Manchester Essex Regional School District
2023 Annual Report

The mission of the Manchester Essex Regional School District (MERSD) is to provide a high- quality, comprehensive, student-centered educational experience that prepares them for a post-secondary educational or service experience, a career, and life as an engaged member of society.

MERSD has a reputation of strong academic achievement, high-quality faculty, a commitment to small class size, and a robust co-curricular program.

Throughout 2023 MERSD continued to make progress in fulfilling its goals as outlined in the Strategic and District Improvement Plans. Highlights include continued academic excellence, ranking number two on *Boston Magazine's* best high schools list, receiving the Safe and Supportive Schools grant, completing the Hyland and Brook Street turf field replacement project on time and under budget, achieving entry into the Massachusetts School Building Authority eligibility process for Essex Elementary School, welcoming two new district leaders, and continuing development of our academic program to support student achievement.

Manchester Essex Regional High School ranked second in *Boston Magazine's Fall 2023 Best High Schools Edition. Boston Magazine* ranks public high schools in towns or districts within, or partially within, I-495. The list is compiled from the most recent data for each school available at press time from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. Student achievement, quality of the faculty, class size, and funding are among the components used to establish rank. Additionally, MERHS ranked among the top 5% of High Schools Nationwide in the Spring 2023 *US News & World Report Best High Schools* edition.

In July of 2023, Heather Leonard (Director of Curriculum & Instructional Technology) and Julie Sgroi (High School Principal) joined MERSD as new members of the leadership team. Throughout the search process, both Ms. Leonard and Ms. Sgroi impressed the committee with their energy, intellect, professionalism, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and experience. With their proven track records in instructional leadership, vision of excellence, and commitment to continual improvement, they are well positioned to build on the successes of their predecessors.

In alignment with its Strategic and District Improvement Plans MERSD continues to develop its academic program to support and improve student achievement. The Strategic Plan consists of our District Mission, Vision and Core Values, and Vision of the Graduate. It forms the construct for the district and school-based Improvement Plans and ultimately the framework for developing teacher goals and objectives. The District Improvement Plan is based on the model of continual improvement, and it is intended to be a living document that provides a district road map for growth The overarching goal of our plan is to increase our professional capacity to support and nurture all learners. MERSD is making solid progress toward reaching our goals and expanding our capacity to better serve our students. Last year, the district met 87% of its curriculum and instruction district improvement deliverables. To learn more about our accomplishments and plans for the year ahead, please visit our Strategic Plan to review our 2022-2023 District Improvement Plan Progress Report and 2023-2024 District Improvement Focus Areas.

Highlights include:

- The College Board awarded MERHS bronze recognition in its 2023 AP School Honor Roll. The AP Access Award reflects the District's commitment inclusion and high expectations for all students. Schools are honored for increasing college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, expanding access to traditionally underrepresented students, maximizing college readiness, and ensuring consistent student outcomes.

- MERSD expanded its work with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to include a Middle School partnership with ADL's A World of Difference Institute to Provide Anti-Bias and Anti-Bullying Training to Students. Through the ADL's A World of Difference Institute Peer Training Program, Peer Trainers learn to understand and challenge bias and bullying; practice anti-bias facilitation skills; and take on a leadership role in their schools, positively influencing school culture by challenging bias and modeling respect, allyship, and civility.

- In support of our strategic priorities of fostering authentic learning and integrating social emotional learning into all aspects of the school day, MERSD has been awarded several Department of Elementary and Secondary Education competitive grants.

    - Investigating History grant supports the training and field-testing of the inquiry based *Investigating History* curriculum developed by DESE in support of the new History/Social Science curriculum frameworks.
    - Safe and Supportive Schools grant supports districts in the development and implementation of action plans that address the social, emotional, and health needs of all students. The plan prioritizes six areas of safe and supportive schools: leadership and culture, family engagement, professional learning opportunities, access to resources and services, teaching and learning that fosters safe and supportive environments, and updating policies and procedures. Each Manchester Essex school created a team to take part in development, in coordination with the district leadership team of principals, deans, and central office administration.

- The Arts and Cultural Vitality Team grant provides funding for schools to conduct an arts program review using the Arts & Cultural Vitality Index. This grant funds stipends for a team of staff and community members to evaluate our arts and culture programming to ensure a high-quality, culturally responsive, and equitable arts education program.
- Essex and Memorial elementary schools have begun the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process. NEASC is an independent organization which partners with over 1500 public, independent, and international schools to assess, support, and promote high quality education for all students through accreditation, professional assistance, and pursuit of best practices. NEASC provides a process for meaningful, ongoing whole school improvement while honoring the unique culture and context of each institution.

- MERSD has continued its efforts to assess and map its long-term facility's needs. In the fall of 2022 MERSD commissioned Habeeb & Associates to conduct a needs assessment of both facilities to provide a data-based resource to guide in the development of a timeline to address the replacement of Essex Elementary School as well as to proactively plan for maintaining the middle high school, which will reach its half-life in 2034. The results were reported to the community in November 2023 and clearly showed that Essex Elementary has passed its useful life. The study identified approximately $9 million in capital investments needed to maintain the aging facility. In response to the report, MERSD filed a Statement of Interest (SOI) with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) in April 2023. A Statement of Interest is the first step in applying for building project funding assistance from the MSBA. In December 2023, the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) recommended and approved the Essex Elementary School for admission into the Eligibility Phase of the MSBA grant process. Being accepted means the Essex Elementary School has been identified as being one of the neediest facilities in the state (close to being out of options to address the structural issues of the building) and a good candidate for the grant program.

  The MSBA grant program provides technical assistance and financial support (a minimum of 30% reimbursement) for the planning and construction of a new/renovated school. The District now has 270 days (about 9 months) to complete a series of actions, including creating a School Building Committee, documenting financial and community readiness, and developing an agreement for a full feasibility study. Upon successful completion of the Eligibility Requirements, MERSD will go before the MSBA board for admittance into the Feasibility phase which will allow MERSD to work with the MSBA team of experts to conduct a feasibility study to determine the most cost-effective solution for providing a renovated/rebuilt facility.

- MERSD, in cooperation with its town partners, successfully completed the Hyland and Brook Street Turf Field replacement projects. The project encountered some initial delays related to specific requirements that both MERSD and the Manchester Conservation Commission required related to testing for PFAs. All test results for MERSD's turf field components came back negative, and these test results have been posted on MERSD's web site. Despite a slow start, the

project was delivered on time and under budget with minimal disruption to the fall athletic schedule. MERSD is very thankful to its member communities for their support of this project.

MERSD continues to wrestle with the challenge and strategic priority of maintaining a sustainable, multi-year operational budget and capital improvement plan. MERSD's operational budget is managed each year to deliver stable and predictable growth in spending and town assessments balancing program needs and town funding constraints. The past five years, spending and assessment increases have been consistent, averaging 3.0% for spending and 2.88% for assessments. The annual goal is to maintain a carry forward/level services budget. A carry services budget provides the same program scope, class size, course offerings, and services from one year to the next and allows for the resources needed to support the priorities of the MERSD Strategic Plan. When program enhancements are necessary, MERSD has historically funded them by finding ways to reduce costs in other areas of the budget to reinvest them in current areas of need. Over time, however, this has become more challenging.

From 2007-2014, MERSD experienced a significant increase in resident enrollment; however, the enrollment trend has reversed in keeping demographic decline across the Commonwealth. MERSD's resident enrollment has declined 23% from a high of 1,466 in 2012-2013 to 1,158 in the 2022-23 school year. This decline has led to some enrollment-related staffing reductions, cost savings, and resources to offset growth in other areas of the budget. MERSD initially shifted teaching resources from elementary grades to middle school and then high school, following the path of the enrollment growth "bubble" rising through the grade levels. The last remnants of this 10-year bubble are now at the upper grades of the high school exited in 2023.

Throughout the period of declining enrollment, MERSD has also needed to add special education teachers and teaching assistants to address increasing student need, which is also a trend seen across the Commonwealth. Prior to the FY24 budget, these special education staffing additions were mostly offset enrollment-related reductions in general education staffing, keeping total District staffing relatively stable, despite declining enrollment. In the approved FY24 budget, MERSD continued to make enrollment-related staffing reductions in both general and special education.

In the past several years, the District has fallen short of a level services budget making staffing reductions beyond right sizing for enrollment to ensure that budgetary growth fits within the levy limit. Although student enrollment is a key driver in determining staffing levels, there are many aspects to the program that are determined by student needs, state requirements, and community expectations. It is important to remember that our budget's purpose is to support our goals of maintaining services, improving student achievement, and pursuing our strategic priorities. The challenge of balancing the growth rate of school districts and available town resources is a challenge for communities across the state. MERSD is committed to a transparent, open, and informed budget development process, and we will continue to work cooperatively with the Boards of Selectman and Finance in both Essex and Manchester to find a long-term solution to our challenge.

MERSD proudly works to educate each child from his/her own readiness level to facilitate intellectual, social, and emotional growth. We look at the whole child when determining student academic, social, and emotional needs. There are many measures of success, and we are committed to helping each individual child achieve his/her potential. The success of the Manchester Essex Regional School District is a community effort! On behalf of the faculty and staff of MERSD, I extend my sincere appreciation to the residents of the communities of Manchester and Essex for their unwavering support of our students and of our schools.

Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent of Schools

Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology

Curriculum

The Manchester Essex Regional School District holds a continued commitment to ensure our curricula is aligned with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum Frameworks, the MERSD Vision of the Graduate, and focuses on our strategic goal of authentic learning. Secondary levels have engaged in curriculum mapping processes to articulate our learning experience and build a coherent experience for learners. At the elementary level, educators completed Parent Curriculum Guides which provide MERSD families with an overview of learning objectives and outcomes for each content area grades K-5.

The Manchester Essex Regional Schools utilize a process for curriculum review that engages professionals in a collaborative effort to evaluate, revise, and articulate curriculum and instruction. Decision making around curriculum design and resources will be informed by the district strategic plan, initiatives outlined in the district improvement plan, current educational research, and guidance from MA Department of Education. During the fall of 2023, we began curriculum review processes in History/Social Science and the Arts. These curriculum reviews were both supported by competitive MA DESE Grants (Investigating History Grant and Arts & Cultural Vitality Index Grant) to fund aspects of these curriculum review processes.

Data-Informed Decision Making and Tiered Systems of Support

The Manchester-Essex Regional School District mission is to provide a high-quality, comprehensive, student-centered educational experience that supports students' academic, social, and emotional development and prepares them for a post-secondary educational or service experience, a career, and life as an engaged member of society. Using Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), the district will ensure high-quality instruction across academic and social emotional domains to provide an inclusive learning environment for all students.

During 2023, MERSD continued to build and refine their MTSS systems to ensure consistent assessment integrated across K-8, utilizing i-Ready assessment platform to measure student learning in English and Mathematics. Staff utilized the data to identify what student support is needed within the classroom and through various interventions resources and structures. This consistent structure also informed the development of a common elementary schedule with shared practices across both elementary schools and all grades. Continued data analysis and action planning support instructional programming to support learning for all students.

District data analysis has also provided focused work in areas of need including specific academic programming, and student support. MERSD was awarded grants to support chronic absenteeism and high intensity tutoring that will be implemented in 2024 to target key areas of need.

Technology

The MERSD District Technology Team consists of the District Network Administrator/Technology Manager, District Data Analyst/Database Administrator, IT Support Specialist, Digital Learning Specialists, Technology Teacher, Director of Finance and Operations, and the Director of Curriculum and Instructional Technology. This team has worked during the 2023 school year to increase efficiencies and ensure technology systems support teaching and learning cross-district. Specific work has focused around:

- Student Data Privacy-after research on current policies and practices in the field, the team joined the Student Data Privacy Consortium to ensure we continue to evaluate our compliance with student data privacy practices.
- Instructional Resource Systems- refined instructional technology software and subscription to identify the most appropriate tools to support teaching and learning.
- Technology Integration Support-staff provided instruction and support for the integration of technology across all aspects of our learning environment including assessment platforms, data access, assessment processes, professional learning, and more.
- Continued Administrative Updates and Maintenance-the team continually builds systems for effectiveness and efficiency and has utilized tools to streamline our external website communication and internal data tracking systems.

Cultural Competency & Social Emotional Learning

MERSD was awarded year two of the MA DESE Safe and Supportive Schools Grant. Massachusetts Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law (G.L., c 69, s. 1P) defines a safe and supportive school as follows: Schools that foster a safe, positive, healthy, and inclusive whole-school learning environment:

- Enable students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and

- Integrate services and aligns initiatives that promote students' racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, and supports their behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching, suicide prevention, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children's mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with IEPs, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives. (DESE Safe & Supportive Schools Framework)

In alignment with MERSD Strategic Plan core value of creating a just and equitable environment that respects individual differences and the diversity of our communities, country, and world, the district continues to work collaboratively with consultant Michael Eatman to develop our professional capacity in the five components of Cultural Competence: Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge, Skills, and Practices.

MERSD utilized ESSER grant to fund the development of Social Emotional Coordinator and Specialist roles to support the ongoing implementation of RULER strategies from Yale's Center for Emotional Intelligence. These roles are leading the work to analyze the status of our Social Emotional Learning across our schools and grades, while planning system needs and professional learning opportunities for our school communities.

Heather Leonard, Director of Curriculum & Instructional Technology

Student Services

The Manchester Essex Regional School District Student Services Department comprises Special Education, Section 504, English Language Learners, Homeless Students, Health and Counseling Services, and Preschool. Responsibilities of the department include program development, staff training and supervision, budget management, delivery of direct services (ELL, Counseling, Special Education), and maintenance of legal compliance with federal and state regulations in these areas.
The MERSD is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for students with disabilities. The special education department provides direct services, assessment, and consultation for these students through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The district's compliance with state regulations is assessed on a three year Tiered Focused Monitoring cycle, which was most recently completed in 2021-2022, and yielded no findings of special education non-compliance.

The district routinely conducts screenings of children to identify potential disability-related needs; approximately two hundred thirty (230) students, 18.5% of the student population, receive special education services. Sixty-nine (69) children PK-12 were referred for an initial special education evaluation in 2022-2023. Special education services range from classroom support and related services (OT, PT, and Speech) to sub-separate in and out-of-district programming. The District maintains several specialized in-district programs that include Students with Integrated Goals (SWING) for children with developmental and communication disabilities; Academic and Communication Enhancement (ACE) for children with neurological and complex language based learning disabilities, Intensive Reading and

Written Language (IRWL) for students with dyslexia; and the Social and Academic Integrated Learning (SAIL) and Transitions programs for students with social-emotional disabilities and/or level one autism.

In addition to special education, the district provides accommodations for seventy-seven (77) students eligible for Section 504, a federal regulation that protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in education and employment. Six (6) English Language Learners (ELs) receive direct instructional services through the district and nine (9) additional former ELs are monitored through the department. The MERSD also provides full time health and counseling services in each building, including School Adjustment Counselors, School Nurses, and School Psychologists.

In-District Special Education Programs

MERSD offers several specialized in-district programs that benefit students by enabling them to remain in our community schools with their peers and help to manage potential spikes in costs. MERSD's in-district programs save taxpayers more than $1.8 million annually after factoring in added staffing costs. Without these in-district programs, MERSD would be obligated to send students to programs outside of the district, which are consistently much more expensive, with an average FY23 tuition cost per student of $96,650 annually. For the 2023 fiscal year, the Massachusetts Operational Services Division (OSD) authorized a fourteen (14) percent increase in private out-of-district special education school tuitions.

Estimates for the FY24 budget show that 14 students, whose needs cannot be met with in-district programs, have placement tuition costs in excess of $95,000. Out-of-district (OOD) placements can be difficult to predict when associated with move-ins (i.e., new residents). Transportation is also mandated for OOD placements. The cost of these services has risen significantly for all school districts in recent years, due to a nationwide shortage in hourly workers, including bus drivers. Recognizing this statewide fiscal challenge, a portion of these transportation expenses is now reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the "Circuit Breaker" program, but the majority of the cost increase falls to MERSD through its budget.

Allison Collins, Director of Student Services

Essex Elementary School

"Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, have no meaning." ***Benjamin Franklin***

Schools, with their ever-changing inhabitants, are uniquely charged with continuous improvement to meet the unique learning needs of their population. Goals, established in long-term district and school strategic plans, govern course adjustments while classroom and student-oriented goals control the day-to-day alterations. At EES, we've been uniquely aware of changes, in staffing, population needs and experiences of our students. We've noted areas of growth, in our own capabilities as educators, and sensitivities to the social-emotional student burdens. And, we continue to seek progress as we make decisions dominated by identified areas of need.

As anticipated by our school & district initiatives, the MERSD elementary schools applied and were accepted into the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process. This comprehensive process affords external scrutiny and guidance in developing and strengthening our academic program. Our efforts to consolidate, align and strengthen our instructional practices is in keeping with our ongoing School Improvement Plans to define and update intervention services, evaluate existing curriculum, and foster authentic learning opportunities.



Our in-depth look at programming is well-matched to our most recent 2023 state assessment and survey results which indicate both strengths and areas for improvement. Disappointing results on recent state testing indicate underperformance in writing, both quantity and content, across English Language Art, Mathematics and Science, Technology, and Engineering assessments. While district data indicates continuous improvement in reading, vocabulary development persists as a weakness across grade levels. Mathematically, challenges with accurate computation impact overall performance. Copious research indicates that students are not available to learn unless they feel a strong sense of safety and belonging. One extremely positive indicator of student learning readiness comes from a state-sponsored survey in which all EES students in fourth and fifth grade report they feel accepted, supported and a strong sense of belonging at our school. These results validate our school and district initiative to support the social-emotional learning of all students.

Continual growth and progress demands, not only thoughtful reflection and adjustment, but additions and expansions of prior practices. Highlighting and applying skills and knowledge in a variety of ways and building more authentic learning experiences for students have been a priority both within and without the confines of the school day. In response to one area of weakness, a further emphasis on bringing vocabulary "alive" has resulted in a recent Vocabulary Parade. Training in new, updated history/social science instructional methods for our fifth grade teachers has resulted in more complex, critical thinking about our country's past. Collaborations with local resources such as the Gloucester Maritime Museum, Cape Ann Museum, and Mass Audubon have resulted in robust learning, application and exploration of our local history and community. Afterschool programming, redesigned and expanded over the course of the past two years, enhances critical thinking, writing, mathematical explorations and perseverance through clubs such as STEM, Writer's, Legos, Growth Mindset, and Sewing as well as Student Leadership Council, Green Team, and Greenhouse Growers.



Rich experiences await our students, often the result of collaborative efforts of many. This past March witnessed our first, and very successful, joint Memorial/Essex Fifth Grade play, enhancing the existing opportunities for the two classes to get to know one another before entering Middle School. Flashlight

Tag is a new addition to our “just for fun together” line-up, destined to become an annual favorite ranking right up there with Field Day! Whether we are all dancing to the Monster Mash, walking/biking to school together or reading our Community Read book as a learning community, EES strives to envelope our students and families in the delights of belonging to a supportive, warm and welcoming learning environment.



Our community resources have also afforded enrichment and enhancement, reinforcing the value of our local surroundings. Our Friends of EES Parent-Teacher Organization hosts a wide variety of family-friendly, community events such as our annual Happy As A Clam race, Messy Art Night, and the Fall Hoe Down, just to name a few.



From musical opportunities with Daisy Nell and performance opportunities at a variety of community events, to Memorial Day support from our local Veteran’s association and a Community Breakfast made possible through the efforts of many community members, our students benefit from the many opportunities and collaborations with a wide network of caring adults.

Growth, a constant in any learning journey, and the reflection required to make adjustments toward continuous improvement, is thriving at Essex Elementary School. Through each child’s heart and sense of belonging, we strive for academic excellence.



Sheila McAdams, Principal

Memorial Elementary School



Manchester Memorial Elementary School (MMES) has 302 students enrolled in Pre-K through Grade 5 this school year. In addition to Grade K-5 classrooms, the school also has three programs that are available to students from Essex and Manchester. Students needing specialized services from either town may qualify for these programs. Over the years, we have seen tremendous success for the children in these programs, including the MERSD Integrated Pre-K, the MERSD Social and Academic Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program, and the MERSD Intensive Reading and Written Language (IRWL) program. In Grades K-2, classrooms average roughly 18 students per class. In grades 3-5, classrooms average roughly 24 students per class. The school reduced two classroom teachers last year due to budget reductions resulting in slightly higher class sizes than what is typical.



MMES offers all of its students a wide range of activities and academics in our effort to educate the "whole" child. Social-Emotional Learning and an inclusive, welcoming community are the hallmarks of the school. Additionally, MMES consistently performs among the top schools in the state on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). All students participate in weekly classes in wellness (physical education/health), music, art, library/research, and technology. Students in the upper grades may take instrumental music lessons during the school day and participate in the MERSD elementary band. Students also can join our before-school chorus program and perform with the band at various concerts throughout the year. MMES students also enjoy a number of enrichment programs that are sponsored by our PTO, including musical/dance performances and academic enrichment presentations.

We have been focusing our improvement work on aligning with our colleagues at Essex Elementary to provide a consistent experience for all elementary students in the district. Educators from both schools have been collaborating on the creation of common curriculum maps while engaging in the shared New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) elementary accreditation experience.
The staff has made a renewed commitment (post pandemic) to proactive school-home communication and connections.

A natural byproduct of this has been more engaged families leading to the rejuvenation of our Parent Teacher Organization (MMPTO). The MMPTO has worked closely with the staff and administration to bring back some traditional community-building events such as the Poetry Café Night and 5k Road Race

along with some new events to bring our community together. The partnerships that MMES have with its families and the community are valued at a very high level by all.



John Willis, MMES Principal

Manchester Essex Regional Middle School

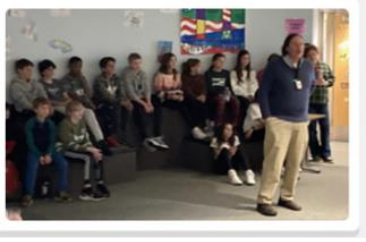
As in past years, during the 2023 school year, students were supported by the middle school model. This model allows grade-level teams to meet weekly to discuss student progress, including all academic, social, emotional, and behavioral celebrations and/or concerns. Teams at each grade level consist of core academic, special education, and exploratory teachers. Our School Adjustment Counselor (SAJ) and Dean of Students also join team meetings as integral participants in this collaborative approach to supporting our students' complex educational and developmental needs. As students move on from MERMS, they demonstrate an emergence of skills and dispositions identified by our District Vision of the Graduate.



There are many measures of student success, and we are committed to helping each individual child achieve their potential. In addition to a robust core curriculum that balances high expectations for student achievement with the needs of the whole child, we offer specialty programming and a variety of 21st century learning opportunities for our students. These offerings include Middle School Academy in Grade 6 and specialized learning programs for students with dyslexia, autism spectrum disorders, and developmental delays; STEM coursework in coding, project-based learning and exploration, robotics, and Project Adventure. Middle School exploratory offerings include art, engineering, health, physical education, and three music choices that include chorus, general music, and band. Our current exploratory structure and staffing enables us to provide year-long courses in which students are fully immersed in learning experiences that foster creativity, critical thinking, and artistic expression.

Middle School highlights from the 2023 school year:

Guest Visitors



High school peer mentors visited eighth grade students to share their freshman year experiences and provide tips for success as high school students.

A parent of a sixth grade student shared his experience working as an archeologist for Boston’s Big Dig project.

He showed artifacts from the dig, which helped students make connections to artifacts they were learning about from the Neolithic and Paleolithic Eras.



Members of Yale University's a cappella group, *Mixed Company*, visited eighth grade students to perform and lead workshops.

Local author, Kevin Carey, visited sixth grade students to read sections of his latest novel, *Jr. Miles and the Junkman*. After listening to excerpts that described unique and curious settings, students wrote their own pieces then volunteered to read their writing aloud to the entire grade.

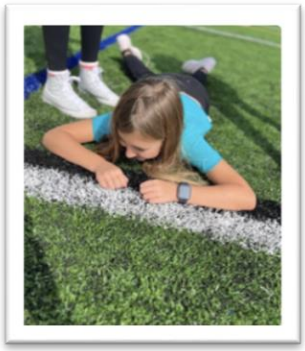


Planet Friendly Initiatives

Middle School Academy's team, "Who Let the Plants Out?" was awarded *Best in Show* for *Most Innovative Experiment* in the Plant the Moon Challenge. They were one of 310 finalists! The Middle School Green Team collected over 20 pounds of soft plastic, which was repurposed into building materials as part of the NexTrex recycling program.



Curriculum



Middle School History and Social Sciences classes piloted a new curriculum resource, *Investigating History*. Pictured here is a sixth grade student using the football field as a timeline to measure the existence of planet earth and learning that the length of time earth has had civilizations is the width of two human hairs!

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The Middle School hosted its second annual Civics Fair where all students in eighth grade presented their action research projects to members of the community. Middle school teachers engaged in two training sessions for our new K-8 math and reading diagnostic tool, iReady. Teachers are finding iReady to be a useful resource for measuring student progress and helping to support additional skill development and growth.

Community Connections



Middle school students participated in the district's first annual STEAM Showcase. In addition to featuring a whole host of student projects, the Showcase welcomed close to two dozen community members from local companies, museums, and non-profit organizations. Student projects spanned a large breadth of work created in math, science, art, and music classes across all three grades.

The middle school partnered with the *Anti-Defamation League* to train 33 students in Grades 7 and 8. These student ADL Peer Leaders will begin student-led workshops during half days in 2024.



Project Adventure continues as a yearly staple of the middle school experience. Each year we partner with the North Shore YMCA to

utilize their Camp Spindrift in Gloucester, Massachusetts, so students can enjoy all of the outdoor challenges and adventure!



Joanne Maino, Principal

Manchester Essex Regional High School

Manchester Essex Regional High School strives to provide a well-rounded high school experience for all. Anchored by our Vision of the Graduate, we consider the whole child approach to learning and deliver instruction that is student centered, current, and inclusive of all learners. Our students continue to achieve at high levels. Eighty-four percent of the class of 2023 moved on to higher education. We had 141 students take AP exams in the spring with 82% receiving a score of 3 or higher.

Beyond the classroom, students participate in and engage in authentic, real world learning activities. Our annual STEAM Showcase, a vibrant celebration of student ingenuity and creativity across the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) serves as a dynamic platform for students to proudly exhibit their innovative projects and share their discoveries with a wide range of audiences. This event is not only about highlighting student accomplishments but also about fostering connections with the broader STEAM community.



The 9/11 and the War or Terror class and the Social Studies Department took 50 students to New York City to visit the 9/11 Museum and Memorial. The ADL student group "A World of Difference" at Manchester Essex led 4 sessions with 9th graders last year, leading activities and facilitating conversations about identity and bias. This fall the group brought back 20 returning members and has trained 15 new members to go into 9th grade classes again in the spring.



Students organized and participated in several community service opportunities, including collecting donations for Beverly Bootstraps, Planet Aid, and other toy, clothing, and food drives. The Debate Team continues to grow, experiencing a resurgence of students this school year.

Our DECA chapter continues to thrive with many students qualifying for the state competition. Some of our students advanced to the national competition held at Disney World. The Class of '23 enjoyed a memorable Senior Week with prom at Tupper Manor, an afternoon of mini golf and ice cream, a trip to Six Flags, and an evening meal with families at Tuck's Point, all capped off by wonderful Baccalaureate and Graduation ceremonies.





The Performing Arts department offers several opportunities for students to showcase their talents. From concerts to musicals to Mass Drama Fest, students find their voice in our arts program, which continues to grow. This past fall, students performed in the musical “Freaky Friday.” Not only can our students perform in seasonal concerts in the high school but have also been able to showcase their talents in the community with performances at Manchester’s Harvest Fest and Friendship tree lighting ceremony.





ATHLETIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Winter 2022-23



Boys Basketball: MIAA D4 Sweet Sixteen, Undefeated CAL Record (First time in program history), CAL Champions
Girls Basketball: MIAA D4 Sweet Sixteen, CAL Champions
Alpine Ski: NSSL Interscholastic Race 6th Place - Kiernan Day ranked #20 overall as individual
Swimming and Diving: MIAA Sectionals & Individual Qualifiers - Megan Graeter 8th at States (100 back)
Indoor Track and Field: Finn O'Hara 2nd at MIAA Divisionals in the 1-mile event, 12th at MIAA All States in the 1-mile event







Spring 2023



Baseball: MIAA D4 Round of 32
Boys Lacrosse: MIAA D4 Sweet Sixteen, CAL Champions (First time in program history!)
Girls Lacrosse: MIAA D4 Final Four
Sailing: Mass State HS Fleet Race - 10th Place
Softball: MIAA D4 Round of 32 - first time the program returned to MERHS in 4 years
Boys Tennis: MIAA D4 Quarterfinals
Girls Tennis: MIAA D4 State Finalist





Fall 2023



Cross Country: Finn O'Hara IQ (SR/PR) - 1st Place Divisionals, 20th Place All State; Sabine Cooper IQ (PR) - 17th Place Divisionals, 84th Place All State
Cheer: First time Varsity Sport in several years, 30 cheerleaders in the program; 2nd time competing in the CAL Cheer Competition, 5th Place
Field Hockey: MIAA D4 Final Four
Football: MIAA D7 Sweet Sixteen
Golf: Gray West - 21st at Sectionals
Girls Soccer: MIAA D4 Sweet Sixteen
Boys Soccer: MIAA D4 Round of 32






Julie Sgroi, Principal