

Your Parent Teacher Organization

Mansfield Middle School, 205 Spring Hill Road, Storrs, CT 06268



MMSA NEWS



Volume XII, Issue IV

January/February 2007

From the Principals

Dear Parents,



At the mid-point of this school year, we have some news to share about personnel changes on the MMS staff, two impressive recognitions of staff members, as well as news about our on-going efforts to make our school a safe and comfortable place every day for every student.

At the start of the New Year we welcomed back to the fifth grade team Mrs. Ryley Zawodniak from her child-rearing leave. Her daughter Zoey was born in November, and everyone in their family is adjusting to their new schedules. We are grateful to Ms. Mary Francis for sharing her love of reading, writing and students with our fifth graders while Mrs. Z was on leave.

Seventh grade math teacher Mrs. Tracy Moore will be going on child-rearing leave soon, and she will be out for the rest of this year. In her place for the rest of the school year will be Mrs. Lisa Hart from Pomfret. Mrs. Hart is returning to teaching after three years at home with her two young sons. Mrs. Hart has previously taught middle school math and algebra in Sudbury, MA, and Uxbridge, MA.

On a sad note, Mrs. Jessica Turner, our industrial technology teacher for the past five years, has informed us that she will not be returning to Mansfield Middle School, following the death of her husband last month. She has expressed her appreciation to her students and colleagues in Mansfield for the time that she taught here. For the rest of this school year, Mr. Peter Cavagnaro, our former IT teacher, will return from retirement to teach our IT classes.

Two MMS teachers have recently received important recognitions from the Connecticut State Department of Education and from the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut.

We recently learned that Mrs. Tracy Moore has been appointed as the Teacher in Residence for mathematics at the State Department of Education for the 2007-08 school year. In this role, Mrs. Moore will work primarily with beginning teachers across the state as they complete the requirements for their permanent teaching certifications. Mrs. Moore will have some professional responsibilities in Mansfield during the 07-08 school year, and she will return to full-time teaching at MMS in Fall, 2008. Mrs. Moore is the third MMS teacher to receive this prestigious appointment. (Dan Coughlin and Julie White preceded her as teachers-in-residence for social studies and language arts, respectively.)

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CMT Testing

CMT Testing will begin Monday, March 5, 2007 and will end Thursday, March 22, 2007. Please refer to the CMT testing calendar in this issue for the exact dates and times. During testing it is very important for children to be in attendance at school. Please be sure that your child is here in time for testing.

Here are a few helpful hints for successful test-taking:

1. Make every effort to have children attend school during the testing period. Regular attendance will provide them with peer support during the testing process and minimize time taken away from the classroom for make-up testing.
2. Make sure they get a good night's rest. Children who have a full night's sleep are better equipped to maintain alertness through the morning testing period.
3. Encourage your children to eat a good breakfast. A nutritious breakfast is fuel for the brain as well as the stomach!

We hope that this information and these suggestions will help make this testing period an easier time for you and your child. If you have any questions regarding the testing, please contact me or your child's school counselor.

SEE CMT TESTING SCHEDULE ON PAGE 4

Sincerely,
Candace Morell
Assistant Principal



MMSA Family Fun Night to be Re-scheduled

Because of scheduling conflicts the MMSA Family Fun Night listed on the school calendar for Friday, February 2nd has been postponed. A new date and time for this event will be forthcoming, look for a flyer with more details to be coming home soon.

History Day

Once again MMS will be hosting History Day for students and families in our region. The date is set for Saturday, March 24, 2007. The MMSA has the task of providing food and refreshments for the judges, students and parents who come to the school for the day. If you didn't sign up at the Open House but would still like to help out, please contact chairperson Laura Smith at 429-8735. A planning meeting will be scheduled soon.

Visit our website at: www.mmsnet.org

Link: *Mansfield Middle School Association*

From the Principals (continued)

In mid-January eighth grade language arts teacher Mrs. Julie White was recognized by her alma mater as the recipient of the Neag School of Education Alumni Association’s Outstanding Educator Award for this year. She will receive the award at a formal presentation in the spring. Congratulations, Mrs. White!



An on-going challenge that we face is helping our students to be consistently respectful and generous in their behavior toward each other. As we have noted before, our children often receive the message from popular media that it is funny to make fun of other people, and that one can become popular by belittling others. This is a powerful, ingrained message, and it takes persistent attention to address it each time we see hurtful behaviors at school.

MMS staff members and students have joined in this effort to make school a place that is safe and comfortable, free from put-downs and hateful speech. This effort has become a priority for the Student Council, the Ambassadors Club, and a group of students who have volunteered to participate in after-school discussions of how students treat each other. Our goal is to develop a critical mass among students so that it will become increasingly comfortable for them to stand up to mean or degrading comments when they hear them.

Last spring a group of MMS student leaders attended a workshop entitled *Respect Me!* at the Connecticut Association of Schools. Along with representatives from other Connecticut middle schools, these students (and staff members who accompanied them) learned strategies to get students talking about fostering respect, empathy, and kindness among students. Last spring students developed an assembly for the whole school that identified unkind behaviors that commonly occur and suggested strategies for eliminating them.

This effort – part of our theme *MMS Cares* – has included several before-school planning sessions, in-school discussions, and after-school workshops that have been well-attended by student volunteers. At these sessions, students discuss questions like these:

- What does *meanness* look like at MMS?
- What do you do when you see meanness?
- What can we do to help each other respond to meanness?

These simple questions have led to lengthy discussions among groups of students. Identifying common experiences leads students to discuss strategies for convincing other students to stop hurtful behaviors. Knowing that other students share these perceptions helps students to develop strategies for intervening or getting adult help.

Some upcoming activities related to the *Respect Me!* Initiative include:

- Meetings of students to develop skits that they will videotape or perform for groups of students. These scenarios are based on students’ comments during the discussions. They will lead to further discussion about how we treat each other at school.
- Ambassador training for current students so they can help students new to MMS get used to their new school.

As a community we want to help students to question images of popularity they see in the media and to do what they know is right, even when it might not seem popular. We appreciate the enthusiastic response that students have given to these voluntary meetings. Over 70 students have participated so far.

If you would like to discuss these items or anything else about school, please get in touch with one of us as 429-9341 or cryanj@mansfieldct.org or morellcv@mansfieldct.org.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey L. Cryan
Principal

Candace V. Morell
Assistant Principal



Youth Gambling Prevention

Northeast Communities Against Substance Abuse (NECASA) will be giving parents a brief presentation and discussion on youth problem gambling prevention at the March 6th MMSA meeting. While we hope this is not a problem with our middle-schoolers at MMS, the presentation is meant to raise awareness about on-line and in-home gambling situations.

The program will start promptly at 7pm. The regular business meeting of the MMSA will follow.

Box Tops for Education

Now is the time to send in all those box tops you have been clipping. The MMSA will be sending in another batch soon and will receive \$.10 for each box top. This is an easy and painless way to earn money for MMS! Please place box tops in the marked container outside the main office.

Also, we are looking for someone to take over as Box Tops Chair for the school. Anyone interested should contact Sondra Boyer at 487-5812.



From the MMSA President

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year! Now that the holidays and winter break are over, the MMSA is gearing up for a busy spring. Please join us for our first meeting of 2007 on Tuesday February 6th. With our major fund-raising projects behind us, we'll be concentrating on helping out the school with several upcoming events.

First up is the **Magazine Drive**, which starts on March 8th. Help is always needed in the mornings helping the students with their orders. Also in March is **History Day**, scheduled for Saturday March 24th. During this day-long event the MMSA provides breakfast and lunch to all the visitors to our school, and it's a big endeavor requiring lots of volunteers! In April/May we have **Staff Appreciation** days, and finally in May is our annual **Plant Sale**. If you would like to volunteer to help out with any of these activities please contact the committee chairperson and they'll be happy to put you to work!

We still need a chairperson for the 8th Grade Closing Ceremony in June. The actual date will be set once the threat of snow days are over and the school can plan the end-of-year events. If you're interested or would like more information give me a call at 423-1127.

So as not to be considered all work and no play, the MMSA is also looking into options for an MMS Fun night. Because of the success of the similar Family Fun nights at the Mansfield Community Center, we're exploring options other than an Open Gym night to get families and kids out together. Look for details to be coming home soon.

Wishing you a warm and healthy winter season!

Sincerely,

Mary Sikand,
MMSA President

News from the Mansfield Board of Education

Here are some highlights from the December and January Board of Education Meetings, which were held on December 14, 2006 and January 18, 2007:

- The BOE will work with and supports the Town of Mansfield's goal that 20% of its energy needs comes from clean energy sources.
- Members of the physical education teams from the Town's elementary schools gave an overview of the curriculum and physical education programs for K-4 students.
- A Professional Development Format was proposed with the goal of "Helping All Students Become Confident Leaders".
- The calendar for the 2007-2008 school year was reviewed and approved.
- The Board and the Principals of all the schools began the budget review process.

During the budget season, the board meets more frequently and has meetings scheduled for January 25th, February 1st and 8th; parents are welcomed and encouraged to attend.

K12NOW - Receive School Notifications Immediately Mansfield Middle School



Mansfield Middle School has signed up to use a new service called *K12now*. This service will allow us to communicate with you via **email** as well as cell phone or pager **text messaging**. We will use this service to inform you of emergency closings and announcements about school events.

This service is free of charge and signing up is fast and secure. You can enter up to four email addresses and two cellular phones or pager text messaging phone numbers. *K12now* allows you to choose which addresses receive emergency or priority notifications and which addresses receive general notifications. Your personal information is never shared or sold, and there is no advertising attached to the service.

K12now will complement our present procedures. We encourage you to sign up for this service. We think that it will help us to communicate with you more effectively.

To sign up free of charge, go to <http://myk12now.com> and enter the school code from the box on the right.

Parent Registration:

<http://my.k12now.com>

When prompted, you will need to enter the code below.

Now Code:

GST-WPJ-K

MMS Magazine Drive

The annual MMS Magazine Drive will be taking place from Thursday March 8th to Tuesday, March 20th, 2007. Magazines, music and other items will be offered for sale at great prices! If you have magazines coming up for renewal here's your chance to do so and support the school at the same time. All proceeds from the Magazine Drive benefit Computer and Technology programs at MMS.



MMSA 2006-2007 Board

Members and Committee Chairs

For a complete listing of the 2006-2007 MMSA Board Members and Committee Chairs, please go to:

<http://www.mansfieldct.org/schools/mms/parent/positions.htm>

March 2007 – CMS Test Schedule

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			February 28 Practice Test Grade levels to schedule 60 minute block for test.	1 Make-up Practice Test	2 Make-up Practice Test	3
4 <i>**Testing note Grade 7 Math I Grade 8 Math II tests are 80 minutes in length.</i>	5 Testing 8:30-9:50 Math I Gr. 5&7 Math II w/Calc. Gr. 6&8 (80 min)	6 Testing 8:30-9:25 Direct Assessment of writing Gr. 5-8 (55 min)	7 Testing 8:30-9:40 Math II w/Calc. Gr. 5&7 Math I Gr. 6&8 (70 min)	8 Testing 8:30-9:25 Reading Comp. I Gr. 5-8 (55 min)	9 Testing 8:30-9:25 DRP Gr. 5-8 (55 min)	10
11	12 Testing 8:30-9:40 Math III w/Calc. Gr. 5&7 Edit & Revise Gr. 6&8 (70 min)	13 Testing 8:30-9:40 Math III w/Calc. Gr. 6&8 Edit & Revise Gr. 5&7 (70 min)	14 Testing 8:30-9:25 Reading Comp II Gr. 5-8 (55 min)	15 Testing Supplemental Tests Gr. 5-8	16 Make-up Testing	17
18	19 Make-up Testing	20 Make-up Testing	21 Make-up Testing	22 Make-up Testing	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31