


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.

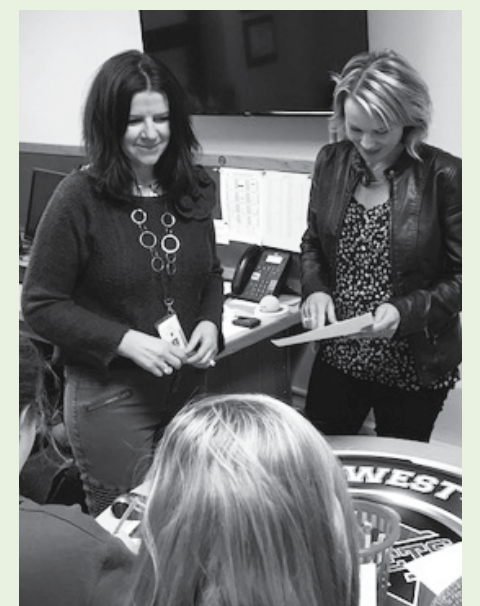
The team serves as a resource for all students regardless of background because every child will need support at some point in their lives, and as the need for mental health support increases it's important to provide resources to help meet those needs.

"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."

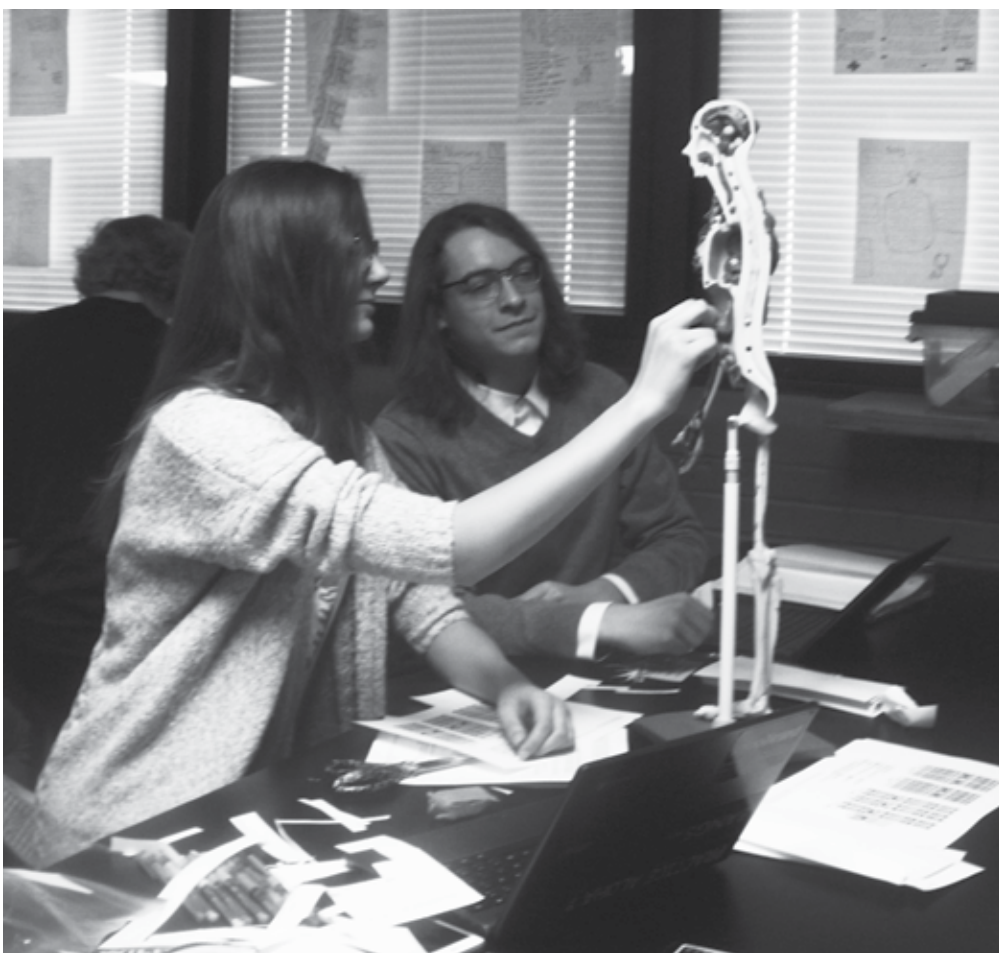
By being on the front lines with students, the team can help problem solve so students can grow socially and emotionally at a rate that's best for them. Mankato Area Public Schools continues to look for ways to provide the support they need.

"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.