



# MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

## Office of the Superintendent

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**Date:** December 19, 2024

**Subject:** Fall 2024 Superintendent's Newsletter

Dear Montgomery Township School District Community,

As part of our district's strategic planning objectives and actions, I will be sharing a newsletter a few times each school year to celebrate the learning, achievements, and activities taking place inside and outside of our classrooms. I hope that this newsletter will serve as a way to keep you informed and engaged while also providing a window into the unique energy of our schools and the learning environments we have created for our students and families.

### Orchard Hill

- ❖ This October, our youngest learners participated in our annual Early Childhood Center Fall Festival. Students picked pumpkins and used their senses to learn all about these colorful gourds. They explored corn with sensory play and even took a wagon ride through the field!



- ❖ Some of our second-grade students used their scientific wonderings to discover how many seeds are in a pumpkin. After learning that there are clues that can help us estimate how many seeds will be inside, our scientists got their hands dirty and used their knowledge of place value to count 479 seeds in total!



- ❖ As part of their UMS Cares Day, Unified students from Upper Middle School visited with some of the OHES Cubs for some extra Physical Education time. Students played basketball, bean bag toss, and cup stacking games to promote physical fitness, teamwork, and connection.



- ❖ The OHES Cubs Cave was a popular spot for students during the mild fall season. The Cubs Cave is an innovative outdoor space designed for creative and exploratory play. It provides K-2 students with a unique environment to enhance problem-solving, creativity, social/emotional skills, and physical well-being. The Cave empowers students to take charge of their learning through hands-on play.





- ❖ Our students are embracing the Cub Core Values in its third year of implementation. Safe Spaces, Kind Words, and Friendly Faces can be seen all around OHES. Our Cubs are working hard to be positive role models and stand-up citizens!



## Village

- ❖ This year, VES introduced Blazer's Beliefs. These are similar to our previous school rules and expectations, but we've made a few additions to better support the needs of our third and fourth grade Villagers. Our students spent the first full week of school learning about Blazer's Beliefs in all areas of our school community.

# Blazer's Beliefs

**Blazer's Beliefs**  
Bluebirds Make Smart Choices IN THE HALLWAYS

SHARED SETTINGS	• Close in line
WORDS AND FACES	• Voices off
PERSONAL SPACES	• Smile while passing

BLAZER BELIEVES IN YOU!

**Blazer's Beliefs**  
Bluebirds Make Smart Choices IN THE GYM

SHARED SETTINGS	• Play fair + share ball
WORDS AND FACES	• Respond to signals
PERSONAL SPACES	• Be a positive sport

BLAZER BELIEVES IN YOU!

**Blazer's Beliefs**  
Bluebirds Make Smart Choices IN THE CAFETERIA

SHARED SETTINGS	• Sit at your assigned table
WORDS AND FACES	• Listen to our staff
PERSONAL SPACES	• Keep under table

BLAZER BELIEVES IN YOU!

**Blazer's Beliefs**  
Bluebirds Make Smart Choices IN BATHROOMS

SHARED SETTINGS	• Clean and dry
WORDS AND FACES	• Quietly wait outside
PERSONAL SPACES	• Respect privacy

BLAZER BELIEVES IN YOU!

**Blazer's Beliefs**  
Bluebirds Make Smart Choices ON THE PLAYGROUND

SHARED SETTINGS	• Play fair and have fun
WORDS AND FACES	• Share and take turns
PERSONAL SPACES	• Follow equipment rules

BLAZER BELIEVES IN YOU!

**Blazer's Beliefs**  
Bluebirds Make Smart Choices ON THE BUS

SHARED SETTINGS	• Find your assigned seat
WORDS AND FACES	• Listen to the driver
PERSONAL SPACES	• Stay seated

BLAZER BELIEVES IN YOU!

**Blazer's Beliefs**  
Bluebirds Make Smart Choices. Exceed our expectations!

Shared Settings	are respected.
School Appropriate Words and Friendly Faces	communicate kindness and acceptance.
Personal Spaces	means our bodies are in control.

BLAZER BELIEVES IN YOU!

- ❖ VES was delighted to welcome back the Princeton Symphony Orchestra's "BRAVO!" music education program. Professional musicians from the Orchestra introduced 3rd graders to the string instrument family including the violin, viola, cello, and double bass. 3rd graders learned about the characteristics of each instrument and how each one contributes to the melody, harmony, or rhythm of a song. Afterward, students expressed interest in playing an instrument in 4th grade, the foundation for our district's highly regarded instrumental music program.

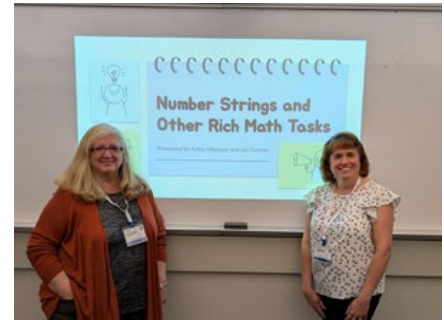


- ❖ Members from the Montgomery Township Police Department and the Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association led some special Bike and Pedestrian Safety assemblies for our third graders. Their presentation supported the third-grade Bike Safety Health unit and emphasized the importance of community safety.



- ❖ Our K-3 Math program, Bridges, utilizes Number Strings and Math Tasks to strengthen number sense. Working with these strategies focuses on building connections and developing a strong mathematical foundation. Third-grade teacher Mrs. Jen Furman recently led a professional development opportunity for New Jersey math teachers about our program. She shared how incorporating the strategies from Bridges help challenge our students' mathematical thinking!



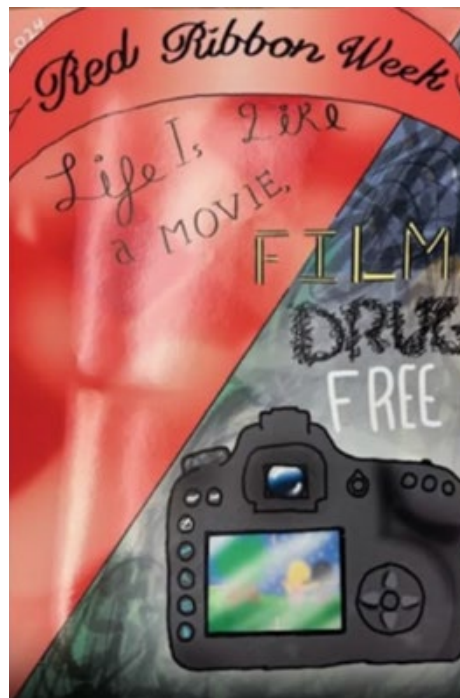


- ❖ VES students enjoyed a visit from the Montgomery High School Peer Leaders. The focus for this visit was the Pen Pal program between the MHS Peer Leaders and our VES students. This will be the third year that we have been participating in this exciting program! The Peer Leaders visited classrooms and taught the students how to write friendly letters. They also designed “getting to know you” activities and spent time in some Physical Education Classes, recess, and the lunch room.



### **Lower Middle**

- ❖ As part of Red Ribbon Week in late October, students were encouraged to get involved by creating posters for the township’s poster contest that reflected the message “Life is a Movie, Film Drug-Free.” LMS had over 40 posters submitted, which was more than any other school! Four LMS students were named winners of the contest and had their posters displayed inside the Montgomery Township Municipal Building.

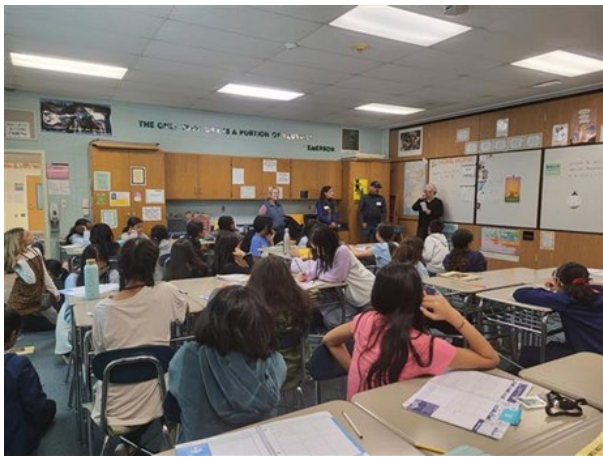


- ❖ Following a special visit from some local Veterans, our fifth graders had the opportunity to create and submit letters to our Veterans. Seven fifth graders were selected to read their letters at the township's annual Veterans Day celebration. The letters were profoundly moving and left a lasting impact on everyone present. All of the letters that were submitted by our fifth graders were displayed at the local Veterans Hospital.





- ❖ This year, LMS started a Parent Book Club! The club, facilitated by fifth-grade counselor Mr. Brian Cooper, offers a chance for parents to meet together, make new connections, and talk about some great books. For the first session, parents read and discussed *The Power of Showing Up* by Dr. Dan Siegel.
- ❖ The Montgomery Middle School PTO hosted a Fall Social in late October. Plenty of students attended as they “Dressed to Impress.” They came ready to dance the night away and spend a fun couple of hours with their friends!
- ❖ The LMS Interact Club was busy in November. On November 5th, students took a trip to Stonebridge at Montgomery to spend time with the senior residents. Both the residents and our fifth/sixth graders enjoyed playing games, reading, singing/dancing, and getting to know one another. On November 20th, the Rotary Club of Montgomery-Rocky Hill spoke at our Interact Club meeting to celebrate World Interact Week. Members of the Rotary Club shared many of the wonderful activities that the “grown-up Interact” does to help our local and broader communities!



## Upper Middle

- ❖ The Multilingual Language Learner (MLL) department recently hosted a vibrant and inspiring Community Family Night, uniting students, families, educators, and community members. This special event highlighted the power of collaboration and connection, celebrating the resilience and cultural richness of our MLL students and families while fostering stronger partnerships within our community.





- ❖ The UMS counseling department invited students from Vo-Tech schools to share their experiences and insights with our eighth graders who are interested in pursuing a trade in high school. The event provided a valuable perspective on how trade-focused education can lead to rewarding and successful careers, empowering students to make informed decisions about their high school options.



- ❖ UMS held their first Cougar C.A.R.E. (Community, Acceptance, Resilience, Empathy) Days of the school year. Led by our Compassionate Care Team, students participated in meaningful conversations about fostering a culture of respect, learning how to disagree respectfully, and promoting overall wellness.
- ❖ MHS students from the People Project, led by Mrs. Christine Grossman, promoted empathy, resilience, and social-emotional well-being by sharing their powerful message "Grow Through What You Go Through". Their presentation inspired our UMS students to embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and to support one another in building a compassionate and inclusive school environment.



- ❖ Staff from our Visual and Performing Arts department created an enriching series of lessons focused on the history, culture, music, and art of Native American communities. Through these lessons, students delved into the rich heritage of the Lenni-Lenape people, who are the original inhabitants of the land on which UMS stands today. Students learned about the Lenni-Lenape's deep connection to the land, their traditions, and their significant role in shaping the region's culture.
- ❖ MTSD Superintendent Mrs. Mary E. McLouglin, MTSD Director of School Counseling and Student Wellness and former UMS principal Mr. Cory Delgado, and current UMS principal Mrs. Raquel Estremera-Rivera attended the National Blue Ribbon Schools Recognition Ceremony in Washington, DC in November. UMS celebrated this prestigious honor by thanking the amazing staff for their unwavering commitment to our student's social and emotional well-being and academic excellence.

Highlights of our celebration included students coming together to form the letters "UMS" and a ribbon on the field, a moment beautifully captured through aerial footage provided by MHS Robotics. Adding to the festivities, a heartfelt video was created with vice principal Mr. Mark Accardi's guidance that captures the heart and soul of UMS. With contributions from staff, students, and our administrative team, the [video](#) captures what makes UMS a family.



### **High School**

- ❖ The students of MHS continue to be among the highest-achieving students in the state. Our students rank among the top of their peers in SAT and Advanced Placement tests. The Class of 2024 mean SAT score of 1317 was 267 points above the national mean. Our AP test scores were equally impressive; 53 percent of the 1548 tests taken achieved a top score of 5, and 95 percent earned a 3 or higher. MHS had 10 finalists, 12



semi-finalists, and 62 commended students in the 2024 National Merit Program. Additionally, MHS had 113 students earn the Seal of Biliteracy recognition.

- ❖ In October, the MHS Child Study Team hosted an informational session with the Center for Educational Advancement and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services about an internship program. This program is provided through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for students with disabilities (aged 14-21) who need support in gaining work experience and career awareness.
- ❖ On November 22nd and 23rd, our community was treated to incredible performances of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by our very own MHS Theater department. Under the direction of Mr. David Gordon, our students reimaged this Shakespeare classic, setting it in the 1970s. All aspects of the show were so well-coordinated including the acting, staging, costumes, lighting, music, sound, set design, and crew.



- ❖ The 2024-25 MHS Math League is in full swing. The team is looking to uphold its 2023-24 first-place county finish. Once again, the team is comprised of enthusiastic students who are discovering their love of math, sharpening problem-solving skills, and making new friends under Mrs. Nitu Sinha's leadership. Students have also competed in the American Mathematics Competition along with the monthly competitions. We are excited to see our students grow in their passion for exploring the wonders and challenges of math!



- ❖ On November 6th, the MHS Sensasian Club hosted its annual Garba and Bollywood Night in the MHS Commons. The fun-filled evening was attended by nearly 200 students and community members. Many were dressed in traditional and colorful outfits and participated in Garba, which is a traditional style of rhythmic dancing. The event serves as a fundraiser in support of the Holi Spring Fling Show which will be held later this school year.



- ❖ The MHS World Language Department, in collaboration with Señora Licinski's Spanish 5 classes, sponsored a Hispanic Heritage Exhibition in our MHS Media Center. This showcase of Hispanic history and culture highlighted the rich, dynamic, and significant cultural contributions to the United States and global society. Additionally, a Dia de Muertos altar created by students from Spanish 5 and the Latinx club was exhibited in the MHS main lobby during the final weeks of October.





Thank you to every member of our school district community for your support throughout the first four months of the school year. Be on the lookout for the next celebratory newsletter in March of 2025!

Sincerely,

Mary E. McLoughlin | Superintendent of Schools