

SCHOOL NEWS



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Mankato Area Public Schools goes solar

Mankato Area Public Schools, in partnership with Xcel Energy, has gone solar after contracting with Geronimo Energy to provide solar energy to most of its school buildings. In the solar subscription, two of Geronimo's area solar gardens, Koppelman and Rengstorf, provide solar electricity to the district's buildings currently served by a local utilities company.

Scott Hogen, director of facilities for Mankato Area Public Schools, says the school district hopes to see big savings over 25 years.

"We are in a unique contract with Geronimo where we are into a locked purchase



Rengstorf solar garden, located near Courtland, Minn., is one of two gardens that supplies solar energy to Mankato Area Public Schools.

By Shelly Miller
price that won't increase for the next 15 years," Hogen says. "At year 14, we will review the subscription and evaluate the savings. If they meet expectations, we will review every five years until the 25-year contract is met. We believe that savings will be \$1 million plus."

Cost savings is not the only reason to go solar. "Saving money is an important part of adopting solar energy but we also took a look at our impact on the environment and what our carbon footprint would look like if we continued to solely use energy coming out of a power plant to supply the schools," Hogen says. "Going carbon free greatly reduces our impact on the environment. Sustainability is important to our future."

In the future, the school district hopes to extend solar electricity to their remaining school buildings. 🌱



Complimentary "VIP Gold Card" to experience Mankato Area Public Schools

By Shelly Schulz, public information

Mankato Area Public Schools' "VIP Gold Card" is exclusively for seniors—age 62 plus—who live within school district #77. It's a great way to enjoy no cost admission to enjoy concerts, athletic and academic events, plays and planetarium shows.

To obtain a "VIP Gold Card," simply contact Mankato Area Public Schools' central office at 507-387-1868; or the activity offices at East High School (507-387-5671) or West High School (507-387-3461).

Students benefit from audience attendance, intergenerational and community involvement. Quality schools positively influence quality of life, economic development and home values. 🌱

#EastofTaylor bound to make a difference

By Shelly Schulz, public information

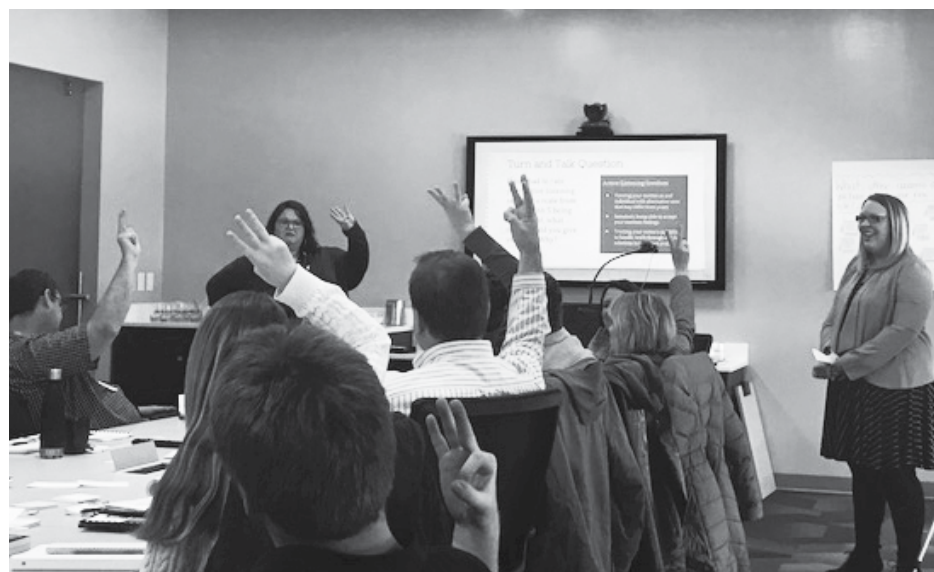
East High School is excited to partner with Taylor Corporation which is contributing time and resources to create positive life outcomes for students. Empowerment, relationship building and possibility-thinking are all part of the #EastofTaylor program. As part of this recent partnership, professionals with work and life experience are volunteer mentors to high-reaching East High School students.

"When education partners with the business community, breakthrough possibilities can occur with our students," says Superintendent of Mankato Area Public Schools Sheri Allen. "We're grateful to Taylor Corporation executives for stepping forward with their ideas and a desire to reduce barriers, sharing time and life experiences with students."

"Taylor mentors are excited to build relationships with some amazing high school students," says Suzanne Spellacy, Taylor Corporation's executive sponsor for this initiative. "We're humbled by the talented students we've met so

far and hope to support them in achieving their goals." Spellacy is Vice President and General Counsel for Taylor and serves as one of the mentors.

In addition to mentoring, important components of the partnership with Taylor include barrier-free neighborhood study nights, leadership meetings, tutoring, field trips and the basic gift of time – all designed to empower students to succeed and achieve their personal best. For Taylor, this new relationship provides opportunities for employees to give back to the community and enhance the educational opportunities for students. 🌱



Julie Larkin-Spies and Mari Considine (MAPS mentors) facilitating training with Taylor Corp mentors.

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The right start

By Sara Frederick

Roosevelt Elementary School teacher Kay Green motivates students to be math ready for life

By Shelly Miller

"Math is all around us. Everywhere. Every day," says Kay Green, math intervention teacher at Mankato Area Public Schools' Roosevelt Elementary School. That's why she says she is so passionate about teaching students math skills that ensure they are math ready for life.

Green strives to make learning math fun and effective. She says building math confidence and removing the stigma that math is hard is the number one focus. "If students believe they can, they are more likely to succeed," says Green. "I start with something familiar to them and then sneak in building the new skill. We break it down and slow down. And in no time, they've bought into it and see incredible success."

She uses small group stations to individualize learning within the group. Often, Green begins class with jumping jacks and squats to wake up the brain and get ready for learning.

And, Green finds students relate when she makes math real. "Making a connection between math skills and real-life situations that they relate to and get excited about provides real ah-ha moments for kids," Green says. "For example, applying area and perimeter to their dog's kennel or a family picture frame enhances the relevance of their classroom learning."

Ann Haggerty, principal at Roosevelt Elementary School, says students respond to Green's high-quality instruction, genuineness and passion. "Kay knows kids and knows how to meet their needs," Haggerty says. "Her instruction is just stellar. She exudes passion about math, learning and growth in kids. And, she works to build relationships with all."



Kay Green works with Roosevelt Elementary fifth graders Sofia Roessler and Michael Hughes on landmarks.

One of the ways Jean Fitterer Lance can demonstrate the quality of the education she received at Mankato West High School is by the number of credits she tested out of when she started college at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

"That was before we had Advanced Placement classes," explains Lance, who graduated in 1980. "But I was able to test out of so many classes that I graduated in three years."

Lance, who went on to attend law school at the University of Minnesota, is now the senior vice president and chief compliance officer at Boston Scientific Corporation in Minneapolis. Mankato West, she says, prepared her well for that career.

"I had a great education all the way through," she says. "West High School offered a wide curriculum with as much rigor as you wanted to pursue. District 77 has a legacy of excellence and I definitely benefited from that."

Equally important, Lance adds, are the lifelong friends she made as a student in Mankato.

"There are friends from kindergarten who I am still connected with," she says.

Lance knows that her parents, her teachers and the school district she grew up in were critical in helping her succeed.

"My parents were both teachers," Lance says. "I could see in them their passion for helping students learn and their commitment to excellence in education, which I also experienced throughout my years in the Mankato Area Public Schools."



Jean Fitterer Lance was honored by West High School last year. "Once a Scarlet, always a Scarlet," she says.

Creating connections

By Edell Fiedler, public information

Sometimes what's seen as basic life skills can be new or challenging to some. Sarah Karau-Dauk, a teacher at Mankato Area Public Schools' Central High School, spends her days teaching and helping develop skills students need to be successful. She teaches the importance of healthy relationships and connects students to community resources so they know what's available once they graduate.



Sarah Karau-Dauk

Karau-Dauk also brings students together through food by cooking and enjoying a meal as part of class. Not only do they prepare meals, they enjoy time together.

"Many of us get distracted and lose connectedness, so it's important to make time to have genuine conversation," Karau-Dauk says.

Karau-Dauk manages the on-site daycare and teaches Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting classes, also known as TAPP, designed to teach skills necessary for parenthood while providing the opportunity for students to graduate.

"Sarah has a genuine passion for her profession and for the students she serves," says Director Kathy Johnson. "Students know that Sarah cares for them as a student and as a person."

Hazel Stackurski: A positive influence

By Sara Frederick

It isn't easy for Hazel Stackurski to narrow what she likes best about school. She likes her art and media classes, for example. She likes reading. She likes her friends and classmates. But mostly, she just really likes school.

"I like to learn," says Stackurski, a fourth grader at Rosa Parks Elementary in Mankato. "So school is just kind of fun."

Stackurski's two younger siblings also go to Rosa Parks Elementary School; her sister is a first grader and her brother is a kindergartner. She wants to be a role model to both of them and to show them how to be good students. She's been reading the Wings of Fire series to her sister, who she says can now read like a third grader.



Hazel Stackurski's favorite class is art. "I like working with colors and shapes," she says.

The staff at Rosa Parks Elementary School knows that Stackurski's positive influence expands beyond her family. Her attitude and her love of learning affects her classmates, too. She appreciates to be seen that way—and she thinks she might understand why she is.

"I'm a good friend," she says. "I show empathy to others. And I smile a lot. So I think a lot of people like to be around me."

Making middle school look easy

By Michelle Laven

Sixth grader, Brooklyn Geerdes seems to have this middle school thing figured out. Armed with color-coded folders, her homework planner and a school-issued Chromebook, Geerdes is taking full advantage of the opportunities Mankato Area Public Schools' Dakota Meadows Middle School has to offer.

"I like having the options to join classes and clubs that you can't do in elementary school," Geerdes says. "This year my new activities are Spanish, Gateway to Technology (GTT), and Becoming an Expert Student (AVID), Builder's Club, and Student Council." After school, Geerdes participates in Math League, Volleyball, and Softball.

When asked what middle school students needed to succeed, Geerdes replied, "You need the confidence and mentality that nothing is too hard, and some basic skills to help you stay organized. In sixth grade, having a lot of homework may be because of not using work time during class."

Geerdes admits she sometimes has a hard time staying focused, but knows herself well enough to handle that. "With my schedule I don't have a regular time to do homework after school, so I find short periods of time to squeeze it in," said Geerdes. "If I need a break, I set a timer so I know when to get back to work."

And when Geerdes isn't busy? "I like to get on my iPod and relax, because that's what kids do."



Brooklyn Geerdes reviews Math League information while facilitators Shannon O'Connor (left) and Becky Gersich (right) look on.

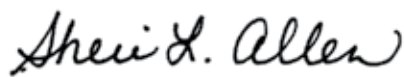
Dear residents,

Mankato Area Public Schools value a healthy culture of excellence. Students are a top priority for our district, and we continue to look for ways to engage them in their learning and skill development to benefit them through graduation and beyond. Thank you for continued community support for our students.

Schools are a vital part of community success. Continued support makes an important difference in positive outcomes for students, families and businesses. Mankato Area Public Schools' commitment is to continuous improvement toward assuring learning excellence and readiness for a changing world, being progressive and setting high expectations which includes openness and a culture of civility and excellence.

Please contact us any time we can be of service.

With the highest regard,



Sheri Allen, Ed. D., Superintendent
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10 Civic Center Plaza,
Mankato, MN 56001
507-387-1868
sallen1@isd77.org

*Assuring learning excellence and
readiness for a changing world.*



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By Shelly Schulz, public information

Stay informed about Mankato Area Public Schools' by subscribing to news and information via email and/or text messages. It's easy—go to isd77.org, and simply click on, "subscribe to news" to stay informed about school district news, information and events. Another option is to stay connected with Mankato Area Public Schools on Facebook and Twitter @isd77news.

Quality schools help drive economic well-being, including favorable home values. Businesses, jobs, schools and economic stability have interrelationship. Importantly, public schools are designed to serve all students and outstanding education is often one of the key factors for families in deciding where to live, and for businesses when determining where to invest and reinvest.

For more information about Mankato Area Public Schools, contact staff at 507-387-8516.

Mankato Area Public School Board— how to reach



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MISSION
Assuring learning
excellence and readiness
for a changing world.



VALUES

Integrity
Respect
Excellence
Adaptability
Responsibility
Engagement
Collaboration

School Board meetings

The Mankato Area Public School Board typically meets at 5:30 p.m., the first and third Mondays of each month. School Board meetings are open to the public and are held:

Mankato Room (first floor)
Intergovernmental Center
10 Civic Center Plaza
Mankato, Minn.

School Board meetings can also be viewed live on public access KTV online at accessktv.org or on cable television channel 180 (Charter) and 8 (Consolidated Communications), and replayed in the same locations at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays. School Board meeting video and minutes are available online at isd77.org.

For more information, contact staff at 507-387-1868.

Mankato Area Public Schools'

24-Hour School Help and Information Line

507-386-4777

This newsletter is published to keep citizens well informed.
Many articles were written in response to questions.

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isd77.org or mankatomn.gov

Provide feedback online anytime:
isd77.org/page/4291





The alumni of Mankato High School class of 1967 were welcomed to participate in the recent homecoming coronation at West High School. In celebration of the event, the class of 1967 donated \$2,100 to the West High School Vex Robotics Team in memory of two classmates who were killed in Vietnam: Gary Sack and Tom Manderfeld. Representing the class are: Bob Chesley, Phil Meyer and Elaine Tosch Meyer.

Pictured left to right: Front row: Carter Langworthy, Alanna Pohlman, Mr. Mark Zenk, VEX Robotics teacher and advisor. Back row: Phil Meyer, Matt Preis, Elaine Tosch Meyer, Cecelia Anderson, Bob Chesley, Sherri Blasing, principal of West High School.

Your support counts!

The generosity of individuals and businesses helps enhance students’ education by supporting Mankato Area Public Schools’ programs. To make a contribution to Mankato Area Public Schools, contact Superintendent Sheri Allen at 507-387-1868 or sallen1@isd77.org. Following is a list of contributions during the past year:

All American Foods	\$1,500-robotics	Mankato Area 77 Lancers Marching Band Parents Assoc.	marching band trailer (\$10,000 value)-music program
American Association of University Women Mankato Branch. . .	\$50-robotics	Mankato Area Youth Baseball Association	\$200-high school proms
American Legion Post 518 of North Mankato	\$400-elementary schools	Mankato Basketball Association	\$7,000 for backboards and hoops-elementary school
American Legion Post 617 of Eagle Lake	\$2,000-baseball		\$1,500-boys basketball; \$1,500-girls basketball
American Mortgage and Equity Consultants Inc.	\$500-robotics		\$4,500-high school basketball hoops
Linus and Staci Anderson	\$200-robotics	Mankato Clinic	\$150-soccer
L & N Andreas Foundation -	\$10,000-daycare	Mankato Clinic Foundation	\$2,476 for diabetes diagnostic kits for biomedical sciences program
Angies Boomchickapop.	300 bags of popcorn (\$600 value)-family learning center	Mankato Ford	\$500-robotics
Anonymous donors	Books, art supplies and classroom materials (\$515 value)-family learning center	Mankato Sunrise Lions Club	U.S. Constitution booklets (\$450 value)-high school classes
	Small-wheeled walker (\$100 value); \$500-high school swim program	Mankato/North Mankato Youth Football	\$500-high school football program
	Plants and landscaping materials (\$150 value)-elementary school	Tana and Tom Marthaler.	\$100-robotics
	\$500-elementary school; Student equipment (\$4,000 worth)-special education	Maschka Riedy and Ries Law Firm	whiteboards (\$750 value)
	\$500-high school girls’ swim/dive program; \$500-winter color guard program	Masonic Lodge 12	\$1,200-kids program
	\$150-high school food service Angel Fund; \$100-school lunch program	Lee and Wendi Masters	\$500-high school boys’ basketball
	\$2,000 for wireless headsets-elementary school; \$1,891-elementary school	Mayo Clinic Foundation	\$10,000 for equipment-biomedical sciences program
	orchestra field trip; supplies (\$500 value) for preschool program	Mayo Clinic Health System.	materials (\$2,020 value)-American Education Week
Anthony Ford Fund	\$9,000-kids program	MedExpress	\$500-career expo
Daniel and Angela Bastian	\$250-robotics	Jan Meier	snow pants (\$200 value)-elementary school
Brooke Belcher	\$300-high school dance program	MICO Inc.	\$250-robotics
Blinds and More	\$250-high school dance program	Midwest Art Catalyst	\$500-high school photography
BLK Electric	\$500-robotics	Mark and Mary Miller.	school supplies (\$132 value)-elementary school
Bolton & Menk	\$3,000-career expos	Minnesota Elevator Inc.	\$250-community education; \$200-robotics
Charles and Alanna Brandel	\$500-robotics	Minnesota Masonic Charities.	\$1,200-kids program
Burrito Wings LLC.	\$500-robotics	Minnesota Precision Manufacturing Association	\$500-robotics
C & S Supply	\$50-high school	Minnesota State University Event Mgmt	\$395-kids programs
CAB Construction	600 cut squares metal material (\$100 value)-welding	Minnesota Workforce Council.	\$800-career expo
CabinetPak Kitchens of Minnesota Inc.	\$100-robotics	MinnStar Bank	\$100-high school dance program; \$100-high school prom
California Casualty Management Company	\$1,000 grant-middle and high schools pole vaults	Paul Mitchel	\$200-scholarship
Casey’s General Stores	\$100-robotics	Modern Woodmen Youth Service Club	\$500-school supplies
Larry Cattell	books and supplies (\$3,500 value)-high school art department	MSU Construction Management Student Association	woodworking and construction tools (\$500 value)-high school
Century 21 Atwood Realty	\$1,250-high school choral program	Munchkin Markets	\$356 classroom materials-family learning center
Charlie’s Appliance Center	\$100-robotics	NAPA Auto Parts	hand tools and diagnostic equipment (\$2,500 value) and to automotive technology program
Class of 1967	\$2,100-robotics		
Edmund and Patricia Colby	\$50-elementary school reading program	Thomas Ngo	\$100-robotics
Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota	Tech and stage crew communication system (\$2,000 value)-high school drama club	North Mankato	\$3,000-music program, community education, middle school public achievement program, student activities, parent teacher organization; \$1,000-robotics
Community Charities of Minnesota	\$240-elementary school		
Condux International	\$54 for steel-high school welding	North Mankato Firefighters Relief Association	\$800-robotics
	\$44-high school technology education department	North Star Aviation	\$250-high school music department
Consolidated Communications	\$500-high school dance program	Northern Comfort Inc	\$100-high school dance program
Mary Kay and Doug Cook	Baldwin console piano (\$800 value)-high school	Northflow Solutions	\$400-robotics
Coughlan Companies	900 books (\$8,500 value)-early childhood screening	OASIS (Opportunity, Access, Success, Intercultural Services) at MSUM	\$71-high school science, technology, engineering, arts and math
Todd and Lori Coyour.	\$50-high school dance program	Robert and Susan Olson	\$100-high school soccer
Bev and Robert Cox.	\$300 in educational materials	Carolyn Osdoba	\$100-scholarship
Crystal Valley Coop.	\$2,000-career expo	AmyAnn and Timothy Pearson	\$100-high school dance program
Jack Cunningham.	\$100-high school scholarship	Pepsi of North Mankato	10 cases of pop (\$100 value)-career expo
Aaron DeVlaeminck	Classroom set of books (\$600 value)-high school	Michelle Perish	\$50-high school dance program
Drummer’s Garden Center	\$200-high school	Earle Peters	\$500-high school boys tennis
Eagle Lake American Legion	\$200-elementary school; (\$100 value)-elementary class supplies	Pioneer Bank Employees (two locations)	\$25 and school supplies valued at \$300
Eagle Lake Area Sports Association.	\$1,500 for wireless headsets-elementary school	The Pohlad Family Foundation	\$16,000 kids program
Eagle Lake Fire Department	\$500-elementary school open gym program; \$400-elementary school	Prairie Ecology Bus	\$21,050 grants-elementary schools
	\$4,669-high school wrestling mats	Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council	\$2,000 grant-community education
East elementary wrestling program	\$150-high school robotics	Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center	\$1,000 grant-high school hydration stations
Edward Jones.	\$250-high school robotics; \$250-high school business program	PTO/PTA and Booster Clubs	more than \$255,000-districtwide
El Microcircuits Inc.	\$200-robotics	Quality 1 Hr. Foto	materials/labor (\$2,305 value) high school activities dept
Eide Bailly LLP	\$2,000-robotics	Rasmussen College	\$1,000-career expo
Exposure Marketing & Promotion Inc..	\$50-high school dance program	Elizabeth Ratcliff.	\$1,315-districtwide school lunch program
Express Employment Professionals	\$100-high school dance program	Steve Ray	\$100-high school swim/dive program
Flexible Plastics Inc.	\$50 in school supplies-elementary school	Gregory Reeves	\$100-high school dance program
Forrest G. James Marine Auxiliary	\$100-robotics	River City Electric Company	\$3,500-robotics
Barbara Forst.	\$200-robotics	Robotics Education & Competition Foundation	\$1,655-robotics
FPX LLC	\$100-high school dance program	Scheels All Sports	\$25 in gift cards-elementary school; \$250-high school choir
Frentz & Frentz.	\$300-robotics		\$1,000-elementary schools bike and walk days
Froehling Anderson Ltd.	\$150-robotics; \$250-high school dance program	Sertoma of Greater Mankato	\$2,000-deaf and hard of hearing program
Gish Electric	\$200-robotics	Tammy Shain	\$300-high school dance program
Glen A. Taylor Foundation	\$12,500 kindergarten program	ShopKo Foundation	\$500 grant-middle school
Hardees of Mankato.	cookies (\$75 value)-community education	South Central Perkins Consortium	\$5,000-career expo
Steve and Sandy Hasse.	\$250 gift card-middle school	South Central Workforce Council	\$800-career expo
Mark and Jodi Himmer	\$320-robotics	Southern Minnesota Orthodontics	\$100-high school dance program
Angie Hood.	\$50-high school dance program	SouthPoint Financial	\$100-career expo
Horace Mann Insurance (Gretchen Rehm)	\$80 in gift cards-elementary reading program	Rex and Karen Sparks	\$100-robotics, costumes, racks, shelving (\$11,500 value)-high school theatre department
Doris Huepenbecker Memorial	\$1,500 high school hall of fame		
Hy-Vee	\$100-soccer	Spinners	\$250-robotics
I & S Group	\$1,000-robotics	St. John’s Episcopal Church	gloves, scarves and hats (\$200 value)
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Parent Teacher League	\$100-robotics	Dave Stahl	\$50-robotics
Indigo Organic	\$150-robotics	Jason and JoRae Galli Storm.	\$200-high school dance program
Industrial Fabrication Services, Inc (IFS)	scrap metal (\$300 value)-high school welding	Superior Concrete Block Company	\$1,000-robotics
David and Melissa Iverson	\$50-high school dance program	Timothy and Elizabeth Swanson	\$250-robotics
Jack Links.	\$15,000 districtwide	Taco John’s	\$200-robotics
Basil and Linda Janavaras	\$1,500-high school scholarship	Dr. Thoo and Lisa Tan	\$50-elementary school reading program
Jerry’s Body Shop	\$50-robotics	TSMA of Elbow Lake, Minn.	\$700-manufacturing tour
Jo’s Fitness Garage	\$100-high school dance program	Christina Turner.	\$50-high school dance program
Janet C. Johnson	\$100-robotics	Tweetens One Stop Inc	\$100-high school dance program
Johnson Outdoors	\$250-robotics	Megan Ulrich	\$100-scholarship
John Just, Sr.	\$5,000 for Bunny Just-middle school music departments	U.S. Army Recruiters Office	\$3,000-robotics
	\$5,000 for Fred Just Sr.-high school activities	John and Paulette Uttech.	\$200-robotics
	\$1,420-kids program	V-Tek	\$200-robotics
K&G Gymnastics	\$250-high school dance program	Valley News Company	\$250-high school dance program
Kaye Corporation	\$150-high school club; \$250-robotics	Van Eman Real Estate Inc.	\$250-robotics; \$100-high school business program
Kiwanis Club of Mankato	\$100-high school student council	Viking Fire and Safety	\$50-high school dance program
Knutson and Casey	\$1,000-robotics	VisualEdge Inc.	\$50-robotics
Knutson Brothers Inc.	stuffed animals (\$335 value)-elementary school; \$1,000-robotics	Volk Transfer	\$50-soccer
Kohl’s	\$100-high school dance program	Walmart Distribution Center	\$1,500-career expo
Beth Kozitza	\$75-high school activities	Michael and Peggy Walters.	\$1,800-robotics
Ryan and Laurie Krosch	\$150-robotics	Mark Weingartz (Dan’s Barber Shop)	\$100-robotics
Jerome Krueger	\$1,000-robotics	Weisser Distributing Inc	\$100-high school business program
Lake Washington Improvement Association	\$200-robotics	Wells Fargo	\$1,000 grant-teacher recognition
Larkstur Engineering & Supply Inc.	\$150-high school dance program	Wells Fargo Foundation.	\$500-elementary school
Brian and Holli Loe	\$80-high school boys golf	Darrell Wolf.	\$250 high school dance program
Rick and Connie Long.	\$100-high school girls swimming and diving	Matthew Wolff	\$1,000-high school scholarship
Marc Luckey	\$100-robotics	Christopher and Rebecca Worley.	\$50-high school robotics
Delores Lutterall.	\$500-robotics	WOW Zone	\$240 in gift cards-elementary reading program
	\$175 in cash and backpacks filled with supplies	Zonta Club of Mankato	\$610-robotics
D.L. Machado.	\$1,000-kids program		
Madison Avenue Nutrition.	\$200-high school girls hockey		
Mankato Area Gymnastics School			
Mankato Area Hockey Association.			




Planning for the future

Mankato Area Public Schools' strategic roadmap provides the foundation for district's core purpose, values, vision and strategic directions. Staff and school board members, with the help of a third party reviewer, are evaluating the strategic roadmap to determine if efforts are moving in the right direction. Flexibility is important as the strategic roadmap is reviewed. Being flexible provides room for any adjustments needed to provide the best outcome for students. A few focus areas include kindergarten readiness, closing reading gaps and cultural competency.

"We are looking at each area to learn if there are other methods to help us be efficient while focused on student learning," says Superintendent Sheri Allen.

The district has also adopted a new budget to align with its strategic roadmap. Since the budget is impacted by federal, state and local funding, it's important to ensure enough resources are available to meet the needs of a growing student population.

"We need to plan for the future and find a way to provide programs for students that positively impact their learning as well as physical and emotional health while using resources efficiently," Allen says.

View Mankato Area Public Schools' Strategic Roadmap online at isd77.org. For more information contact staff at 507-387-1868. 

By Edell Fiedler, public information

Grant gives Mankato Area Public Schools biomedical students a leg up

Mankato Area Public Schools has expanded its health occupations program to include biomedical sciences at East and West high schools giving students with interest in health occupations a leg up on their career.

The program expansion, which is part of Project Lead the Way, offers targeted coursework, some with college credit. Courses include Principles of Biomedical Science, Human Body Systems, Medical Interventions and Biomedical Innovation. Equipment and supplies to supplement courses were also purchased with the grant provided by the Educare Foundation.


Using the same tools used by professionals in hospitals, clinics and labs students engage in compelling, hands-on activities and work together to find solutions to problems.

"Health care is one of the pillars of our community so we wanted to build opportunities to empower students as tomorrow's biomedical professionals," says Heather Mueller, director of teaching and learning for Mankato Area Public Schools. "Biomedical courses

give students real-world authentic experiences. They learn in-demand knowledge and skills they need to thrive in real life situations ensuring college and career readiness."

For example, students problem solve taking details from a human autopsy to determine the cause of death.

Kim Mueller, career and readiness coordinator for Mankato Area Public Schools, says the curriculum provides experiences that foster student engagement and transformative learning in an area of high demand. "The curriculum provides teachers with training resources and support needed to engage students in real-world learning," says Mueller. "Students work with community experts and real equipment in situations that simulate real-life experiences."

The courses allow students to explore options for future careers. "For some students, it is the beginning of a career pathway, while others may determine their passion lies elsewhere," Mueller says. 

By Shelly Miller

Saying YES! to compostable lunch trays


By Sara Frederick



Students at Prairie Winds Middle School sort plastic, recycling, and compostable food/trays after eating lunch.

From a typical student's perspective, school lunch is the same healthy food choices, same smiling servers, same partitioned lunch trays. From facilities director Scott Hogen's perspective, those partitioned lunch trays have been radically improved. According to Hogen, Mankato Area Public Schools has taken the next step in its ongoing efforts to reduce the district's environmental footprint by adding lunch trays to its district-wide composting program.

Initiated by a request from West High School's Youth Energy Summit (YES!) Team, the district started working on a styrofoam tray reduction project with representatives from district food services and district facilities, Mankato Zero Waste and YES! Team Advisor, Eric Koser. Following a successful two-month pilot at Dakota Meadows Middle School and Roosevelt Elementary School, the decision was made to implement compostable trays to all sites with kitchens.

"Compostable trays are a straightforward and relatively inexpensive solution to styrofoam waste pollution," explains Koser. "Although not perfect, they are a step towards sustainability, and are a more earth-friendly alternative to styrofoam and will help to further reduce our school district's environmental footprint." 

Student support dream team helps make a difference in overall student success

By Edell Fiedler, public information

Support is critical to students' overall success. Mankato Area Public Schools has a special in-house team focused on ensuring students have emotional support to guide them through challenging experiences: social workers, psychologists, counselors and nurses. When needed, they connect students to outside resources that can provide additional help.

"They serve as a vital link between the community, schools and families in providing support for our students and families," says Scott Hare, director of student support services.

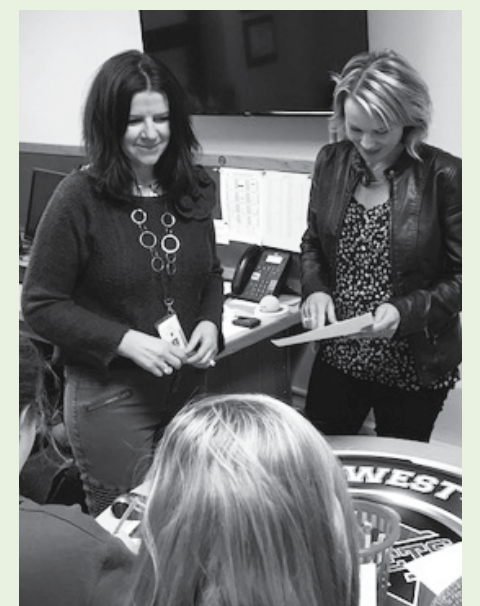
The team serves as a resource for all students regardless of background because every child will need support at some point in their lives, and as the need for mental health support increases it's important to provide resources to help meet those needs.

"Students are at school the majority of the day, so having these resources at school is important," says Molly Fox. "If they can't express themselves, are anxious, grieving, or need to work on social skills, it's difficult for them to focus on learning."

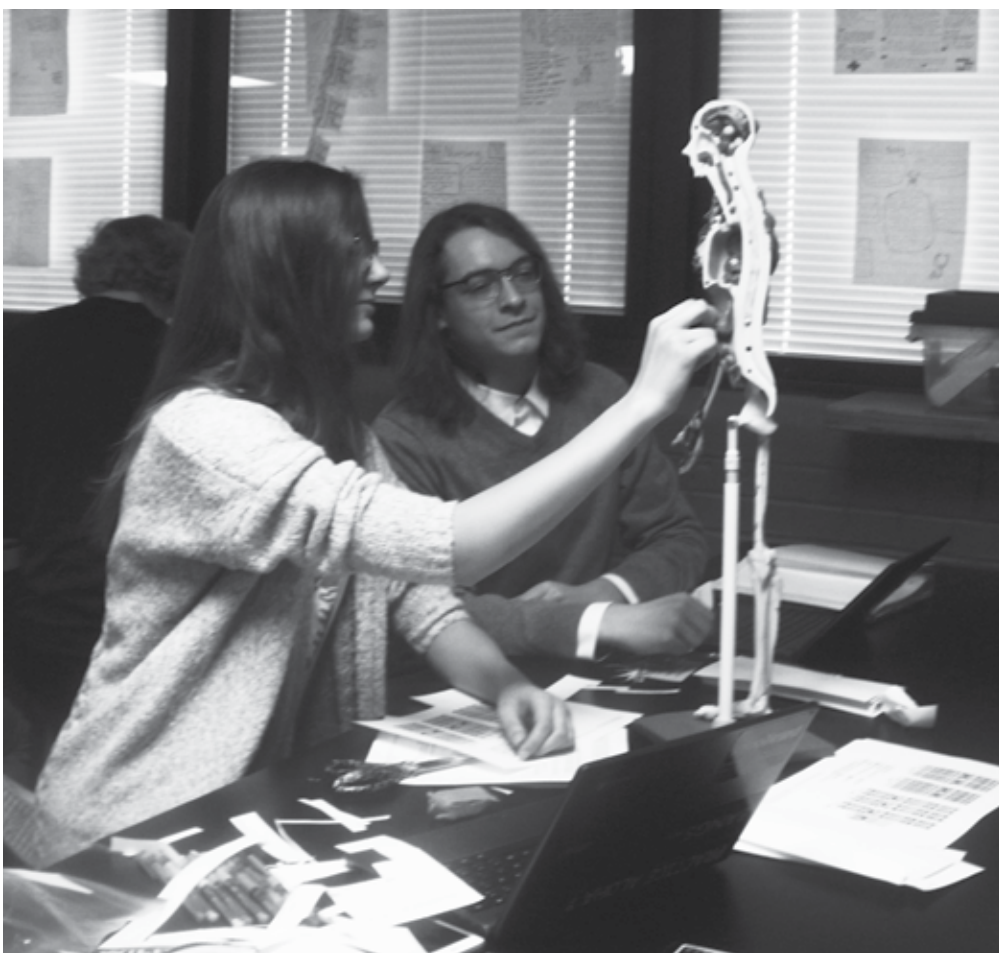
By being on the front lines with students, the team can help problem solve so students can grow socially and emotionally at a rate that's best for them. Mankato Area Public Schools continues to look for ways to provide the support they need.

"These team resources are essential to the emotional, social wellness and health of students and families," says Superintendent Sheri Allen. "They make a difference."

Fox was named School Social Worker of the Year by the Minnesota School Social Workers Association. 



School Social Worker of the Year Molly Fox and School Counselor Amanda Bomstad work with a team of students.



West High School students Bella Frentz and Josh Austin use a human skeleton to study human anatomy.

Mankato Area Public Schools joins the makerspace movement

By Shelly Miller

Mankato Area Public Schools has joined a growing number of schools nationwide in the makerspace movement which implements dedicated, in-school makerspaces, where students are encouraged to simply make. Thanks to a grant by Jack Links of Mankato and Educare, area elementary schools have implemented and enhanced makerspaces, opening the doors to endless, hands-on learning opportunities.

Makerspaces provide students with a space to gather and explore using a variety of tools and materials. A makerspace can be anything from a repurposed book cart filled with old electronic parts or arts and crafts supplies like yarn and glue to a space in the media center with a table of Legos or more advanced 3D printers, Makey Makey invention kits and littleBits electronic building blocks.

“Allowing our students to be makers opens the doors to personalized and authentic learning,” says Tracy Brovold, educational technology and information system director for Mankato Area Public Schools. “Makerspaces allow creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration.”

Time in a makerspace engages students in a purposeful, yet authentic way.

“Makerspaces give students the freedom to explore their own interests and come up with their own project ideas,” says Steve Johanson, principal at Monroe Elementary School. “They are having fun while they are learning so they forget they are actually learning.”

Shane Baier, principal at Washington Elementary School, says makerspaces engage students to think outside the box. “Makerspaces are classrooms that come alive with opportunities for students,” he says. “There is so much for kids to get their hands on. It offers the balance they need to be creative and feel comfortable to fail and try again.”



Monroe Elementary School students Colette Chelstrom and Molly Miller engage at the lego table.

Academies have immediate impact

By Sara Frederick

For the past 10 years, Mankato Area Public Schools has been inviting all of its staff to attend the Learning Academy, regular professional development sessions designed to support their work with students in the schools.

After each session, Marti Sievek checks in with the participants twice—once 30 days later and again after 90 days—to get feedback about how relevant, effective and impactful it was. What Sievek, the professional development coordinator for the district, hears back is overwhelmingly positive.

“What we hear is it has an impact,” Sievek says. “Some of that is immediate, specific strategies that they can incorporate the very next day. And some of it is a bigger awareness that impacts the fabric of their existence in the schools.”

The Learning Academies take place twice during the school year (in November and April) and on an ongoing basis in the summer. Each session is designed to align with the district’s strategic roadmap and to meet the licensure needs for teachers. Although the topics vary, they generally hit on the same themes: literacy and math; race, culture and poverty; and talent development.

“As a district, we recognize how important it is to invest in staff,” says Heather Mueller, director of teaching and learning for the district. “From the superintendent and the principals to the teachers and support staff, we see the importance of having strategies and practices that can be implemented immediately.”



Staff from the district participate in one of the Learning Academy sessions. The sessions feature presenters from within the district as well as community members and other experts.



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Support the wonder of learning

The Educare Foundation makes privately funded education grants available to Mankato Area Public Schools. Educare provides financial support beyond the normal operating budget for programs and activities that will enhance educational opportunities. Through this funding, teachers are enabled to explore new ways to expand a student's world through learning.

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How to find school attendance areas, busing eligibility and walking routes

By Edell Fiedler, public information

Finding school attendance areas and busing eligibility is as easy as 1, 2, 3. Simply visit isd77.org/page/3956, and follow online instructions to get to the search page. Once there,

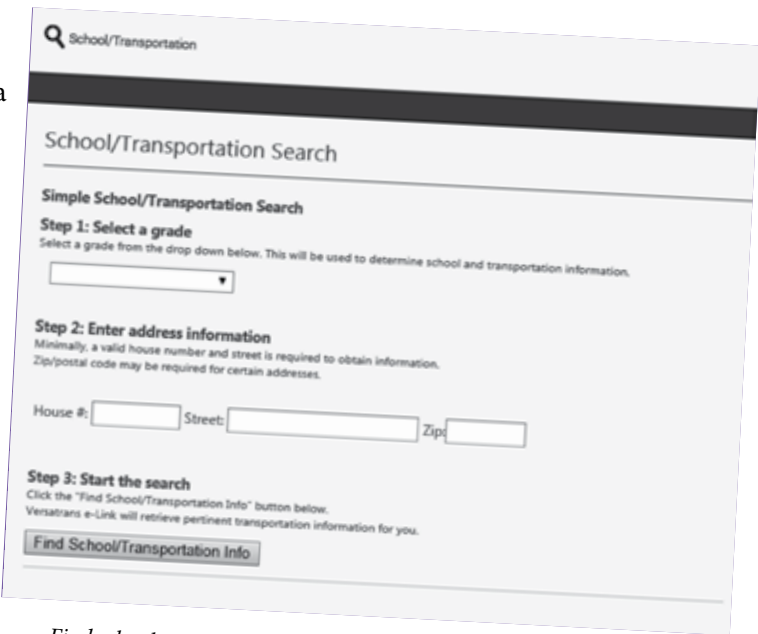
1. Select student's grade.
2. Enter address.
3. Click Find School/Transportation Information button to start the search.

Benefits of this online search tool includes 24/7 access and convenience because it can be accessed from anywhere there's internet access.

Not riding the bus?
Go online to isd77.org/page/4540 to see Safe Routes to School for Franklin, Jefferson, Kennedy, Roosevelt, Rosa Parks and Washington elementary schools.

Still have questions or need assistance? Mankato Area Public Schools' Central Registration office is another resource to help. Staff can assist with registration, attendance area and busing questions.

For more information, contact staff at 507-207-4037.



Find school attendance areas and busing eligibility online—
isd77.org/page/3956.



John Considine III speaks to a class of 11th and 12th grade AVID students.

Making matches

By Sara Frederick

When Alison Troidahl heard John Considine III speak at a Greater Mankato Growth Leadership Institute, she knew he would be a great guest speaker for the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. So she asked him if he was interested.

“I jumped at the opportunity to go back to my old high school,” says Considine, who graduated from Mankato West. “Plus it was an opportunity to talk about my job and how I work to help the community where I grew up.”

As the Family and Community Engagement Coordinator, Troidahl’s job is to connect people in the community with volunteer opportunities within the school district. Sometimes, volunteers come to her; other times, she approaches them. Almost always, the resulting partnership is mutually beneficial.

“It’s a benefit to the teachers and students in the schools to have these community volunteers,” she says, “but it’s also a benefit to the volunteers. They have an opportunity to get connected, to build a network, and to give back in our schools.”

In the seven years that the Family and Community Engagement has been an active office, more than 1,857 volunteers have put in 43,833 hours working with students from early childhood through adult learners. The value of that, Troidahl explains, goes well beyond the \$1 million it would be worth in the private sector.

“Our volunteers are an extremely important resource in this district,” she says. “They benefit our students and staff, and they help foster a positive relationship with the community. It’s been amazing to see what’s happened.”

Oh, what a ride!

By Michelle Laven

A few years ago, Sharon Patterson, a physical education instructor at Kennedy Elementary School, utilized a new Mankato Area Public Schools’ “Safe Route to Schools” grant to increase opportunities for her students to walk or ride their bikes to school. With that success, a new dream and community partnership was born.

The dream: Provide an opportunity for 100 percent of district elementary students to learn how to ride a bike and to do it safely.

“In the spring of 2016 I brought the Bike Minnesota safety curriculum to my fifth graders at Kennedy,” says Patterson. “Before I put kids on bikes, I gave them a written pre-test. My first question was, ‘Do you know how to ride a bike?’ My head almost exploded when I saw how many kids did not!”



The future: Beginning this spring, every fourth and fifth grade student in the district will have the opportunity to learn to ride a bicycle and go through the Bike Minnesota safety curriculum.

The partnership: Support for the district-wide curriculum has come from many organizations including, Blue Earth County, Greater Mankato Bike and Walk Advocates, Mankato Clinic, Minnesota Bike Alliance, Nicollet Bike Shop, Scheels and even the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee Legacy Fund.

“Our strongest ally has been the Greater Mankato Bike and Walk Advocates,” says Patterson. “They’ve been with us from the beginning, and the ongoing support from volunteers like Jed Chronic and Tom Engstrom is invaluable.”

Mankato Area Public Schools recognized for education and business partnership

By Shelly Miller

Greater Mankato Area Growth recently Recognized Mankato Area Public Schools and Junior Achievement of Greater Mankato with its Brian Fazio Business Education Partnership award for their collaboration to enhance education and business in Greater Mankato.

Mankato Area Public Schools and Junior Achievement work together to inspire nearly 10,000 Mankato-area students every year and prepare them to succeed in a global economy. The partnership empowers students to make a connection between what they learn in school and how it can be applied in the real world.

Kim Mueller, career and readiness coordinator for Mankato Area Public Schools, says Mankato Area Public Schools partners with more than 300 local business volunteers who offer local students the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in today’s world. “Junior Achievement volunteers bring industry and innovation to the classroom to show what the real world looks like outside of the walls of school,” says Mueller. “The unique piece is that students not only get to learn but they get to learn by doing.”

Junior Achievement District Manager Jaci Sprague says what better way to learn. “Our programs are all taught through experiential learning,” said Sprague. “They give students real world experiences to prepare them for a lifetime of success. Studies show alumni students are two-and-a-half times more likely to start a business after graduation.”



The Brian Fazio Business Education Partnership award was presented to Mankato Area Public Schools and Junior Achievement.

Stay informed about Mankato Area Public School Board meetings

View live online, cable, or watch a replay

By Edell Fiedler, public information

The Mankato Area Public School Board typically meets at 5:30 p.m., the first and third Mondays of each month. School Board meetings are open to the public and held in the Mankato Room on the first floor of the Intergovernmental Center, 10 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato. Being informed is possible even if not at the meeting:

View online.

View meetings live online at KTV (accessstv.org) or on Mankato Area Public Schools' website <http://isd77.org/page/4699>.

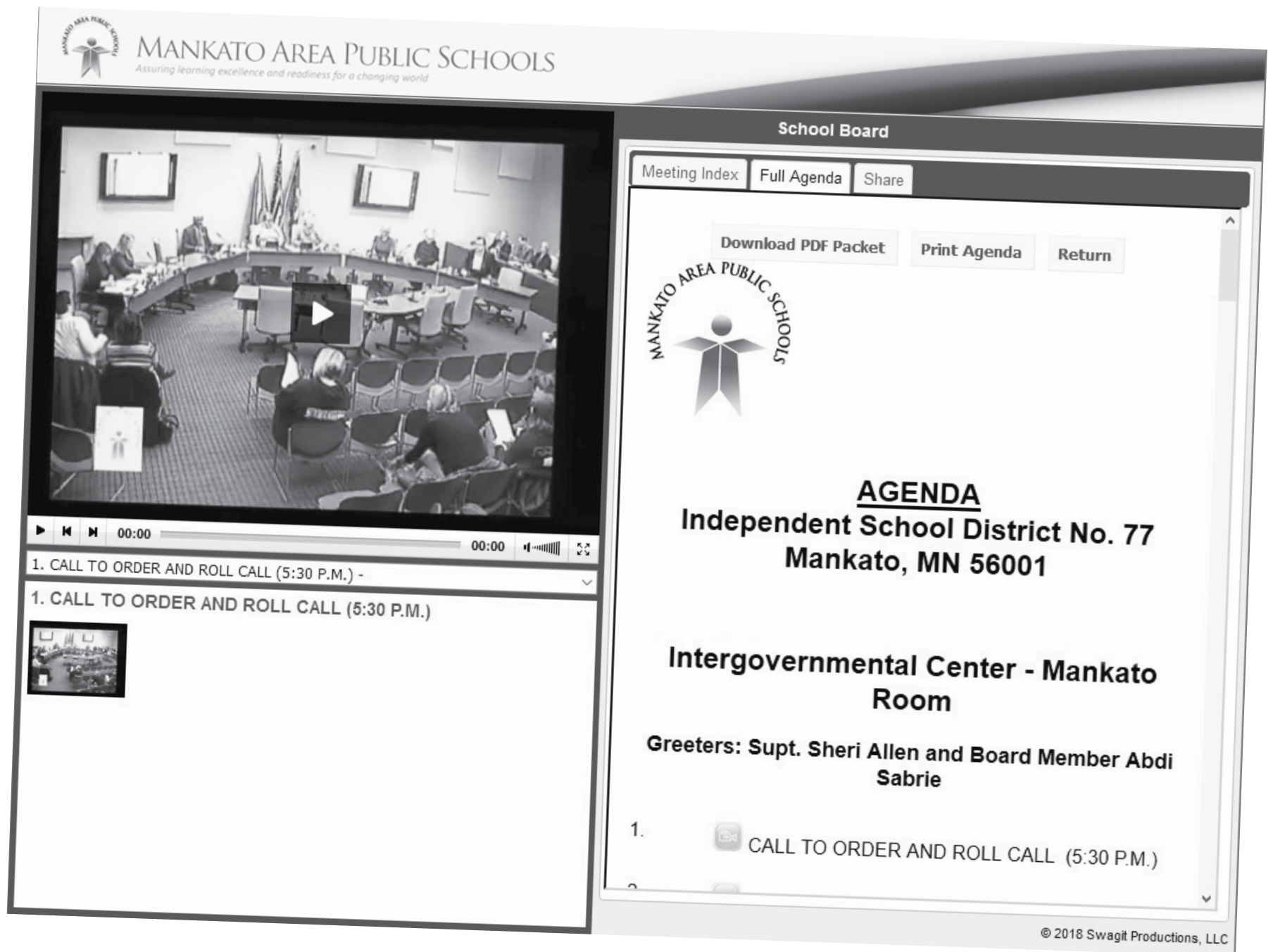
Watch a replay.

Missed the meeting? Simply go to <http://isd77.org/page/4699>, click the School board tab and then select which meeting there's interest in viewing. Replay videos are integrated with meeting agenda and supplementary information, so viewers can go right to the meeting footage they are looking for.

Tune in to cable television.

School Board meetings are aired live on channel 180 (Charter) and channel 8 (Consolidated Communications). They are replayed on these channels 6 p.m. on Wednesdays.

For more information contact staff at 507-387-1868 or maps@isd77.org.



View live or replay meetings online at <http://isd77.org/page/4699>.



Transparency through technology

Technology makes viewing meetings convenient and easier than ever. Online access and replay provides opportunities to view meetings from anywhere there's internet access. And if a live meeting is missed, there are still other ways to stay informed about decisions being made that have an impact on people.

Follow Mankato Area Public Schools' Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages at @isd77maps.