



Mason Public Schools Keynotes

October 2021

Alaiedon Elementary Named
2021 National Blue Ribbon
School
Page 1

MPS Hires Members of the
Community
Page 2

Board of Education Resolution
on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Page 2

MPS Welcomes New Board of
Education Member
Page 2

MPS Foundation Donates
\$100,000 to the District
Page 3

Team Mason - Excellence
in Action
Page 3

Welcome New Leadership
Page 4/5

Staff Milestones
Page 6

Welcome New Staff
Page 6

Steele Elementary
Construction Update
Page 7

Mason Public Schools
Website Survey
Page 7



ALAIEDON ELEMENTARY NAMED 2021 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

On September 21, Alaiedon Elementary, one of Mason Public Schools' exemplary elementary schools, was named a 2021 National Blue Ribbon School (NBRSS). The award from the U.S. Department of Education is based on a school's success in maintaining high academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. This prestigious award has been given to Alaiedon Elementary for consistently maintaining high M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) scores for all grades and being a top performing school in the State of Michigan.

The U.S. Department of Education says, "The National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content. National Blue Ribbon Schools are an inspiration and a model for schools still striving for excellence."

"Congratulations to the entire staff at Alaiedon, current and former, for this achievement. To be recognized as a NBRSS is well-deserved and a huge accomplishment!" said Ronald Drzewicki, Ed.S., Superintendent of Mason Public Schools. "Every member of our team has contributed to the continued excellence of the District. Our work in professional learning communities, quality instruction in the classroom and excellent support services makes this all possible district wide. Thanks to the hard work of our team, we can showcase Alaiedon and the rest of Mason Public Schools as being an exemplary learning community."

INSPIRE | EMPOWER | SUCCEED



MASON PUBLIC SCHOOLS HIRES MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Mason Public Schools, like most other organizations, continues to be challenged in finding qualified individuals to fill open positions in our classrooms and buildings. We are reaching out to the community and families of our students in hopes that you could share these open positions with your friends and family. Who better to support students than members of the Mason community?

In an effort to maintain high staffing levels, Mason Public Schools is looking to fill many positions, including substitute teachers, to support students in each of the buildings throughout the District.

Mason works with EduStaff to hire substitute teachers. Building substitutes who work every school day in Mason, receive a premium pay rate. Substitute teachers who work intermittently are eligible for a monthly bonus program. Requirements to be a substitute teacher include 60+ credit hours from an accredited college or university or a current/ expired Michigan Teaching Certificate. To apply, please visit www.edustaff.org.

In addition, MPS is always looking for the right candidates for the open positions within the District. Learn more about those jobs at our website under Employment. Thank you in advance for helping keep our students learning in person this year!

BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

At the August 9, 2021 Board of Education meeting, a resolution on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was adopted by the Board. The resolution condemns discrimination, harassment, and racism and stands behind the efforts of the staff, administration, and Diversity Committee. To read the full resolution, visit www.masonk12.net/get-involved/diversity-committee.

MASON PUBLIC SCHOOLS WELCOMES NEW BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER

At the Board on Education meeting on Monday, September 20, 2021, the Board voted to appoint a new member to fill the Board vacancy. Matthew Hall was sworn in at the meeting and will serve as a member of the Board until 2022 when his term will expire, and an election will take place. Mr. Hall was one of 13 applicants to fill the vacant seat on Mason's Board of Education. Welcome Matthew Hall!



Members of MPS's leadership team

MPS FOUNDATION DONATES \$100,000 TO THE DISTRICT

The Mason Public Schools Foundation (MPSF) has recently gifted the District \$100,000 to expand opportunities for learning at Mason Public Schools. The Foundation historically raises funds from the community at their annual 5K and spring gala.



The MPSF recognizes that the quality of education available to students is an essential factor in maintaining a strong community and creating productive, successful citizens.

“We are incredibly fortunate to have a community that is so committed to taking action to promote the high quality educational programs that students at Mason Public Schools have come to enjoy,” said MPSF President Barb Byrum. “The Foundation commends the generosity and support of area residents, businesses, and community organizations as this contribution could not have been done without them.”

TEAM MASON - EXCELLENCE IN ACTION

Last year, Mason Public Schools launched the Mason Teachers - Challenge Accepted campaign to share the amazing stories of creativity and innovation in our classrooms. We partnered with Dr. Janet Alleman, Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University and Mason instructional consultant, to capture these stories and share on them social media. The program surpassed our goals and feel the community support that came from the program was incredible. This year, our goal is to continue sharing these stories but also expand the program to include all members of the team. This renewed project is called *Team Mason - Excellence in Action*. We are so grateful for our entire staff and want to be sure these stories of creativity and innovation include great interactions, projects and programs outside of the classrooms as well. Please look for these *Team Mason* stories soon.



Welcome New Leadership

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SUPPORTS

Mason Public Schools (MPS) has recently named **Craig Kueffner** the new Director of Student Supports for the District. In this new role, Mr. Kueffner will lead and implement social emotional learning system development, the growth of summer and



before and after-school offerings and serve as the student success resource for staff. Additionally, Mr. Kueffner will work with MPS's Diversity Consultant and District leadership to support equity, diversity and inclusion training and professional development for staff as well as ensure programmatic alignment of the District's Strategic Plan and DEI efforts.

Prior to this, Mr. Kueffner has been serving in the role of Assistant Principal and Athletic Director at Mason Middle School since 2016. Additionally, throughout his career, he has served as a High School English Teacher and Middle School Language Arts teacher for Haslett Public Schools. Mr. Kueffner received his Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from Michigan State University, teaching certification from Ferris State University and his Master of Arts in K-12 Administration from Michigan State University. Mr. Kueffner resides in Haslett with his wife, Laura and two children.

HIGH SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Mason Public Schools (MPS) has recently named **Tara Becker-Utess** as a new Assistant Principal of Mason High School. Ms. Becker-Utess joins the leadership team of Principal, Lance Delbridge and Assistant Principal, Nicholas Toodzio.



Ms. Becker-Utess came to Mason from Ingham Intermediate School District (ISD) where she had served as an academic consultant since 2014. Prior to working at Ingham ISD, Ms. Becker-Utess had many roles at Charlotte High School including Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) team math coach, interventions coordinator, social studies and mathematics teacher as well as Assistant Principal intern. Additionally, she currently works part time at Michigan Virtual School as a social studies and mathematics online instructor and course content specialist.

Ms. Becker-Utess received her Bachelor of Science in education from Western Michigan University and her Master of Arts in curriculum and teaching from Michigan State University. She then received her administrative certification from Western Michigan University. Ms. Becker-Utess resides in Dimondale with her husband and 4-year-old daughter. Welcome Ms. Becker-Utess!

Welcome New Leadership

MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL & ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Mason Public Schools (MPS) has recently hired a new Assistant Principal and Athletic Director to serve Mason Middle School. **Mary Hilker**, who has spent the last 3 years teaching fifth grade at Alaiedon Elementary, has recently stepped into this role after Craig Kueffner was hired to serve as the District's new Director of Student Supports.



Ms. Hilker is a former Mason High School graduate (class of 2000). She received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and History from Michigan State University before moving to Chicago to teach and eventually serve as the Administrative Dean of Culture for Perspectives Charter School. Ms. Hilker went on to receive her Master of Educational Leadership from National Louis University.

In her time at Alaiedon Elementary, Ms. Hilker worked with the team to utilize social-emotional strategies to connect with students as they navigate mental health, peer relationships and academic performance. When needed, Ms. Hilker filled in as Alaiedon's principal, implementing school-wide expectations for student behavior and serving as the point person for any building issues.

MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST

Mason Public Schools has recently hired a Mental Health Specialist to join the team to support student success. **Amber Johnson** has been hired to support the mental health of students who may be struggling with anxiety or depression as well as the impacts of the pandemic.



Ms. Johnson will be working on building a rapport with students to help them navigate their mental health and emotional wellness while staying successful in school.

She received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Central Michigan University and her Master of Social Work from Widener University in Chester, PA. She most recently served in dual roles as a clinical therapist and as an elementary counselor for Ovid Elsie Area Schools. Welcome Ms. Johnson!



STAFF MILESTONES

30 YEARS

Marene Barker
Lee Chaney

25 YEARS

Bambi Banks
Jennifer Buskirk
Nicole Carlson
Kelly Donaldson
Suzanne Flowers
Lisa Harless
Ken Hensley
Brian Martel
Kathy Omillian
Deb Schafer
Elisa Zwick

20 YEARS

Pete Barnum
Bonnie Cantu
Erik Cargill
Jen Carter
Laura Lewis
Amber McRay
Karla Robson
April Switzenberg

15 YEARS

Beth Bailey
Cecelia Bouchard
Lisa Castle
Val Fitchett
Erica Francis
Amber Hastings
Michelle Mabis
Beth Malone
Rebecca Murray
Nicole Walsh

10 YEARS

Thomas Bullock
Katy Campbell
Amy Fredericks
Denise Green
Amber Husted
Gary Ireland
Amy Poe
Ken Pulford
Linda Tkaczyk

WELCOME NEW STAFF

Anthony Alvarado
Catherine Andersen
Kari Arend
Tara Becker-Utess

Alissa Beemer
Sierra Bennett
Erin Berryhill
Audrey Bowen
Karen Briggs
Jeffrey Brown
Sherry Cislo
Richelle Conine
Ashley Cox
Marissa Crandall
Scott Deehan
Vicky Dexter
Holly Ehresman
Danielle Escutia-Perez
Marcelino Gonzales
Brian Hamel
Sarah Hammond
Brian Hewitt
Tracey Hogge
Aaron Hudechek
Katherine Hyne
Christina Iiams
Amber Johnson
Brigette Laier
Shelly Lance
Samantha Maurer
Maureen Maynard
Robert McKay

Collin Meeuwenberg
Lynette Mills
Heather Montemayor
Samantha Myrick
Kayla Nguyen
Katherine Nicholason
Julia Olson
Kasondra Pfiester
Nanci Pineda-Avila
Kandi Pranshka
Alexa Prusa
Amanda Pyle
Kelsey Ries
Leslie Ring
Kathleen Romano
Hilary Schroeder
Laura Showers
Molly Silvernail
Elizabeth Stark
Michael Stuparek
Rosetta Towslee
Leigh Whipple
Tracey Wooden
Sarah Yanez



Steele Elementary site, October 1, 2021

STEELE ELEMENTARY CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Construction is continuing on Steele Elementary through fall 2022. As you pass by, you will see a new building taking shape behind the current structure. Throughout the school year, construction will remain outside on the addition. Beginning in the summer of 2022, renovations will begin inside the 1998 addition and the two structures will be connected to each other. We anticipate holding a ribbon cutting in the fall of 2022 and the community will be invited to tour the new building at that time. Thank you for your patience as construction takes place this year.



MASON PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEBSITE SURVEY

This year, the District will be launching a new website to better serve our students, families, staff and the community. We need your help to ensure the new site contains the most useful information all while keeping the site as user-friendly as possible.

Please participate in the website survey at this link or by scanning this code with your smart phone camera:

shorturl.at/ejGTU



Mason Public Schools
201 West Ash Street, Suite 2A
Mason, MI 48854



INSPIRE | EMPOWER | SUCCEED

Mason Public Schools
Keynotes

Mason Public Schools is committed to academic excellence in a safe environment where students develop critical thinking skills, are empowered to succeed, and are encouraged to serve their community.

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