SOUTH WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT — "A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE"

Excellence in Education

Mustang ROUNDUP

Volume 40 ✦ Number 4 ✦ May 2025

Celebrating Excellence and Growth in 2024-2025

As the 2024-2025 school year draws to a close, South Western Elementary Schools celebrate and reflect on another year of excellence in education with immense pride. It has been a year filled with discovery, learning, and the blossoming of potential within every one of our elementary learners. We celebrate the remarkable growth and achievements of our students. Together as a strong school community of parents, dedicated teachers, supportive staff, and enthusiastic students, we have witnessed our children embrace challenges, expand their knowledge, and develop into thoughtful and engaged individuals.



Throughout the year, our classrooms have been vibrant hubs of excellence, where students actively participated in captivating experiences across mathematics, reading, writing, science, social studies, and specialist subjects. We have been inspired by their curiosity, eagerness to learn, and the progress they have made in mastering new concepts and skills.

Excellence in education expands beyond academics; we have remained committed to nurturing the whole child by providing opportunities that have fostered:

- **Effective problem solvers:** Students have tackled challenges with creativity and critical thinking.
- **Insightful critical thinkers:** They have developed their ability to analyze information and form thoughtful perspectives.
- **Responsible members of society:** We have seen growth in their understanding of community, collaboration, and responsible citizenship.

Our guiding principles, the four fundamental expectations we share –

Strive to do your best

Take responsibility for your actions

Always be safe, and

Respect people and property

have continued to provide an excellent foundation for a positive and productive learning environment.

This year our Core Essentials program has once again played a vital role in shaping the character of our students. Through the focused exploration of monthly value words, we have seen our students and staff actively *SAY IT, KNOW IT, SEE IT,* and *BE IT.* These shared values have fostered a positive and supportive atmosphere within our schools.

The specific core value words explored this year have provided invaluable lessons in compassion, self-control, generosity, cooperation, resilience, uniqueness, service, hope, and initiative; further enriching our students' excellence through social and emotional growth.

As we conclude the 2024-2025 school year, we extend our deepest gratitude to our elementary families for your unwavering support, partnership, and dedication to your children's education. Your collaboration has been instrumental in the successes we have celebrated this year.

We are immensely proud of the progress our elementary learners have made, both academically and personally. They have demonstrated resilience, curiosity, and a commitment to excellence that fills us with hope for their future.

We wish you a safe, happy, and restful summer break. We look forward to welcoming back our students in the fall, ready to embark on another year of growth and academic excellence together.

INSIDE...











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Elementary Schools..... 7:45 AM - 2:30 PM
Middle School..... 8:20 AM - 3:23 PM
High School..... 8:25 AM - 3:20 PM

March is Music in Our Schools Month

Music in Our Schools Month (MIOSM) is celebrated every March and serves as an important reminder of the significant role music plays in the development of students across the country. Established by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) in 1985, this month-long celebration highlights the benefits of music education and advocates for its continued presence in schools.

Music is more than just an art form; it enhances cognitive abilities, fosters creativity, and nurtures emotional intelligence. Studies have shown that students who participate in music programs tend to perform better academically. Moreover, learning music helps improve problem-solving skills, memory, and attention, which are essential for academic success.

Beyond academics, music education plays a vital role in the social and emotional growth of students. Through ensemble performances, students learn teamwork, collaboration, and communication. Music also provides a healthy outlet for emotional expression and helps build confidence, resilience, and self-discipline.

MIOSM serves as a platform for communities to advocate for music programs in schools, highlighting their positive impact and the need for accessible arts education. This month also reminds us of the importance of preserving music programs to ensure that future generations continue to benefit from the enriching experiences they offer.



This year, South Western School District celebrated Music In Our Schools Month in collaboration with music educators throughout the district, alumni, and 6th grade writers from EHMMS. The culminating concert celebration of MIOSM was held on Friday, March 28th. The concert not only featured the over 200 musicians from the high school in both vocal and instrumental performances, but featured two South Western Alumni. Staff-Sergeant, Dylan Tucker currently serves as a fife instrumentalist in The United States Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, a premier military ensemble. Outside of his duties to the Fife and Drum Corps, Dylan is an active freelancer and chamber musician. SSGT Tucker performed *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* with the members of Concert and Symphonic Bands.



In early January, the Legacy Club of the South Western Music Department sponsored an essay contest for all 6th grade ELA students. They were asked to write an essay entitled, "*What Music Means To Me.*" Carli Wilson and Maggie Presley were featured during the concert as honorary recipients and Savannah Rider was selected as the winner. Her essay, "*Music Is My Freedom*" was set to music by South Western Alum and Professional Composer, Bryce Fuhrman.

Bryce has received music composition degrees from the University of Maryland (DMA), University of Louisville (MM), and Shenandoah University (BM). Bryce is currently employed as the Music Arranger for Elan Artists, a live entertainment company based in New York City. The world premiere of "Music Is My Freedom" was performed by the entire high school music department and were joined by all district music educators.



National Association for Music Education

Partnerships Bring Exciting STEM Learning to District

We are excited to announce a partnership with the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation to establish state-of-the-art STEM Centers in each of our four elementary schools. This initiative will provide dynamic and engaging learning opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation is a national nonprofit dedicated to empowering young people. Their STEM Center Initiative, launched in 2016, has already reached over 305,580 youth across 25 states through 714 centers.

The STEM lesson plans will be embedded within our current library curriculum and will emphasize hands-on, experiential learning. This means students will actively participate in projects, experiments, and challenges, making STEM concepts more tangible and accessible.

What will our STEM Center offer? It will be equipped with a wide range of tools and technologies tailored to different age groups. For our elementary students, expect to see engaging tools like Bee-Bots, Squishy Circuits, and Snap Circuits Jr., fostering foundational STEM skills in a fun and interactive way.

Emory Markle Middle School is teaming up with The Campbell's Company and the Alliance For A Healthier Generation (through their Full Futures initiative) for something that will stimulate students with hands-on opportunities. This collaboration marks a significant step forward in our commitment to providing students with cutting-edge educational experiences, specifically through the

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FULL FUTURES | A School Nutrition Partnership

2024-2025 Excellence in Education – Recipients



Barbara Ehrhart
Manheim – Counselor / IST



Caitlin Riddle
West Manheim – Kindergarten



Alda Heller
EHMMS – Grade 6 ELA



Kristin Frederick
High School – Mathematics

Barbara Ehrhart has taught for 29 years in the South Western School District with beginnings at Emory H. Markle Middle School as a learning support teacher and currently at Manheim Elementary as the school counselor and instructional support teacher. During her tenure she received her Masters of Science in School Counseling from McDaniel College. Barbara demonstrates excellence in the classroom through her unwavering commitment to students' academic, social, and emotional development, incorporating innovative teaching methods that foster real-world skills and personal growth. Her collaborative approach, focus on social-emotional learning, and resourceful support for families create an inclusive and nurturing environment where all students can thrive.

Barbara Ehrhart's contributions exemplify her commitment to excellence in education, as demonstrated by her innovative teaching practices, focus on professional growth, and collaborative efforts to support students, families, and colleagues. Her dedication to fostering a nurturing, inclusive, and resourceful environment has had a profound impact on her school community. Barbara's passion for education and service makes her an inspiring leader and an invaluable asset to the South Western School District. Congratulations to Mrs. Barbara Ehrhart, 2024-2025 SWSD Elementary Representative for Excellence in Education.

Caitlin Riddle embodied what it meant to be a dedicated educator over her 12-year career as a primary teacher with the final 7 years occurring at West Manheim Elementary as a kindergarten teacher. So, it is easy to say that 'Excellence in Education' is a title fitting for her.

She was an educator who always put her students first. She set high standards for herself as well as her students. This drive for excellence would often have her reserving a block of time each weekend to ensure that her lessons were differentiated, thorough, and effective. Caitlin ensured that her students were always growing by immersing herself in professional development, which ultimately led her to be an early adopter of the Science of Reading at South Western. Caitlin taught in a way that instilled a love of learning in her students. Caitlin enjoyed teaching her students to read. She believed that success in reading and writing would lay the foundation for her students to be successful in life. Her students often came in not knowing their letters and left as readers and writers who were set up for future success. Whether it was bringing nursery rhymes to life, integrating science activities with literature, or coordinating hands-on math experiences, Caitlin made learning come alive.

Caitlin had always wanted to be a teacher since she was a little girl. To say working at South Western was anything but a dream would be an understatement. She loved the families. She loved her colleagues. Most of all, she loved her kids. As her final year unfolded, Caitlin exemplified the true essence of strength. She served as a reminder of just how special it is to impact the lives of others, and even in her absence, she continues to remind us all just what it means to be Excellent in Education.

Alda Heller is a 6th-grade ELA teacher at Emory H. Markle Middle School, who is completing her 19th year with the district. During her tenure, she received her Master's Degree in Language and Literacy from Millersville University.

Mrs. Heller is well-known for her positive attitude, creativity, reliability, and commitment to her own professional growth. She creates an engaging classroom atmosphere where kids know they matter, which allows them to succeed and believe in themselves. One of the quotes she lives by is, "It is always a good day to learn something new."

Alda fosters a love of reading with her students by beginning each week with Must Read Monday, challenging sixth graders to join the Million Word Club, and reading while talking with her students about what they are reading. She is always willing to try something new. Her students say that she allows them to make choices about their learning through different assignments, games, and activities – which they enjoy.

Teamwork and community building are important and evident when spending time with Alda. This year, she used her Cricut and made mustangs for each 6th grade student and teacher to show they belong. She is always willing to go above and beyond to lend a helping hand.

Alda is very involved at EHMMS with initiatives

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2024-2025 Excellence in Education – Finalists

ELEMENTARY



Sarah Harness
Park Hills – Music



KaSandra Ploutz
West Manheim – Counselor

MIDDLE SCHOOL



Jennifer Hubbard
Learning Support



Nickolas Wanamaker
Mathematics – Grade 8

HIGH SCHOOL



Tammy Fritz
English



Janet Gass
Health and Physical Education

...Excellence in Education

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that make our district a great place to be. She currently serves on our Student Assistance Program, provides homebound instruction, hosts field students from colleges, teaches summer school, and has been a cooperating teacher for a student teacher. She gives her all in everything she is involved in within our South Western community. Alda continues to prove and model the district motto, "*Once a Mustang, Always a Mustang.*"

Kristin Frederick has taught mathematics at South Western High School since August of 2008. Her students shared that she is a wonderful teacher who works with them until they understand their math problems. They also said she takes time to listen to them when they are having concerns or struggles, and she always has a smile on her face. In addition to her exemplary 17 years of service to our district in the classroom, she has been an active member of our school and community in a variety of other roles. For a number of years, Mrs. Frederick was the math teacher for the South Western Academy (an in-house cyber program), that allowed students to work with SW teachers for their core subject classes.

Kristin has coached our diving team for 10 years, during which time she has seen multiple divers succeed at the district level. She has been a class advisor for 12 years, having helped to guide three graduating classes (2013, 2017, 2021) through their high school experience. Mrs. Frederick has been a new teacher mentor and has served on the school's scheduling committee and social committee. A few years ago, she started a twice-per-month pancake breakfast for the high school faculty and staff – and the breakfast has taken root as a tradition that has contributed to a positive workplace climate. Outside of school, she has been an active Girl Scout leader for many years.

Mrs. Frederick's colleagues have said that they appreciate the many ways she promotes a positive school climate, they appreciate her regular participation in school spirit days and department costumes, and are thankful for her willingness to share ideas and help her colleagues.

...STEM Learning

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integration of a dynamic aquaponics program tailored for our 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade science classrooms. This initiative will actively engage young learners in real-world applications of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). By exploring interconnected concepts, students will develop a deeper understanding of these critical disciplines.

What is aquaponics? Think fish and plants working together in a special setup – like a mini-ecosystem right in your classroom. Aquaponics is like having a fish tank that helps our school garden grow. The fish create natural food for the plants in the water, and the plants clean the water so the fish stay healthy.This innovative approach allows students to cultivate fresh vegetables while engaging in hands-on science. This method requires less water and avoids the use of harsh chemicals. Think of it as a closed-loop system where everyone benefits – the fish, the plants, and our students.

We believe these STEM opportunities will be a valuable asset to our school district and the wider community. It will not only inspire our students to explore future careers in STEM fields but also cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills essential for success in the 21st century.

Inclusive and Personalized Education

At the heart of a truly inclusive school community is a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all students. Special education plays a vital role in ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the support, tools, and opportunities necessary to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Special education is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It's personalized, adaptive, and deeply human. Our special educators work closely with families, therapists, and general education teachers to create Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) tailored to each student's strengths, needs, and goals. From supporting communication development to facilitating social-emotional growth and academic achievement, these professionals wear many hats.



Special education is more than just a program—it's a comprehensive system of individualized services designed to support students with a wide range of learning differences and disabilities.

Depending on each student's unique needs, special education services may include:

- Specialized instruction tailored to different learning styles and abilities;
- Speech and language therapy to support communication skills;
- Occupational and physical therapy to assist with mobility and daily living tasks;
- Behavioral and emotional support services;
- Accommodations and modifications to curriculum, testing, and classroom environments;
- Assistive technology to enhance learning and access.

These services are not just about addressing challenges – they are about recognizing potential, building confidence, and empowering students to reach their goals. Special education staff work tirelessly to ensure students feel included, respected, and capable in every aspect of school life.



Families are important partners in this process. Communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making help ensure that students receive the most effective support in a nurturing environment. These educators do far more than teach. They advocate, nurture, and champion the success of students with diverse learning needs, ensuring every child receives the support and opportunity they deserve.

South Western is proud to offer a wide array of services that make a real difference in students' lives. With the dedication of our special education team and the support of the entire school community, we continue to create spaces where all learners are seen, heard, and celebrated.

Excellence in Every Corner: Emory H. Markle Middle School Shines Bright

At Emory H. Markle Middle School, home of the Colts, excellence isn't just a goal – it's our way of life. From the classroom to the athletic fields, from the concert stage to the cafeteria, our school community demonstrates what it truly means to lead with pride, purpose, and character.

This past fall, our Colts Cross Country team raced its way to the top, capturing the state championship title and putting EHMMS firmly on the map. But their victory wasn't just in the medals – they exemplified sportsmanship, determination, and unity every step of the way. That same spirit coursed through all our athletic programs this year. Whether it was our fierce field hockey squad, our powerful football team, our fast-paced basketball and wrestling athletes, our talented girls' volleyball, soccer, or track and field competitors – the Colts brought not only competitive fire but also integrity and respect to every game and meet.

Our athletes showed us that being a champion isn't just about winning – it's about character, teamwork, and heart.

Excellence at EHMMS extends well beyond athletics. Our vibrant music program continues to be one of the finest around. The band, chorus, and orchestra are sources of school pride, consistently delivering performances that inspire and impress. Under the guidance of our dedicated music educators, students grow not only as musicians but as confident, collaborative learners.



Mrs. Yingling, Mrs. Utz and students from the high school visit New Hope Ministries every week to pack approximately 200 bags for our Backpack Program. This program provides a bag of food each weekend to families in need.



This year's spring drama production of *Little Red Robin Hood,* was yet another shining example of what makes EHMMS special. The cast lit up the stage with talent and

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SOUTH WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Social Work Spotlight

South Western School District has two School Social Workers.
Amanda Hoff, LSW supports our K-5 students and
Jennifer Kimmel, LSW works with our 6-12 students.
Together they work as a team under the supervision of Dr. Jeffrey Smale
(Director of Pupil Services) to support the needs of our families in the district.

1. THERAPY



Our social workers are trained to provide individual and group therapy to our students. This service can be provided within the school hours. They will communicate with the school team to find appropriate times to work with your student. Some skills that they can work on with your student are emotional regulation, impulse control, coping skills, behavioral management, grief, mindfulness, social skills, and more.

If your child needs mental health services outside of the district, contact our social workers and they will create a referral for your needs.

2. FOOD RESOURCES

South Western School District has many opportunities for families to participate in receiving resources for food. We partner with New Hope Ministries for our Backpack program that allows families to receive a bag of food each weekend. Once a month there are mobile food pantry trucks at three of our Elementary schools that families can choose fresh food at no cost. Students are able to apply for free and reduced lunches at https://www.schoolcafe.com/





3. HOMELESS FAMILIES

If you are experiencing homelessness during the school year, your children could qualify for the McKinney Vento Act.

What is the McKinney Vento Act? This Act allows students to access free and appropriate public education while experiencing homelessness during the school year.

Our social workers can support your family with finding community resources for housing and schedule an emergency integrated practice team (IPT) meeting with the Children's Home of York.

Our social workers are here to help and serve our families. If your children are in need of clothing, school supplies, holiday help, or other resources - express this when communicating with one of our social workers.

4. CRISIS INTERVENTION

Our social workers respond to crisis situations within the district. They are trained to complete suicide and threat assessments along with other trained professionals in the district. If someone is experiencing suicidal or homicidal thoughts the social worker will assess the persons risk and complete a safety plan. If needed, mobile crisis through Wellspan can be called to support the student at school or parents/guardians can take their child to an Emergency room to be evaluated by other mental health workers.

Crisis Line : Call/Text 988
National Suicide Prevention: 1-800-273-8255
Mobile Crisis: 717-851-5320



CONTACT INFORMATION

DR. JEFFREY SMALE: 717-632-2500 EXT 20005

JENNIFER KIMMEL, LSW: 717-633-4840 EXT 222360

AMANDA HOFF, LSW: AMANDA_HOFF@SOUTHWESTERNSD.ORG

...EHMMS Shines Bright

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energy, while our behind-the-scenes stage crew ensured every moment ran smoothly. The show was a hit with our school community and a testament to the creativity, commitment, and excellence of our students and staff.



In the classroom, our core academic teachers continue to provide a strong foundation in math, language arts, science, and social studies, challenging students to think critically and strive for





their best. Alongside them, our robust exploratory programs—ranging from technology education to family and consumer sciences, art, and more—offer students opportunities to discover new passions and apply their knowledge in innovative, real-world ways.

Behind every success story at EHMMS is a team of exceptional support staff. From our friendly clerical team who greet visitors and keep our front office running, to our cafeteria staff who nourish our students daily, to our hardworking custodians who ensure our school remains clean and welcoming – we are truly grateful for every person who makes this school a safe, positive, and productive place to learn.

At Emory H. Markle Middle School, excellence is not just something we talk about – it's something we live every day. Our administration and the wider community are incredibly proud of the academic achievements, the strength of character, and the remarkable commitment to growth shown by our students and staff.

We are the Colts – and we are proud to stand for excellence in all we do.

Calendar...

May 28
- School Board Meeting, 7 PM

May 30
- Class of 2025 Commencement, 7 PM

June 2
- Committee of the Whole Meeting, 6:30 PM

June 11
- School Board Planning Meeting, 6:30 PM

June 25
- School Board Meeting, 6:30 PM

July 7
- Committee of the Whole Meeting, 6:30 PM

July 16
- School Board Meeting, 6:30 PM

August 4
- Committee of the Whole Meeting, 6:30 PM

August 12-14
- Teacher Inservice

August 13
- School Board Planning Meeting, 6:30 PM

August 19
- First Day of School for Students K-12

South Western High School Class of 2025 – Commencement



The Class of 2025: Ready for What's Next...

It's official — the Class of 2025 is graduating! After four years of hard work, laughter, late nights, and unforgettable memories, these students are finally turning the page to a brand-new chapter.

This class has been through a lot together. From adjusting to new ways of learning to cheering each other on at games, performances, and school events, they've built a strong sense of community. Along the way, they've learned not just about math, science, and history, but also about friendship, perseverance, and figuring out who they are.

Whether they're heading to college, starting a job, traveling, or still figuring things out, one thing's for sure — they're ready to take on the world. Graduation isn't just about leaving high school behind. It's about celebrating how far they've come and all the exciting things ahead. Congrats to the Class of 2025 — you made it, and the best is yet to come!