

Manitou Springs Elementary School

MANITOU SPRINGS DISTRICT 14

At the Foot of Pikes Peak

"Every Child is a Gift"

RUSS VOGEL, PRINCIPAL

Dear MSES Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Welcome, Mustangs and Families, to the 2011-2012 School Year at Manitou Springs Elementary School! As you'll see in this letter, this new school year promises incredible growth and fun for everyone!

There is no doubt that the quality of education in a school depends above all on the people who teach and support students. **These new educators** join a staff that just grows stronger and stronger every year:

- Our First-Grade Team has chosen **Mr. Jonathan Pletsch** as a First Grade Teacher next year. A creative, empowering, and very child-centered educator, Jon has worked for the district as a paraeducator and was a student teacher at MSES last semester en route to earning his Masters in Education.
- **Ms. Jessica Biese** will join our excellent Special Education Department as a Special Education Teacher next year. Experienced as both an intermediate classroom instructor and a SPED teacher in District 2, Jessi brings to MSES her energy, rigor, and tireless advocacy for her students.
- **Ms. Carlie Sutherland** will be a new Speech-Language Teacher next year at MSES. A Manitou resident, Carlie is an experienced speech specialist with a Master's Degree in Communications Disorders. She has worked for the past few years at Community Partnership for Child Development in Colorado Springs.
- **Mr. Peter Sheloski** actually joined us a night custodian late last school year, bringing his experience and training as a maintenance professional and carpenter to our hallowed halls.

As you enter campus this year, you'll note some **changes to our facilities**, as well:

- Our **Dad Corps volunteers** held the group's inaugural event with a two-day project replacing the pea gravel in the entire south end of the play park with special playground wood chips. Our fabulous **Parent Action Committee funded the project**. The beautiful final project is another example of the incredible support MSES parents bring to their children's school.
(By the way, **all Dads and other Dudes are invited** to join Dad Corps this year, as these men meet and greet out front in the mornings, work on small projects, hang out on the playground, and model academic manliness to our scholars! Contact me or MSES dad Justin Armour, at jarmour@mssd14.org, if you're interested!)
- Our Technology Teacher (and resident airbrush artist) Jon Orr has painted the Heritage Hall restrooms with friendly cartoon characters to make them a more welcoming place for our shyest little Mustangs.
- We have installed a second computer lab, in the library, to support whole-class use of computers for projects, research, publishing, and assessments.
- We have updated our original computer lab with new iMacs.

Academically, we are looking to 'consolidate our gains' from last year and add a few new tools:

- In our ongoing Professional Learning Communities weekly meetings, we will be fine-tuning the PLC cycle of data collection, strategy-setting, and program evaluation to enhance our effectiveness in delivering our Essential Learning targets in every subject in each grade.
- We'll be adding the STAR Math Assessment to our Math program to better track student strengths and needs and respond to them earlier.
- With all of our software and presentation systems now in place, we will bolster our instructional cycle for the Muzzy Spanish/Mandarin curriculum. We hope to also host some cultural events to provide context for our language learning.
- We will be bringing last year's Colorado Springs Conservatory program into our own system and facilities: D14 music teachers and members of the Manitou Springs Arts Academy are in the early planning stages of a program that will offer music and possibly theater and visual arts lessons evenings at the SILC building. Watch for details in the fall!

- Our fifth-grade and technology teachers are meeting through the summer to plan implementation of the fifth-grade iPad program. While we will continue our fifth-grade academic program much like it has always been—engaging instruction and academic dialog, cooperative learning, challenging content, and authentic publication of knowledge—these new learning tools will further enhance students’ learning. iPads help engage students in faster, more current research; access to text and information in a format students embrace; and the potential to publish their knowledge in more varied ways that integrate text, audio, images, and video. We will hold an **iPad Parent Night at 4 p.m., August 30** (see details below) and we’ll offer iPad trainings for parents throughout the year.

Finally, some details about school’s start-up this year. Here are some key dates:

- 🍎 **Class lists will be posted** in the front window on the morning of **Friday, August 26**.
- 🍎 **Preschool Orientation** will be held from **5 to 6 p.m., Monday, August 29 up in the preschool room**.
- 🍎 **Kindergarten Orientation** will be held from **6 to 7 p.m., Monday, August 29 in the Kindergarten rooms**.
- 🍎 **Meet your Teacher Night** (drop off supplies, find your room, treats on the playpark) will be from 3 to 4 p.m., **Tuesday, August 30**.
- 🍎 **Fifth-Grade iPad Sign-Out/Parent Night** will be held right after Meet Your Teacher, at **4 p.m., August 30, in the auditorium**. 5th-grade parents must attend with their students to learn policies/complete paperwork for iPad issuance.
- 🍎 **Student testing days, August 31 and September 1 and 2** (see details below).
- 🍎 **Labor Day – no school, Monday, September 5**.
- 🍎 **First day of school for all students, PreK through Fifth, 8:20 a.m., Tuesday, September 6!**
- 🍎 **MSES Open House** (introduction of staff, classroom overviews of the academic year) will be held from **6:00 to 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, September 7**.

Again this year, we will hold our customary **half-day rotations for student pretesting on August 31 and September 1 and 2**. During these important half-days, we conduct initial pretests and health screenings—and our children get to know their new teacher one on one! **Each student will attend school only one-half day for testing in those three days**, on the following schedule:

- **Wednesday morning, 8/31/11**, students whose **last name starts with the letters A or B** will be tested. No others will attend that morning.
- **Wednesday afternoon 8/31/11**, only students whose **last names begin with C, D, or E** are in for testing.
- **Thursday morning, 9/1/11** students whose last names start with **F, G, H, I, or J** will be at the school.
- **Thursday afternoon, 9/1/11**, students with **last names K, L, and M** will test with their new teacher.
- **Friday morning, 9/2/11**, students whose **last names start with N, O, P, Q, R, and S** will test.
- **Friday afternoon, 9/2/11**, those with **last names T, U, V, W, X, Y, and Z** will come in for testing.

Some logistics around those testing days:

- **Morning sessions** will be from 8:20 to 11:45 a.m.
- **Afternoon sessions** will be from 12:15 to 3:35 p.m.
- **Buses will run** in the morning, at midday, and at the end of the afternoon to allow for pickup and drop-off of all bus students (specific details will come from the D14 Transportation Dept.).
- **Lunch will not be served** those first three testing days.
- Again, students should only report to the school for the half-day they are testing. However, **YMCA daycare will be available** at the school all three of those days if needed. For prices and reservations, please contact the Downtown YMCA at 329-7264 or 329-7253.

Well, that’s a lot of details for my old summertime brain to consider—but what a year it’s going to be! I’ll return you to your summer family fun with two final quick notes:

- First, school supply lists are at this link: <http://wpmu.mssd14.org/mses/files/2009/07/Supplylist10-111.pdf>.
- Second, my email is rvogel@mssd14.org, and I’ll be checking it all through the summer to answer any questions you might have!

Can’t wait to see you all in late August!

Russ Vogel, Principal