



Manchester Essex Regional School District 2022 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 2022 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 four on *Boston Magazine's* best high schools list, receiving the Safe and Supportive Schools grant, completing the Manchester Memorial School building project on time and under budget, commissioning a facilities assessment in preparation for pursuing the Essex Elementary building project, and continuing development of our academic program to support student achievement.

- The Manchester Essex Regional High School ranked fourth in *Boston Magazine's Fall 2022 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 2022 *US News & World Report Best High Schools* edition.
- Earlier this year MERSD completed its [Strategic and District Improvement Plans](#). The Strategic Plan consists of a district Mission, Vision and Core Values, and Vision of the Graduate. It forms the construct for the development of the district and school-based Improvement Plans and, ultimately, the framework for the development of teacher goals and objectives. The overarching goal of our plan is to increase our professional capacity to support and nurture all learners. 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. In support of our strategic priorities of fostering authentic learning and integrating social emotional learning into all aspects of the school day, MMS students have been participating in experiential learning activities to increase civic mindedness, collaboration, and compassion, as evidenced by their participation in the first annual Civics Fair and Veterans' Day assembly and the reinvigoration of the school's Green Team into daily learning.
- The Manchester Essex Regional School District has received a \$10,000 grant to develop and implement a safe and supportive school action plan that addresses the social, emotional, and health needs of all students. In alignment with Manchester Essex Regional School District's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, the plan will focus on 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 will create a team to take part in development, in coordination with the district leadership team of principals, deans, and central office administration.

- 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 and clearly show that Essex Elementary has passed its useful life. The study identified about \$9 million in ongoing capital investments that will be needed to address the aging facility. In response to the report, MERSD intends to file a Statement of Interest with the Massachusetts School Building Authority in April 2023. A Statement of Interest is the first step in applying for building project funding assistance from the MSBA, which works with communities to support educationally appropriate, flexible, sustainable, and cost-effective public-school facilities. Should the MSBA invite Manchester Essex into the Eligibility Period, the District will have 270 days 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.
- The Manchester Memorial School project has been completed on time and under budget. It has also been recently awarded “LEED Gold Certification” for recording a “high energy-saving performance score.” LEED-certified buildings save money, improve efficiency, lower carbon emissions, and create healthier places for inhabitants. To achieve LEED certification, a project earns points by adhering to prerequisites and credits that address carbon, energy, water, waste, transportation, materials, health, and indoor environmental quality.

MERSD began the FY24 budget with the challenge and strategic priority of maintaining a sustainable, multi-year operational budget and capital improvement plan. To that end, we continue to work collaboratively with our town partners to address a structural funding problem by reducing our reliance on reserves and increasing revenues received from towns to support a level services budget. A level 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.

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

Finance & Operations

MERSD’s School Committee goals include the objective to “develop and deliver a fiscally responsible budget that restores educational quality, supports District goals, recognizes the confines of Proposition 2 1/2, and advocates for increased funding for the district.”

MERSD’s operational budget is managed each year to deliver stable and predictable growth in spending and assessment (i.e., cost to member towns) each year, balancing program needs and town funding constraints associated with Proposition 2 1/2. Over the past five years, spending and assessment increases have been fairly consistent, averaging 3.27% for spending and 3.17% for assessments.

From a spending perspective, at minimum, MERSD strives to achieve “level services,” or, in other words, the same level of program currently in place. When program enhancements are necessary, MERSD has opted to fund them by finding ways to reduce costs in other areas of the budget whenever possible. Over time, however, this has become more challenging. In the past several years, the district has fallen short of a level services budget, having had to implement staffing reductions to ensure that budgetary growth fits within the levy limit.

Planning for a Revenue Correction in 2023-2024

The challenge begins with the cost of level services, which typically grows at 3.5% - 4.0% annually for most school districts, beyond the limits of Proposition 2 1/2. This puts MERSD and other districts in a cycle of annual reductions to meet budgetary goals. The result over time is a cumulative “level services deficit” that must be addressed every few years with either a revenue correction (e.g. override) or more substantial program reductions. A revenue correction last occurred for MERSD in FY16, when Manchester passed an override and Essex used extra revenues to raise the contribution for MERSD.

Using its ongoing process of multi-year budgeting, MERSD and its member towns began planning a few years ago for another such correction which is now proposed for the 2024 budget cycle – eight years since the last larger-sized adjustment. As of January 2023, the anticipated gap for the FY24 budget between a level services budget and the 3.5% target assessment growth rate for member towns is approximately \$756,000. Additional discussion prior to School Committee’s final budget adoption vote in early February may change this figure. Given the magnitude of the current estimate gap, however, MERSD would need to substantially cut its program if town-voted revenue corrections are not successful. With staffing and benefits accounting for roughly 85% of spending at MERSD and comparable school systems, these reductions would increase class sizes and reduce elective offerings, which would clearly conflict with MERSD’s School Committee goals and the expectations of many community members.

Impact of Declining Enrollment on MERSD’s Budget

One major reason for the FY16 revenue correction was increasing enrollment. Over the decade leading up to this correction, MERSD’s resident enrollment had grown 25% or 310 students, which necessitated more staffing to manage class size. The additional funding requested and received from the community was partially offset by an increase in State Aid from the Commonwealth’s Chapter 70 program, which uses a per-pupil funding model.

Since that time, the enrollment trend has reversed, matching demographic decline across the Commonwealth and nationwide. In Manchester and Essex, MERSD’s resident enrollment has recently

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 staffing reductions and cost savings in many areas of the budget, but other factors have offset these reductions somewhat.

One of these offsetting factors has been the impact of enrollment at each grade level. MERSD initially shifted teaching resources from the elementary grades to the 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, as shown below.

In recent years, 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 mostly offset enrollment-related reductions in general education staffing, keeping total District staffing relatively stable, despite declining enrollment. In the proposed FY24 budget, enrollment related staffing reductions of four full-time equivalents (FTE) are planned in both general education and special education settings.

In-District Special Education Programs

Much of the recent investment in special education staffing is related to development by MERSD of in-district special education programs. These programs benefit students by enabling them to remain in our community schools with their peers, and also help manage potential spikes in costs. MERSD’s in-district programs save taxpayers more than \$1.8 million annually after factoring in the adding staffing costs. Without these in-district programs, MERSD would be obligated to send students to programs outside the district, which are generally much more expensive.

Estimates for the FY24 budget show that 14 students whose needs cannot be met with in-district programs have estimated placement costs in excess of \$100,000. 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. For MERSD, the OOD transportation budget has risen 146% or \$466,000 over the past three years. Recognizing this statewide fiscal challenge, a portion of these 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.

Use of “Rainy Day” Reserve Funds

In recent years, in order to minimize additional program reductions, MERSD has begun to use rainy day, “reserve” funds as a temporary revenue source. This helps to keep taxpayer costs below the levy limit while multi-year, sustainable budgeting planning continues with member towns.

Reserve funds, however, are one-time in nature, and an important source of emergency funding for capital repairs. For that reason, continuing use of reserve funds for the recurring operating budget is neither sustainable nor considered best practice. MERSD is working with member towns to plan for increased revenue to support the operating budget in FY24 so that we will no longer have to deplete these important “rainy day” funds.

MERSD’s recent capital investments, for which reserves funding is more ideally suited, have included facility and technology enhancements at Essex Elementary School to ensure programmatic equity with

the new Manchester Memorial Elementary School. Examples include the new Essex Elementary playground, security upgrades to match the new system at Memorial, and commissioning an updated Facility Conditions Assessment to inform potential costs and timing of systemic, infrastructure upgrades (e.g., roof, boilers, windows) that will soon be required at Essex Elementary, which is currently 66 years old. Preliminary results of this assessment indicate that the cost to remediate individual facility needs at Essex Elementary will be similar to the cost of a systemic building project (e.g. renovation or new construction). Decision-making on how to handle upcoming needs will eventually require a vote of approval and funding from taxpayers in both communities. The district may also qualify for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, which is paying for approximately 25% of the Memorial School project currently.

In the meantime, MERSD has been supplementing reserve-funded capital improvements with funding from grant programs. Over the past five years, MERSD has partnered with the Town of Essex to implement \$470,000 in energy-efficiency improvements through the state Green Communities Grant program over at no cost to taxpayers. These upgrades help to extend the life of the school while awaiting longer-term direction and planning.

Reserve funding also enabled MERSD to keep schools running safely during the COVID pandemic without having to request any additional funds from member town taxpayers. This was despite a cost of \$1.8 million in required facility improvements (e.g. air filtration, sanitization, touch free installations), personal protective equipment (e.g. masks, gloves, etc.), instructional technology and technical support for remote operations for students and staff, and additional temporary staffing (during the 2020-2021 school year only) to facilitate safe distancing between students. District reserves were eventually reimbursed for COVID spending by grants from the federal CARES program in partnership with the towns of Manchester and Essex, by Department of Elementary and Secondary Education COVID grants and by FEMA.

Keeping reserve balances healthy also saves taxpayers money, by lowering the cost of interest associated with building project borrowing, by signaling to potential lenders that MERSD is a low-risk borrower. MERSD's credit rating was recently upgraded to AA+ (one step below the highest possible AAA rating) by S&P, who cited the strong financial position of both Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex, as well as MERSD's multiple years of positive budgetary results and healthy financial reserves. As a result of this favorable credit rating, MERSD was able to secure initial funding for the Memorial Elementary School building project of \$35 million at a 3.289% interest rate, and a second round of \$3.2 million at 1.71%. This represents significant savings from the estimated 5.0% rating presented to voters in the fall of 2018, when the construction project was approved, saving taxpayers more than \$17 million or \$577,000 per year over the life of the bonds. Taxpayer cost for this project has also been offset by \$10 million in contributions from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, with eligibility for up to \$12 million total. At this time, the project is on track to be completed with budgetary savings.

MERSD's strong credit rating has also helped MERSD to reduce the cost to taxpayers of the 2008-10 Middle High School construction project by enabling the district to refinance \$17.5 million of outstanding debt at lower interest rates, generating savings of more than \$2 million over the life of the bonds, or roughly \$130,000 per year.

Fiscal Discipline and Level Services Challenges

Fiscal discipline has been a consistent priority for MERSD, leading to consistent, stable and low growth in spending and "assessment" (i.e., the cost to taxpayers).

Despite a seven-year average annual growth rate in spending of 3.27%, there are structural, recurring reasons why the level services budget generally exceeds the limits of Proposition 2 1/2. Staffing, which accounts for nearly 65% of MERSD's spending, typically grows at 3.0-4.0%, accounting for annual cost-of-living increases (2.0-2.5%), and any additional contractually obligated payments for increased years of service or staff's educational attainment. MERSD uses statewide data to ensure that compensation levels are fair and in line with other districts. According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, MERSD ranked 105th among all districts in Massachusetts in average teacher salary, amid consistent recognition for MERSD's award-winning academic and 'whole child' programs.

MERSD's next largest area of spending is mandated health insurance. With average annual medical trend growth rates in the public marketplace of 6-8%, health insurance, which accounts for 20% of MERSD's budget, naturally pressures pushes level services budget growth upward each year as well. An unusual challenge occurred in 2018, when MERSD absorbed a 28% increase in health insurance rates after its budget had been set, with a two-year cost increase of \$1.5 million. Since then, MERSD has negotiated changes to its benefits offerings to make them more affordable, resulting in below-average growth in costs. Cost of retiree healthcare, however, is mandated by State law, and MERSD now covers more retirees (168) than active employees (165). Through negotiations with its teachers association, MERSD has set aside \$4 million to address mandated future retiree health care (aka Other Post-Employment Benefits, or OPEB), which can be used to offset the cost to taxpayers in any given fiscal year.

Avi Urbas, Director of Finance and Operations

Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology

The Manchester Essex Regional School District continues to refine and expand instructional practices for teaching and learning at all levels. We are finding our equilibrium after a couple of challenging years. Teachers at all levels are working to articulate their curriculum. In doing so they are aligning MERSD (Manchester Essex Regional School District) curricula with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum Frameworks and the Vision of the Graduate. At the elementary level, the work includes the development of Parent Curriculum Guides. The guides will provide MERSD families with an overview of learning objectives and outcomes for each content area grades K-5.

In addition, we have refreshed the MERSD five-year Curriculum Review Cycle to ensure that our curriculum and instructional practices are grounded in current research, best practices, and are aligned to the Manchester Essex Regional School District's vision for student success.

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 Technology.

This team collaborates in ensuring the compatibility of the administrative and educational elements of the MERSD technology systems and supports.

- This year the MERSD Technology Team focused on: Refining instructional technology software and subscription to identify the most appropriate tools to support teaching and learning.
- Providing instruction and support for the integration of technology in the classroom and beyond.
- Updating multiple administrative components of the system for effectiveness and efficiency.

- Developing a single sign-on system for our students and staff.
- Creating in-house tools for warehousing, analyzing, and presenting data.
- Supporting state and local assessment processes.
- Implementing a digital system for registering, recording, and certifying educator professional development.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

This year Manchester Essex Regional Schools were awarded the Safe and Supportive Schools Grant.

A safe and supportive school is one that welcomes, supports, and engages all students to learn deeply, grow, and thrive. It promotes and ensures that students experience a learning environment that is equitable, culturally responsive, and trauma sensitive.

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 capacity to meet the needs of all students. Michael is guiding us in the application of the five components of Cultural Competence: Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge, Skills, and Practices, as we engage in:

- Completion of Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Assessment
- Identification of inequities and options for minimizing gaps
- Development of Safe and Supportive Schools building-based action plans
- Integration of district and schools' strategic goals and initiatives.

The district continues to implement RULER strategies from Yale's Center for Emotional Intelligence with our work around Cultural Competence.

Data Driven 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 tiered instruction across academic, behavioral, and social emotional domains and provide an inclusive environment that utilizes the concepts of Universal Design for Learning to foster equitable access for all students.

A multi-tiered system of support offers a comprehensive continuum of systematic, evidence-based practices to ensure a proactive response to students' needs. Data collection and progress monitoring are integral in guiding decision making. Using data to build consistent equitable structures and processes that allow for informed decision making has been a focus this year. To that end, MERSD implemented a new diagnostic assessment system this year grades K-8, established a district-based elementary support team, built a common elementary schedule to allow for co-teaching and the integration of support, and implemented common MTSS processes across the schools.

Angela Bik, Interim Director of Curriculum & Instructional Technology

Student Services Annual Report

The Student Services Department comprises Special Education, Section 504, English Language Learners, Homeless Students, Health and Counseling Services, and Preschool. Responsibilities 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 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 screens children to identify potential disability-related needs; approximately 225 students, 17.7% of the student population, receive special education services. Fifty-two children in PreK-12 were referred for an initial special education evaluation in 2021-2022. Special education services range from classroom support and related services (OT, PT, Speech) to sub-separate in- and out-of-district programming. Specialized in-district programs 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 Social and Academic Integrated Learning (SAIL) for students with social-emotional disabilities and/or level one autism. In addition to special education, the District provides accommodations for 70 students eligible for Section 504, a federal regulation that protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in education and employment. Seven English Language Learners (ELs) receive direct instructional services through the District and 11 additional former ELs are monitored through the department. The MERSD also provides full-time health and counseling services in each building, staffed by School Adjustment Counselors, School Nurses, and School Psychologists.

Allison Collins, Director of Student Services

Essex Elementary School

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” ~ Henry Ford

In the spring of 2022, we felt the accuracy of Henry Ford’s words. Spring’s arrival meant our 219 students in Grades K-5 could gather once again, share the hallways, and welcome visitors to our building, reminding us that schools are the social fiber of a community.

The fall of 2022 brought our student-led Open House and school-wide monthly meetings, reinforcing our shared sense of belonging and togetherness.

The personalized instruction in our school is embedded in its systems. Specialized programming, such as our SWING and ACE classrooms, exist alongside centralized support for multilingual language learners and supplemental reading and math assistance. Academic progress, measured by state testing, highlights that our students continue to perform above the state average in reading, mathematics, and science. Enhancing writing skills is an area identified for continued growth. Our after-school programs afford students the opportunity to gain skills in unique ways through multi-week offerings such as Organization Station, Growth Mindset, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

Students’ most treasured memories often generate from their shared experiences in Art, Music, Physical Education, Technology and Library classes. Weekly classes, special events that highlight their achievements like musical performances and the Art Show, and much-anticipated special events like dancing the Monster Mash and Field Day, are all components of joyful, authentic learning. Students in third through fifth grade can take advantage of an extended day as members of instrumental music instruction, chorus, or our new Rock Band.

Working together is success, evidenced by our family and community partnerships. We are thrilled to make use of the expertise and energy around us! From Friends of Essex Elementary-sponsored events, such as the Happy as a Clam road race and the Harvest Hoe Down, to a wide variety of community partnerships, students witness the positive outcomes of these valuable collaborations. Working with our community partners has resulted in a successful community breakfast, student visits to local museums, restaurants, and the Council on Aging, and collaborations with local musicians. The Hooper Fund-supported Community Read brought families to our parade and smiles on the faces of our children. Together, success becomes a reality.

Sheila McAdams, Essex Elementary Principal



EES Open House, September 2022



EES i-Walk Event, October 2022



Winter concert, December 2022



Community Breakfast, Grade 5 helpers, December 2022



Hooper Fund Community Read Parade, November 2022

Memorial Elementary School

Manchester Memorial Elementary School (MMES) has 294 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 both towns. Students needing special 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-5, classrooms average roughly 17.3 students per class.

MMES offers all of its students a wide range of activities and academics in our effort to educate the “whole” child. 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.

Over the past two years, we have focused our work in three areas: curriculum and practice equity (K-5 district-wide), valuing diversity, and expansion of our performing arts participation. Our teachers have been working closely with their counterparts at Essex Elementary School to align their curriculum, instruction, and assessments. Part of this work will be MERSD Elementary Curriculum Guides and eventually updated report cards. We have been working with our staff, students, and families to better understand the diverse backgrounds that we all come from, how that diversity is an asset to our community, and how to be respectful of one another’s differences. Our performing arts program has really kicked into high gear! We can proudly say that this is a hallmark of the MMES culture. From young pianists filling the lobby with music each morning to an ever-expanding “rock band,” our students are learning how to display their talents and passions on stage. The future is incredibly bright!

Finally, MMES is very fortunate to have a high level of supportive parent involvement. As a result of the School Committee, PTO, Spaulding Foundation, and Hooper Fund support and efforts, we continue to maintain MMES traditions and raise funds to enrich the educational experience for our students.

John Willis, Principal Memorial Elementary School

Manchester Essex Regional Middle School

The 2022 school year marked a significant return to pre-Covid school days for the middle school’s 283 students. The Annual Winter Concert was in person for the first time since 2019, and a renewed collaboration with the YMCA of the North Shore gave our students the opportunity to welcome in 2022 with music and song. The statewide masking mandate was lifted in late February, signaling a shift away from COVID-centric protocols. In addition to focusing on academics, middle school students repeatedly asked for time and resources to work on helping others.





As always, teachers put students at the center by facilitating numerous student-led charitable fundraising and giving events. The first began when students looked for a way to recognize and thank our local, tireless healthcare workers who continued to care for and support the many patients still struggling with COVID-19. After organizing a Walk-for-Workers event, which raised over \$3,000, the Middle School Student Council reached out to collaborate with Feed the Frontlines Northshore and The Cookie Monstah, then delivered delicious cookies to healthcare workers at Beverly Hospital. The intrinsic rewards experienced by this first event fueled our students' desire to continue helping others. They connected with our local American Legion, the Gloucester Open Door Food Pantry, The American Red Cross, and organizations focused on helping victims of the war in Ukraine. Through their efforts, our students:

- Collected boxes and boxes of leftover Halloween candy, which they sent to Treats for Troops.
- Ran a successful food drive during the holiday season and shipped donations to the Open Door Food Pantry.
- Coordinated several events to benefit Ukraine, including making blankets, cards, and running fundraisers.
- Organized a second walk-a-thon, raising over \$7,000 to support victims of Hurricane Ian through the American Red Cross.





There were many firsts and new beginnings in the 2022 school year for the Middle School. Grade 8 students enjoyed presentations from members of our local government and participated in their First Annual Civics Fair. We celebrated our first middle school Veterans Day assembly. The Green Team was re-energized, becoming an integral part of daily learning as they shared environmentally focused “Green Facts of the Day” each morning during announcements, and they were featured in our local *Cricket* newspaper. We celebrated our first in-school club day, where students chosen from over 18 teacher-led clubs, from chess to strength and cardio, calligraphy, music, and more. This event was so successful, it will become a staple of our middle school students’ learning and peer collaboration experiences.



developed by the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARCC). Students in Grades 7 and 8 engage in Signs of Suicide (SOS) training and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), and students in Grade 7 participate in Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT). All of these research-based programs are facilitated by licensed middle school mental-health professionals and center around prevention, early detection, risk assessment, and support.

The Manchester Essex Regional Middle School is a welcoming, safe, academically engaging, and inspiring place for early adolescent students to learn, grow, and explore. We are thankful for fantastic teachers, a supportive parent/guardian community, and our many connections to organizations throughout Manchester, Essex, and the larger region who help us develop authentic, real-world learning experiences to our students.

Joanne Maino, MERMS Principal

Manchester Essex Regional High School

CLASS OF 2022

ACADEMICS

Manchester Essex Regional High School continues to progress in an effort to provide all students with a broad-based curricular experience. The curriculum aims to provide a student-centered focus and development of the skills and dispositions of the Vision of the Graduate.



The students at Manchester Essex Regional High School continue to achieve at high levels. Ninety-four percent of the Class of 2023 moved on to post-secondary academic options. One hundred eighty-nine students took Advanced Placement courses during the 2021-2022 school year. Those students took 386 AP courses ending exams with 77% of the students scoring 3–5 (levels that are deemed acceptable for college credit). Two students were named as a Commended Student by the National Merit Scholarship Board for their academic promise and performance on the PSAT.



Students participate in hands-on, real-world, authentic learning activities across disciplines. During the fourth quarter of senior year students take part in SCORE, the MERHS senior Internship Program. Freshmen took part in a STEM fair to show their learning in math and science. Presentations at the end of the experience reflect student growth related to the Vision of the Graduate.



Experiences such as teaching elementary students all about chemistry, develop relationships and provide for an authentic opportunity for students to show and share learning.



The visual and performing arts are an essential component of the Vision of the Graduate as students expand their creativity and collaboration skills.



ATHLETIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WINTER:

- Boys Basketball: MIAA D4 Elite 8
- Girls Basketball: MIAA D4 Round of 32
- Alpine Ski: NSSL Interscholastic Race (Girls Fifth Place, Boys Eighth Place)
- Indoor Track: MIAA D5 Meet - Caelie Patrick, Fifth Place in the 1000m, Jack Newton, Seventh Place in the 1000m, and Caroline MacKinnon 2nd Place in the 600
- Swimming and Diving: Seven female swimmers and one male swimmer at MIAA D2 North States; Shea Furse, 2x Sectional/State Champion in the 200 free and 500 free, two sectional records and one state record, two-time All-American



SPRING:

- Baseball: MIAA D4 State Champions
- Boys Lacrosse: MIAA D4 Round of 16
- Girls Lacrosse: MIAA D4 State Finalists - Runner-ups
- Sailing: Sharon High School Invitational, Second Place; Zimba Fleet Race Championship, Sixth Place; Mass State High School Fleet Race Championship - Ava Rizzico, Ninth Place and Ian Carlin, 12th Place
- Boys Tennis: MIAA D4 Elite 8
- Girls Tennis: MIAA D4 Final Four



FALL:

- Cheer: Competed in the CAL Competition - first time competing in 20 years!
- Cross Country: MIAA Divisionals Meet - Boys, Eighth Place (Individual Qualifiers for MIAA All States Meet were Logan Cooper and Finn O'Hara), Girls, Seventh Place; MIAA All States Meet - Girls, 19th Place
- Golf: MIAA D3 North Sectionals - Eighth Place
- Field Hockey: MIAA D4 Finalists -Runners-up
- Football: MIAA D8 Elite 8
- Girls Soccer: MIAA D4 Elite 8
- Boys Soccer: MIAA D4 Round of 32





EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Throughout the school year students participated in community service, taking part in several toy, clothing and food drives. Debate and DECA continued to find success in. Robotics Team 2084 had an impressive showing at the FIRST Competition.



Senior Week activities returned to their traditional format. Students participated in the Prom at Danversport Yacht Club, a trip to Six Flags amusement park, class night of bowling, Baccalaureate, and Graduation.

Patricia Puglisi, MERHS Principal

