

Mountainside Schools Year-in-Review

Newsletter



Deerfield students enjoy learning in our modern media center.

A is for Academics

----- 2023-2024

Students had the chance to participate in a wide variety of unique events throughout the year. Educational opportunities like these enhance classroom learning, foster healthy competition, and boost confidence. In November, Middle School students submitted Patriot's Pen essays as part of our annual Veteran's Day celebration. Science came alive at our annual Science Fair and Robotics competition in the winter. Others challenged themselves in a national Noetic Math competition earning high honors. We are so proud of our students' academic abilities and their willingness to challenge themselves.



Students Go Above & Beyond

Educational Opportunities Abound In & Out of the Classroom



Top left to right: Science Fair, Robotics Competition, Revolutionary War studies in 4th grade.
Bottom left to right: Reading buddies, Makerspace challenges, and enjoying the eclipse.



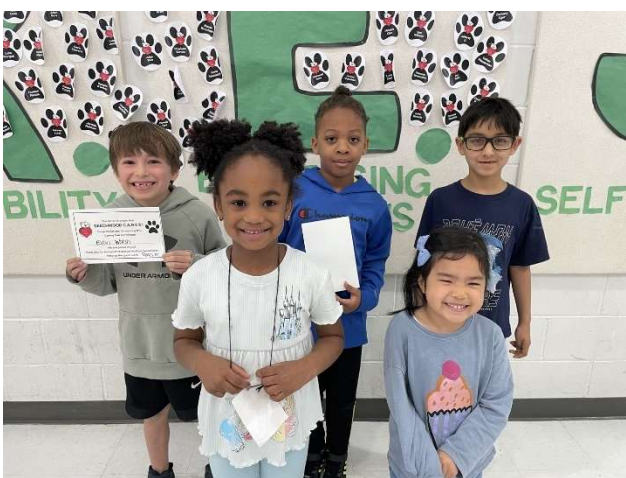
Building Compassion & the Benefits of Positive Reinforcement



B is for Being Kind

Students are encouraged to be responsible, to be a good citizen, and to be kind to others. Our principals, Mrs. Vierschilling and Mrs. Jenks incorporate weekly shout-outs of selected students who demonstrate these desirable traits. They look to “catch” kids doing the right thing and welcome nominations from staff and other students. This type of positive reinforcement is a proven method of encouragement to foster good behavior and accountability, and kids feel a sense of pride when they receive these “Caring Cubs” and “Helpful Huskies” spotlights. We lead by example and are so proud to support many local organizations. This has included Mr. Gormly’s “Soup”erbowl donations to benefit Community Options, Student Council’s cereal challenge to support a local food pantry, PTO’s Angel Tree gifts for the Salvation Army, and Mrs. Vierschilling’s Heart Challenge raising over \$29,000 for the American Heart Association. Indeed, it takes a village and there are plenty of good things happening here in Mountainside Schools and throughout our broader community.

Caring Cubs at Beechwood & Helpful Huskies at Deerfield





Spring Musical performance of “The Little Mermaid” makes waves with rave reviews! Red Ribbon Week Poster Contest inspires creative positive messages. Poets in Residence for 5th Graders, sponsored by the MEF.

C is for Creativity

When students have an outlet for their creativity and can showcase their talent, everybody wins. Mountainside Schools are proud to support the arts and have amazing, dedicated staff who engage and encourage students to challenge themselves as they explore new opportunities in art and music. Talented students participate in the annual Union County Teen Arts program, Jazz Band performances, Winter and Spring Choir and Band concerts, School Musicals, Art Shows, and much more. How wonderful it is when a student takes a chance and discovers a new passion and ability that they didn't know they had! Each year, the level of impressive talent never ceases to amaze us.

D is for Data – The Proof is in the Numbers

Mountainside School District uses a variety of tools to analyze the data of student growth. Benchmark and NJSLA State testing have proven that our students are grasping and mastering the concepts at each grade level, and the district routinely exceeds state expectations for meeting and exceeding proficiency on NJSLA results. Our teachers are reaching their students, and these data points are evidence of attaining the goals set out each year. We use tools like iReady, Thinking Classroom, and 95% Group Phonics programs to help enhance our educational programming. We are pleased to share that as part of our annual NJDOE School Performance Report, Deerfield School received a summary score of 98.02% (out of 100)!

This ranking was determined through a comparison of our NJSLA test scores, student growth on the NJSLA tests, and our absence rate. This is quite an accomplishment, and places us well above many of our surrounding districts. This distinction would not be possible without the dedication of every single one of our staff members, students, and families! While it is based on NJSLA testing, which begins in 3rd grade, we recognize the fact that student growth and ability to perform at this level begins the very moment they walk through our doors in PEAK or Kindergarten and continues to grow from there. We are enormously proud of our District's accomplishments and are confident that we will continue to demonstrate our strong academic performance as we move into the 2024-2025 school year and beyond.



Above: Experiments in Science Labs, Makerspace Engineering, and Eager Readers show the hard work and education in motion in Deerfield and Beechwood Schools.

E is for Endless Appreciation – It Really Does Take a Village

Mountainside School District students could not be as successful as they are without the endless support that is received from so many individuals. We appreciate the efforts of our entire staff to elevate student abilities, both educationally and emotionally, on a daily basis. The Mountainside School District and the Board of Education would also like to thank our incredible community for their support of our schools, students and staff. We have expanded our family and community connections to provide special programming, workshops and assemblies throughout the year. We also thank the PTO, MEF, and Watts Foundation for their generous support. Through these partnerships we have been able to provide meaningful opportunities for all including grief awareness training for staff by Imagine, educational assemblies and workshops for students, grants to support the expansion of instructional areas, and Sensory Hour events for special needs students. Our schools also give back to the community with annual Veteran's Day celebrations, food drives, shared use of our facilities with PAL and Recreation Departments, and a Senior Citizen Reception with a special performance of the annual musical, to name a few. Our students learn the importance of being a good citizen and learn to appreciate the wonderful community of Mountainside.



F is for Future – Looking Ahead Together

As we look towards the future, we are in the process of finalizing the District's next 5-year strategic plan. This plan was developed with input from many different stakeholders and will focus on increased parent/guardian and community involvement; expanded educational opportunities to support student achievement; and leveraging partnerships and grants for sustainability. As a district, we are committed to maintaining academic excellence and providing an equitable, whole-child centered education for all our students. Community assistance is vital in helping us to achieve our goals and to maintain the high level of opportunities such as those shared in this newsletter. One way you can be involved is to provide your support at the polls on November 5th when we recommend the approval of a separate proposal on the ballot. Approval of this proposal will allow us to reinstate programs and staff that were cut due to budget constraints and the elimination of federal grant funds. Support for this question will also allow the expansion of programs to best meet the needs of all our PreK-8 students. Thank you for being a part of our Mountainside community and your dedication to helping our students grow! Please stay informed on our latest news, employment opportunities (we are always looking for substitute teachers), school budgets, and board meeting information via our website at www.mountainsideschools.org and like our Facebook page.

