

District Spotlight:

MTRSD Making Calculated Moves In Math



Five years ago, Amy Chang (they/them) joined the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts as a Math Coach. Before they joined the district, Amy had been a consultant with the goal of moving teachers away from the typical and intimidating ways that math has been taught and warming them up to “inquiry-based teaching and learning.” This approach includes shifting teachers into the role of facilitator, elevating student voices, and integrating more physical activity. Amy started their work here by offering logistical support of the Bridges curriculum at the elementary level. At the same time, middle school and high school began to explore inquiry-based learning. But almost as soon as they started under Amy’s watch, COVID interfered.

During the COVID pandemic, students across the nation experienced considerable learning loss. Once back in the classrooms, not only were we attempting grade level work, but we also had to figure out how to make up and catch up. To face the challenges, the implementation of [Building Thinking Classrooms](#) was part of the plan. This book, written by Peter Liljedahl and published in 2020, has 14 research-based teaching practices that can be implemented in any math classroom, regardless of content, and are designed to encourage thinking and agency. Amy credits much of MTRSD’s progress to Laura Rubinaccio (she/her), a 7th grade math teacher at the Mohawk Trail Regional Middle School, who started with [Building Thinking Classrooms](#) ideas in the spring of 2022.

On this journey of discovery and change, Amy and Laura had opportunities to share what they were learning. At the state level in April 2023, with the Associated Teachers of Mathematics in Massachusetts (ATMIM), they shared data they collected. At a global level, Amy presented on a webinar at which the author of [Building Thinking Classrooms](#) was in attendance. He found their presentation so compelling, he invited Amy to be a panelist in a third arena - the first-ever [Building Thinking Classrooms](#) conference in Indiana in Summer 2023. Amy describes being there among a sea of math practitioners “like a community movement.”

As successful trials of this work weave their way through classrooms across the district (4th grade, 6th grade, and middle school, so far), Superintendent Sheryl Stanton sees the work as promising for the future of not only mathematics, but also general problem solving and the cultivation of collaborators. “The recognition and results we are experiencing are indicators of our teaching staff being forward-thinking and dedicated. Finding the kind of success we are, this is a quiet revolution in the making. I have such gratitude for Amy and the others who have taken this on because they first believed in it, and now are part of a movement toward proven success that is bigger than anything we have seen in a long time.”

MT

School Year 2023-2024

**September—December
In Review**

WE ARE MOHAWK TRAIL

Follow us!



Sheryl Stanton, Superintendent
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In our continued commitment to transparency across the district, please see highlights from September—December 2023.

Enrollment

We have seen growth at the middle school/high school level since the end of last school year.

	End of last school year	As of November 30
MTRS	284	313
Buckland Shelburne	276	265
Colrain Central	105	104
Sanderson Academy	137	138
District Numbers	802 enrolled	820 enrolled

MCAS Results:

We are making steady progress toward the goals set by DESE of recovery to pre-pandemic achievement and growth.

Overall Strong Achievement:

- Grades 3-8 ELA
- Grades 3-8 Science
- High School Math
- High School Science
- High Needs Students Grades 3-8 Science

Overall Strong Growth:

- Chronic Absenteeism Reduction
- 4 Year Graduation Rate
- High Needs Students Grades 3-8 ELA and Math

Subgroups (SG) Seeing Declines/Where Improvement is Needed:

ELA Achievement:

- Grade 3-8 “lowest performing” SG
- Grade 10 “high needs” SG

Math Achievement:

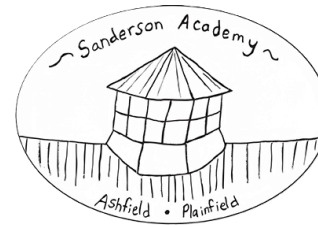
- Grade 3-8 “high needs” SG

Legislative Advocacy

- November 6: conversation with legislators about rural aid
- November 20: meeting with Chair of the Joint Committee of Education and MA State Rep Blais about equity in education and rural advocacy

Community-based Happenings

- Free lunch program continues
- October 25: Mary Lyon Foundation Community Resource Fair
- November, multiple dates: Ron James trainings
- Ongoing: MT Key Club Sharing Is Caring Clothing Closet
- Elementary level basketball programs are flourishing



Sanderson Academy
Emma Liebowitz, Principal



Sanderson Academy students:

- learn about animals, habitats, weather.
- are encouraged to engage with STEM projects like building spaghetti towers.
- participated in their annual Mountain Day 10/3/2023 and Sugar Rush Run 10/31/23.
- in the fifth grade, have pen pals who are senior citizens
- in the third grade, are working on a Storyline project with the librarian.

Also of note, Sanderson Academy:

- serves students from Ashfield and Plainfield
- Principal Liebowitz is hosting coffee hours for families to connect with her.
- renewed their Local Goods fundraising catalog.
- has an active PTO

Colrain Central
Amy Looman, Principal

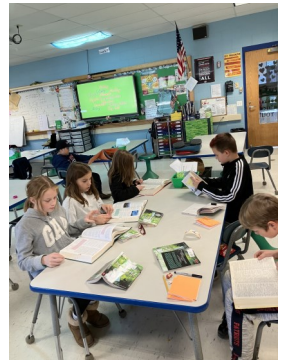
Colrain Central Elementary students:



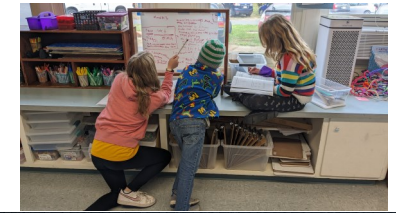
- are encouraged in STEM work with projects like engineering helpful inventions for the library.
- brought in items they grew to showcase at a Harvest Fair.
- were visited by author Marty Kelley for morning workshops on writing and Illustrating.

Also of note, Colrain Central Elementary:

- serves students from Colrain and Heath
- their librarian is participating in the Rural Schools Collaborative as a fellow in the International Teacher Reciprocity Project
- sell CCS swag; held a mum fundraiser.
- the school has an active PTO.



Buckland-Shelburne Elementary
Hayley Gilmore, Principal



Buckland-Shelburne Elementary students:

- in 4th grade are learning math in new ways.
- in 6th grade were trained as mediators to help resolve issues between peers.
- participate in after school enrichments that include LEGO engineering, arts and crafts, soccer skills and bowling.

Also of note, Buckland-Shelburne Elementary:

- serves students from Buckland and Shelburne.
- received a \$5k gift in support of the school library.
- hosted a tree planting work bee on October 29, 2023.
- honored local veterans with an event in November
- staff, students and families hosted numerous holiday fundraisers.
- have an active PTO.

Mohawk Trail Regional students:

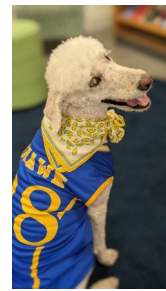
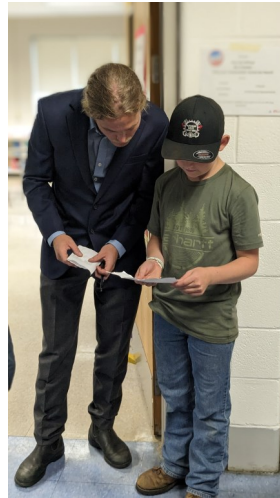
- focus on supporting and promoting student voice through advisory (now called “Crew”), student- led conferences, and Capstone and Civic Action projects
- participate in [Capstone projects](#)
- enjoy these AP courses offered this semester: Chemistry, English Literature and Composition, English Language and Composition, Computer Science Principles, US History
- had American Sign Language added to high school curriculum offerings
- had drama has added in the middle school
- participated in Booster week October 10-13

Also of note, Mohawk Trail Regional:

- serves students from Ashfield, Buckland, Colrain, Charlemont, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, and Shelburne
- Principal Buckland sends a weekly newsletter on Fridays
- the library hosted a photography exhibit titled “[Authentic Selves](#),” celebrating trans and nonbinary people and their families
- the MT Equity Alliance led the March for the Food Bank effort that raised nearly \$3,000.

MTRS

MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL



MTRS Athletics: team schedules at [Arbiterlive.com](#)

- After a 4 -year hiatus the bridge dinner was resurrected and raised \$10,000
- The middle school soccer team was made up entirely of 7th graders. Every player who started the season, finished, which is huge in our efforts to rebuild our soccer programs. Coaches, Nick Brown and Jake Thurber are huge assets to our athletic program.
- Middle school football won each of their 6 games, and the team is evenly split between 7th and 8th graders, which bodes well for the program moving forward.
- The field hockey team is in rebuilding mode, with many young players playing meaningful minutes against much older and stronger competition. Two seniors were selected All-League.
- The volleyball program accounts for over 1/3 of our fall athletes, and is easily our fastest growing program. Every class is well represented, making the future of volleyball bright. The season wrapped with a 12-5 record and the team qualified for the WMass tournament and MIAA State tournament. They finished 2nd in their league behind Turners Falls.
- The cross country teams are young and small, but are loaded with talent and are having very successful seasons. At the MIAA Division 3 State Qualifier hosted by Northfield Mountain [the boys' team placed 6th and girls' placed 7th.](#)
- The Golf team wrapped up their season at 8-10, just one win shy of qualifying for the State tournament. Next season hopes are high with the top three players returning.
- The winter athletic season is upon us, with high expectations. While our girls alpine ski team is looking to win their third straight state championship, our boys alpine team also has aspirations of claiming the state's top prize. Girls basketball will build on a strong end to last season, and for the first time in 6 years, should be able to field 3 teams. The wrestling team is returning its top two grapplers, both of whom will be competing for individual WMass titles.
- Winter sports began the week of December 11.