



MAHOPAC MATTERS

News from the Mahopac Central School District

March 24, 2025

A Message From Superintendent of Schools Christine Tona

Dear Mahopac Community,

Happy Spring! I am happy to inform you that, due to only having one school closure due to snow this year, we currently have three weather give-back days built into the school calendar. If any additional school closures occur due to weather or emergency, these give-back days will be adjusted accordingly. However, barring no emergencies, I anticipate that school will be closed on April 21, May 23 and May 27. Enjoy the warmer weather and sunshine!



Thank you to all of our community members who completed the recent budget input survey. The input provided from the 600+ respondents was invaluable. This information will guide us as we continue to develop the school budget for the 2025-2026 school year. [You can access the summary of the survey here](#). You can also find all of the information regarding the 2025-2026 school budget on our district website or by [clicking here](#). Please check this site often as updates will be posted throughout the next two months. Please mark your calendar to participate in the annual school budget vote and trustee election on May 20.

Thank you to the many community members – parents, staff and students – who have submitted PACcolades to recognize our wonderful staff members. I have received much positive feedback regarding this weekly addition to our newsletter. Please submit a PACcolade to recognize one or more of our staff members through our [PACcolade Submission Form](#).

Sincerely,

Christine Tona
Superintendent of Schools

RICE and Model UN Clubs Partner for Film Screening and Discussion



The Mahopac High School Racial Inclusion Cultural Empowerment (RICE) and Model United Nations clubs teamed up for a unique event featuring a screening of the HBO Original film “1000% Me: Growing Up Mixed” followed by a thoughtful panel discussion and a livestreamed authors’ event.

RICE Club adviser Tricia Johnson and Model UN Club advisers Christine Honohan and Chris Ford kicked off the day with an engaging icebreaker activity called Diversity Bingo. It allowed students to interact with one

another and learn more about their peers. Participants walked around the room to find someone who could match the description on their bingo card, such as “someone who speaks a language other than English fluently” or “someone who is left-handed.” The activity sparked lively conversations and set the stage for a day of reflection and connection.

Following the icebreaker activity, the students gathered to watch “1000% Me: Growing Up Mixed,” a documentary that provided an insightful and heartfelt exploration of identity, race and cultural background through the eyes of mixed-race children. It also offered a powerful approach to understanding the complexities of growing up with multiple cultural identities. After the screening, students from both clubs participated in a deep and engaging discussion on the film’s key themes, such as civil rights, social-emotional learning and the role of storytelling in shaping our understanding of identity.

“Activities like these create a space for students to reflect on their own identities and how they relate to the larger world,” Johnson said. “By sharing these stories, we not only help foster empathy and understanding but also empower our students to embrace the diversity that surrounds them.”

The day continued with a livestreamed broadcast of Facing History & Ourselves’ “Borders and Belonging: An All Community Read Authors Event” featuring Safia Elhillo, author of “Home is Not a Country” and Reyna Grande, author of “The Distance Between Us.” Both authors shared their personal journeys of navigating between cultures while searching for a sense of belonging. They explored how visible and invisible borders shape one’s connection to identity and community and answered thoughtful questions from the students.

The collaborative program provided a valuable supplement to the language arts and history curriculum, connecting to themes in American history, government, and English language and composition. By exploring social justice issues through personal stories, the students gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by mixed-race individuals and the importance of embracing diversity in our society.

The event provided a meaningful opportunity for students to engage with critical social issues, reflect on their own identities and deepen their appreciation for diversity in the world around them.

To read the entire article, [visit the district's website](#).



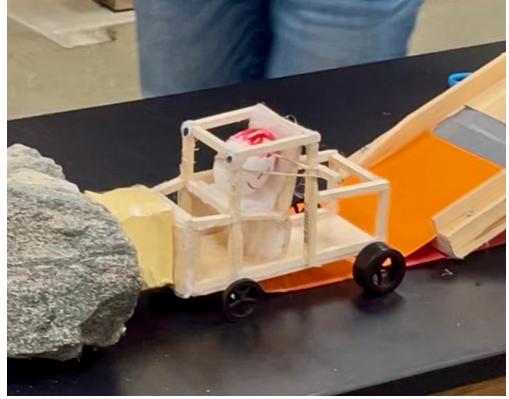
Seventh Graders Engineer Egg-Safe Cars



Seventh graders in Scott Hocutt's STEM class completed an exciting hands-on project where they designed and built cars that protected an egg as the vehicles rolled down a wooden ramp and crashed

into a large rock. The students were challenged to incorporate engineering concepts, such as restraints and crumple zones to absorb impact energy and keep the egg safe. After weeks of planning, designing and testing, the seventh graders achieved an impressive 98% survival rate for the eggs during the crash tests.

"It was amazing to see the creativity and problem-solving skills these students brought to the table," Hocutt said. "They worked hard to understand the science behind impact protection, and their results speak for themselves. I am very proud of their determination and how hard they worked to reach their goal."



For more information and photos, [visit the district's website](#).

Austin Road Fourth Graders Create Weather Broadcasts



Austin Road Elementary School fourth graders engaged in a hands-on learning project that blended creativity, history and technology. As part of their reading and writing curriculum, students worked in teams to research a historical natural disaster, write about it and transform their findings into a news broadcast script. They recorded their weather segments in front of a green screen.

The technological aspects of the project were led by STEAM teacher Trish Huestis, who worked closely with fourth grade teachers Mary Jean Cerbini, Katie Douma, Carolyn Ryan, Jerry Volpe and Tiffany Ziegelhofer and teaching assistant Adrianne Eppolito. Together, they guided the students in using green screen technology to create their dynamic weather broadcasts.

"It was fun watching the fourth graders bring their historical weather events to life using props such as raincoats, umbrellas and microphones," Huestis said. "It's truly fulfilling to see students combine their research, creativity and technology skills to produce something they are proud of."

After recording their broadcasts, Huestis introduced the students to WeVideo, a video editing software, where they refined their projects. The editing skills they developed will be useful later this year when they team up with art teacher Chris Williams on a creative puppet project.

"This project also introduced them to real-world tools they'll use in future projects," Huestis said. "Watching the students grow as storytellers and collaborators is one of the most rewarding parts of my job."

For more information and photos, [visit the district's website](#).



Thank you to all of you who took the time to recognize the wonderful staff members who made a meaningful impact on your student's life. Several PACcolade recipients are acknowledged below and we will continue to share more in future newsletters.

Meghan Reinhardt and **Dana Pinatello** always go above and beyond not only for their students, but for all students in the district. Even before Meghan and Dana were Mahopac employees, they could always be seen at events giving of their time and expertise to ensure every child had the opportunity to participate in events to the best of their abilities. Now, as employees, both service providers continue to demonstrate the professionalism and compassion for which they are known throughout the district."

"I now understand science more because of **Mrs. (Jennifer) Degl**. She is very sweet and funny and explains science in ways that make it so we can understand it better. Without Mrs. Degl I would still be struggling with Earth science."

Team 8A students and Margaret Fox are doing such a great job on the

Peacemaker projects that are hanging in the middle school upstairs science wing. They look great and really are eye opening. If you have a chance, take a look!"

[**Please take a moment to click here to recognize a staff member by sharing a PACcolade.**](#) Thank you in advance for recognizing our staff members!

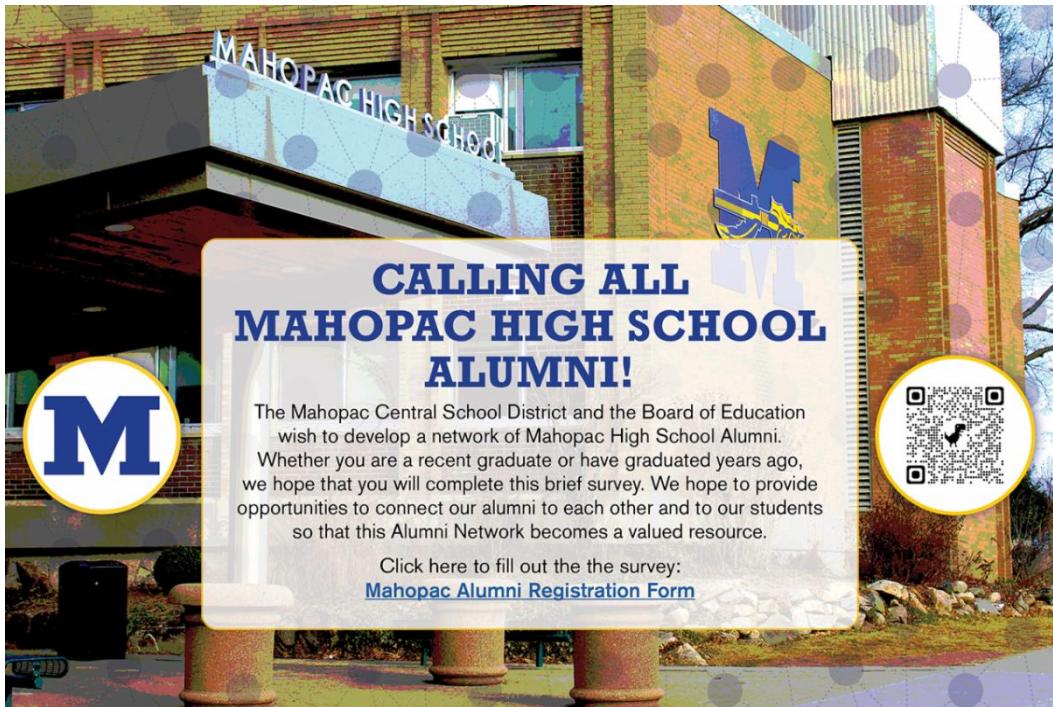


Ad Hoc Advocacy Committee Opens Suggestion Box

The Ad Hoc Advocacy Committee invites our community to provide any concerns, issues, policies for the Advocacy Committee to discuss and consider advocating for and against. Your information will remain confidential and only your suggestions will be shared.

On behalf of the Mahopac Advocacy Committee, thank you for your participation.

[Advocacy Suggestion Box](#)



[Fill out the survey at Mahopac Alumni Registration Form](#)



Upcoming Events

- 3/25 - Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m. High School Auditorium
- 4/3 - 4/5 - High School Spring Musical, "Annie," 7-9 p.m.
- 4/14 - 4/21 Spring Recess, NO SCHOOL

[Visit the full calendar on the district website](#)

Did you know?

MHS Class of 2022 alumni Angelo Centrone, a junior at SUNY Cortland, finished as the national runner-up at 149 pounds at the 2025 NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships. Congratulations Angelo!

Do you have a fact about Mahopac to share?
Your fact may be featured in an upcoming newsletter!

Please share your information here: [Did You Know Ideas for a Future Newsletter](#)

Internet Safety for Parents



April 8, 2025 | 7:00-8:30pm | FREE VIRTUAL EVENT! | Pre-registration is required

The internet is a powerful tool that can be perilous to navigate without consideration. This presentation will encourage critical thinking in online activity, with an emphasis on protecting children from uninformed choices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Frank Guglieri

DIRECTOR OF REGIONAL SAFETY SERVICES, PNW BOCES
(914) 248-2457 | FGuglieri@PNWBOCES.org



Learn more and register now!

Zoom link will be sent to the email provided during registration.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

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ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

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TRUSTEE

Community Bulletin Board

Check out the **Community Bulletin Board** on the District website for flyers and information regarding community events.

Have a community event to advertise? Please share with maasika@mahopac.org.

Mission Statement

The Mahopac CSD develops educated, upstanding citizens with practical life skills through rigorous preparation for the real world.

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