap between school and home, the series shows students how to be "CARE-ing Cardinals" in their local communities just as much as in the classroom. The initiative is part of a broader district effort to foster a positive school climate through consistent language and engaging digital content.

The full series is currently available for public viewing on the district's official website and digital platforms.

Raising the Bar: Indoor Track Athletes Set Program Records

The Red Jacket indoor track program is rewriting its history books this winter, led by record-breaking performances from senior Josh Lepel and junior Danny McWilliams.

Just weeks after setting new program benchmarks, both athletes raised the bar again during a recent meet at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Lepel, a five-year veteran of the program, continued his dominant season in the 55-meter hurdles. Earlier this year, he clocked an 8.32-second finish to break a school record set by Matt



Woodard in 2011. Lepel outperformed himself at RIT, shaving more time off his mark to establish a new school record of 8.27 seconds.

In the field events, McWilliams continued his historic campaign in the pole vault.

After becoming the first male athlete in school history to compete in the event last year, McWilliams has spent the season consistently besting his own marks.

After previously setting the record at 9 feet 3 inches, McWilliams reached a career milestone at RIT by clearing 10 feet.

Both athletes have demonstrated consistent growth as the indoor season draws to a close. Lepel and McWilliams are now preparing for league and sectional championships, where they look to build on their record-setting momentum.

Twin Cities Holiday Basket Program Spreads Seasonal Cheer



The Twin Cities Holiday Basket Program made a profound impact on our community this winter, transforming the local spirit of giving into tangible support. By distributing essential food items and thoughtful gifts, the program ensured that the holiday season started on a bright note for neighbors facing financial hardship.

The success of this program is a direct result of the

overwhelming generosity seen across the board. Thanks to the combined contributions of students, staff, and local community members, the program successfully supported more than 70 families and well over 100 children. From organized food drives to individual gift donations, every contribution helped fill a gap for those in need.



Beyond the donations, the heart of the program was the



dedicated team of volunteers. These individuals spent hours organizing, packing, and distributing baskets, proving that time is one of the most valuable gifts one can give. Their compassion played a vital role in ensuring that every participating family felt seen, supported, and cared for during this special time of year.

Red Jacket Earns Two 2025 NYSPRA Awards



The Manchester-Shortsville Central School District has been recognized with two awards from the New York State Public Relations Association (NYSPRA) in its 2025 annual communications competition.

Red Jacket received an Excellence Award for its district website and a Merit Award for its Rebranding and Mascot Campaign. The district partnered closely with the Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES Communications team throughout both projects. The team played an integral role in the development of the new

website and in guiding the strategic planning and rollout of the rebranding and mascot campaign.

Each year, NYSPRA receives more than 400 entries from school districts and educational organizations across New York State. Awards are presented in three tiers—Excellence, Honor, and Merit—and represent outstanding achievement in school communications, marketing, and public relations.

Out of roughly 120 awards statewide, Red Jacket earned two of them. Only six districts in New York were recognized for their websites, and Red Jacket was one of just four to receive the highest honor, Excellence. For strategic campaigns such

as rebranding efforts, only eleven districts statewide were recognized—one with Excellence, two with Honor, and the remaining with Merit, including Red Jacket.

The New York State Public Relations Association (NYSPRA) is a professional organization that supports school communications professionals across the state. Its annual awards competition recognizes exceptional work in areas such as publications, websites, social media, videos, and strategic campaigns.

Red Jacket's recognitions reflect the district's continued commitment to clear, engaging, and community-centered communication.

Community Schools Survey

We invite families and community members to share their feedback through our Community Schools Survey. This survey introduces our Community Schools initiative, a partnership-based approach focused on strengthening student enrichment, family engagement, and overall well-being across the Manchester-Shortsville community.

All survey responses are confidential. One question asks whether you are interested in volunteering. If you would like to volunteer, you may choose to provide your name. If not, you may leave that question blank to remain anonymous.

Your feedback helps us better understand what is working well in our district and where additional supports may be needed—particularly in the areas of academic support, health and wellness, and access to essential resources. Survey results will be used to help guide and prioritize district and community supports for the upcoming school year.

To take the survey, please scan the QR code.



Keeping our Fleet Moving: Meet Manny Rivas



The district is thrilled to welcome a new face to the bus garage, Manuel "Manny" Rivas, who officially joined the transportation department as a school bus mechanic.

Born in the Dominican Republic, Manny moved to Salem, Massachusetts, where he grew up and attended local schools. He is currently in the process of relocating to Manchester. Manny joins the district with a robust professional background, including experience with the Rochester City School District and various dealerships.

Manny's technical expertise is wide-ranging, covering everything from heavy diesel equipment to standard gasoline engines. His primary goal in his new role is to ensure the fleet remains operational and that all district students have a safe commute.

Outside of the garage, Manny is an automotive enthusiast who enjoys working on race cars, specifically older Hondas. He also spends his time on home improvement projects and seeking out local restaurants with great food.

The district is proud to have Manny on the team to help support our students and staff.

Budding Readers Program

Free Books for Babies

Is your baby 36 months of age or younger? Do you know a baby of this age in our school district? Budding Readers has free "bundles of books" with tips for parents about reading to babies and toddlers. To request a free "bundle of books," you can call, email, place a request on our website, or scan the QR code. One of our volunteers will contact the parent to arrange a mutually convenient time to deliver the bundle of books.

Email: books@buddingreaders.org
Website: www.books@buddingreaders.org
Phone: (585) 900 – 1725

Thank you for helping us provide books for babies.

Budding Readers offers free bundles of books in the following school district communities: Bloomfield, Canandaigua, Honeoye, Marcus Whitman, Midlakes, Naples, Red Jacket & Victor.



Red Jacket Educator Appointed to State Leadership Role with Delta Kappa Gamma



Red Jacket High School teacher Stacy Liberati has been appointed webmaster for the New York State Organization of Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG) International, a professional association that empowers women educators through leadership development and collegial support.

Liberati has been an active member of DKG for ten years, and has been serving as the communications chair for the New York State organization for the past four years. She is also a

member of the local Red Jacket chapter, Alpha Tau.

The appointment comes as the state organization works to revamp its website to better serve members and local chapters across New York. As webmaster, Liberati is responsible for maintaining a user-friendly site that provides up-to-date information and resources to support membership and chapter operations statewide.

“The state-level website is an important tool for local chapters,” Liberati said. “My goal is to ensure it is accessible, current, and helpful for educators at every level.”

At the local level, the Alpha Tau chapter of DKG plays an active role in supporting education in the Red Jacket and surrounding communities. Each year, the chapter awards \$1,000 scholarships to three graduating

seniors who plan to pursue careers in education, along with \$500 grants to two faculty members. Funds may be used for continuing education, classroom needs, or other educational initiatives. With active members from Canandaigua, Midlakes, Victor, Penn Yan, Marcus Whitman, as well as Red Jacket, these scholarships are available to several area schools.

Liberati has also helped connect Red Jacket educators with DKG grant opportunities. Lindsay Debonis received a \$500 Alpha Tau grant to support a leadership program, while Alicyn Preall was awarded a \$1,000 Pi State Educational Foundation Scholarship, a statewide award that supports literacy across content areas. Elaine Anderson, another Alpha Tau member, has received the Pi State Scholarship twice to support reading initiatives in her classroom.

Celebrating our First-Year Teachers



Red Jacket recently hosted a first-year teacher celebration, recognizing new educators' first six months in the district and the colleagues who have supported them along the way.

The event highlighted the commitment, passion, and hard work of the district's newest teachers and provided an opportunity for them to

recognize mentors, colleagues, and leaders who played a meaningful role in their professional growth.

Valerie Femia, a first-year teacher, emphasized the

importance of mentorship during the celebration. She credited her mentor, Barbara D'Aiutolo, with helping shape her experience in the district. “Everybody here has been great, but especially my mentor,” Femia said. “She has been pivotal to my experience, welcoming me to this community, teaching me

the ropes, and being a great co-teacher and advocate.”

David Pullen, behavior specialist at Red Jacket, said the celebration recognizes new and first-year teachers while also highlighting the staff members who have contributed to their early success. “The main goals are to build morale and strengthen our climate, with a focus on retaining highly effective staff members,” Pullen said. He added that fostering a positive professional environment helps position the district as an attractive place to work and supports efforts to recruit highly qualified teachers and support staff.



#CardinalsCARE

VISIT OUR PHOTO GALLERY
BY SCANNING THE QR CODE



**MANCHESTER-SHORTSVILLE
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