



# Tiger TRADITIONS

*Inspiring Excellence and Leadership in All!*

September/October 2017 - Volume 20 • Issue 5

# Welcome BACK!



## 300 children benefit from MACS school supply distribution event

Thanks to the generosity of community members and the Mexico Academy & Central School District Faculty Association, 301 Mexico students received brand new backpacks stuffed with necessary supplies to start the 2017-2018 school year.

Donations of pencils, pens, notebooks, loose-leaf paper, highlighters, crayons, rulers, binders, folders and

other school supplies filled backpacks for students in grades kindergarten through 12. The annual giveaway combined items collected from the United Way of Greater Oswego County's Stuff-a-Bus initiative and supplies purchased from the \$3,500 MACS staff members raised from Jean Days during the 2016-2017 school year.



## A Message from the Superintendent



Welcome to the 2017-2018 school year at Mexico Academy and Central School District!

As you can see throughout this edition of our Tiger Traditions, it has been a busy summer at MACS! We have hired many new talented and experienced staff members including many new faces at the District Office.

Over the summer months, we have updated and will continue to update our facilities to ensure that our children, staff and community have a safe, warm, welcoming, and professional learning environment. Our educators have participated in numerous professional development opportunities so that we may deliver quality programs, services, and learning experiences that maximize our students' academic performance and personal development to ensure their future success. Most importantly, many students have benefited immensely from academic enrichment and academic support opportunities offered by MACS this summer.

Having personally toured each building on opening day, I can honestly inform you that we had a wonderful opening day! A great first day is the foundation for another successful school year at MACS!

As always, please know that I am always available to you. In addition to contacting me in person, you may also contact me through my e-mail address: [sbruno@mexicocsd.org](mailto:sbruno@mexicocsd.org), my office number: 963-5400 ext. 5403, or my cell number: 315-200-9542.

**May this be the best year yet!**

Sincerely,

Sean C. Bruno



### First-grade mathematicians hard at work!

Within the first few weeks of school, first-grade students at Mexico Elementary School have already been hard at work practicing new math concepts. At MACS, we believe ALL students can learn and working in partnership with classmates may lead to mastering new skills.

## MACS welcomes 30 new staff members



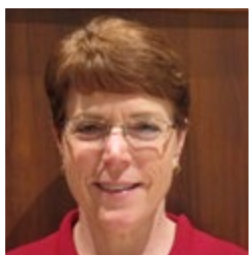
New MACS staff members, from left, in the front row are: Special Education Teacher Lauren Grimmert, Fourth-Grade Teacher Jodi Koproski, Counselor Laura Hyde and Teacher Aide Laurrie Porter. From left, in the second row are: LTS Science Teacher Andrea Searles, English Teacher Meg Farrell, Teacher Aide Marissa Hewitt and Teaching Assistant Sarah Herrington. In the third row are Teacher Aide Jen Bickford and Teacher Aide Megan Bolton. In the fourth row, from left, are: Teacher Aide Denise Seeley, Teacher Aide Allison Sova, French Teacher Najet Gharsallaoui and Teaching Assistant Schally Washburn. From left, in the fifth row are: First-Grade Teacher Rob Teifke, Psychologist Sarah Vonderohe and Science Teacher Erika Kulesa. From left, in the sixth row are: Monitor Heather Cansler, Psychologist Intern Victoria Galbraith, Science Teacher Galen Fellows and Monitor Alicia Harmon. Absent from the photo are: Monitor Kayla Anderson, Teaching Assistant James Lamacchia, Teaching Assistant Paulette Yablonski, Teacher Aide Sara Bateman, Teacher Ashlee Brancato, Nurse Lynn Bogart, Teaching Assistant Jen McGillicuddy, Teacher Aide Tiffany Green and Science Teacher Katharine Kays.

## Stadium project update: on page 4

You may not know that once contracts are approved, it takes from a few days up to a few weeks for the construction companies hired to mobilize their equipment and begin construction. We used this time gap as an opportunity to invite our CiTi BOCES heavy equipment students to begin demolition. This not only allowed us to capitalize on our short summer window by beginning 12 hours after contract approval, it also provided us with additional cost savings while providing local students real world learning experiences.



## Proud to be MACS



### July Proud to be MACS Honoree

#### Merrilee Gorton

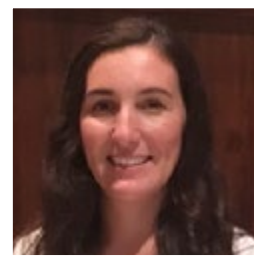
Merrilee Gorton, former 13-year MACS BOE member, was chosen as the July 2017 Proud to be MACS honoree. Merrilee grew up in Mexico and graduated from MACS in 1980. She attended SUNY at Oswego and completed her degree as an

adult student graduating from Empire State College with a BA in Human Services Administration.

She enjoys spending time with her family, including son Jacob and daughters Tonaya and Zianna. Her loving nature has transcended from her family life to her professional life. Her spirit is refreshing and continues to help make the world around her a better place. Merrilee currently serves as Assistant Director of Spaulding Support Services, a non-profit agency that provides services for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. She has remained dedicated to her job and the people she serves there for 28 years.

It had been her thoughtful analysis, probing questions, and eloquently stated positions on the various BOE issues she helped work through during her tenure that further proved her caring community connections. Over the years, Merrilee had served on numerous Board committees which include, but are not limited to, the Faculty Advisory Committee, the School Safety Committee and the Community Recreation Committee.

Her work with MACS has come full circle, as she - along with former Board member Joe Godfrey - created and developed the Proud to be MACS recognitions.



### September Proud to be MACS Honoree

#### Angela Zarnowski

Angela Zarnowski, Mexico High School science teacher, was chosen as the September 2017 Proud to be MACS honoree. Angela grew up in Oswego and graduated from Oswego High School in 1997. She continued her education at SUNY Oswego, with a bachelor's degree

in biology and a master's degree in education. While she initially worked at an engineering company and as a chemist, she joined MACS in 2008. Since then she has taught chemistry, bio-medical for Project Lead the Way and Living Environment.

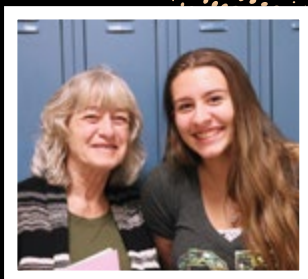
A few colleagues and former students who nominated Angela for the Proud to be MACS honor concurred her patience, positive attitude, kindness and big heart have all contributed to her success and celebrations within the school district. She has been noted for conveying complex ideas in simple ways, welcoming each of her students daily and devoting extra time to help people master concepts. This was apparent to one former student whom Angela told her that her job "isn't to see you do well as a student; it's to see you do well in life." Angela has been described as a mentor, a counselor, a cheerleader, a friend, a manager, a go-getter and someone to look up to.

A highlight at MACS thus far, she said, has been the Class of 2015 advisor, as she was able to see several students set and accomplish lofty goals and gain school spirit. She was incredibly supportive and encouraging of the students to set out to make any ideas they had a reality.

When asked about her favorite aspects of working in the MACS district, she responded with three: the spirit of community, her coworkers and her students. When not at school, Angela, who resides in Baldwinsville, enjoys traveling and playing polo.

## Freshmen become acquainted with Mexico High School

As members of Mexico High School's Class of 2021 get ready to embark on the last four years of their MACS education, upperclassmen and staff members have been on hand to ease their transition from middle school.



*Mexico High School freshman Destiny Dorling, right, finds her locker and the way through the building with the help of Terry Catchpaw, left, during the ninth-grade orientation night.*

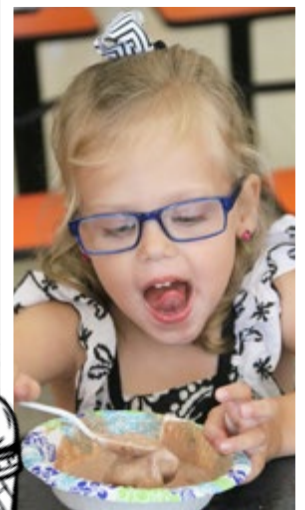
The incoming freshmen, along with their families, attended a recent ninth-grade orientation night to become more acquainted with the high school as they practiced locker combinations, navigated the hallways through their schedules, learned about the importance of high school credits and reviewed all of the great opportunities the high school has to offer. Principal Ryan Lanigan greeted a crowd in the auditorium before he explained pertinent information, including the revamped Freshman Seminar curriculum each ninth-grader will take.

## New Haven UPK students enjoy ice cream social

New Haven Elementary School's youngest students attended an ice cream social to find their Universal Pre-Kindergarten classroom and have a tasty treat before school began.

Teacher Cheryl Barbeau said the fun event served as an ice-breaker activity to get the children acclimated with the school environment. Some staff members, including Principal Jennifer Granholm, were on hand to serve ice cream sundaes in the cafeteria before the students and their families made their way to their first classroom.

*New Haven Elementary Universal Pre-Kindergarten student Althea Sawyer enjoys an ice cream sundae during a recent introductory UPK event at the school.*



# STADIUM PROJECT Update

Dear MACS community,

As I am sure you have seen, we are currently completing the stadium phase of our 2013 District Wide voter approved capital project. Through your support, we have been able to update many areas of our District for our students, community and staff members. Our stadium renovation portion of this project was originally scheduled to begin and be completed last year.

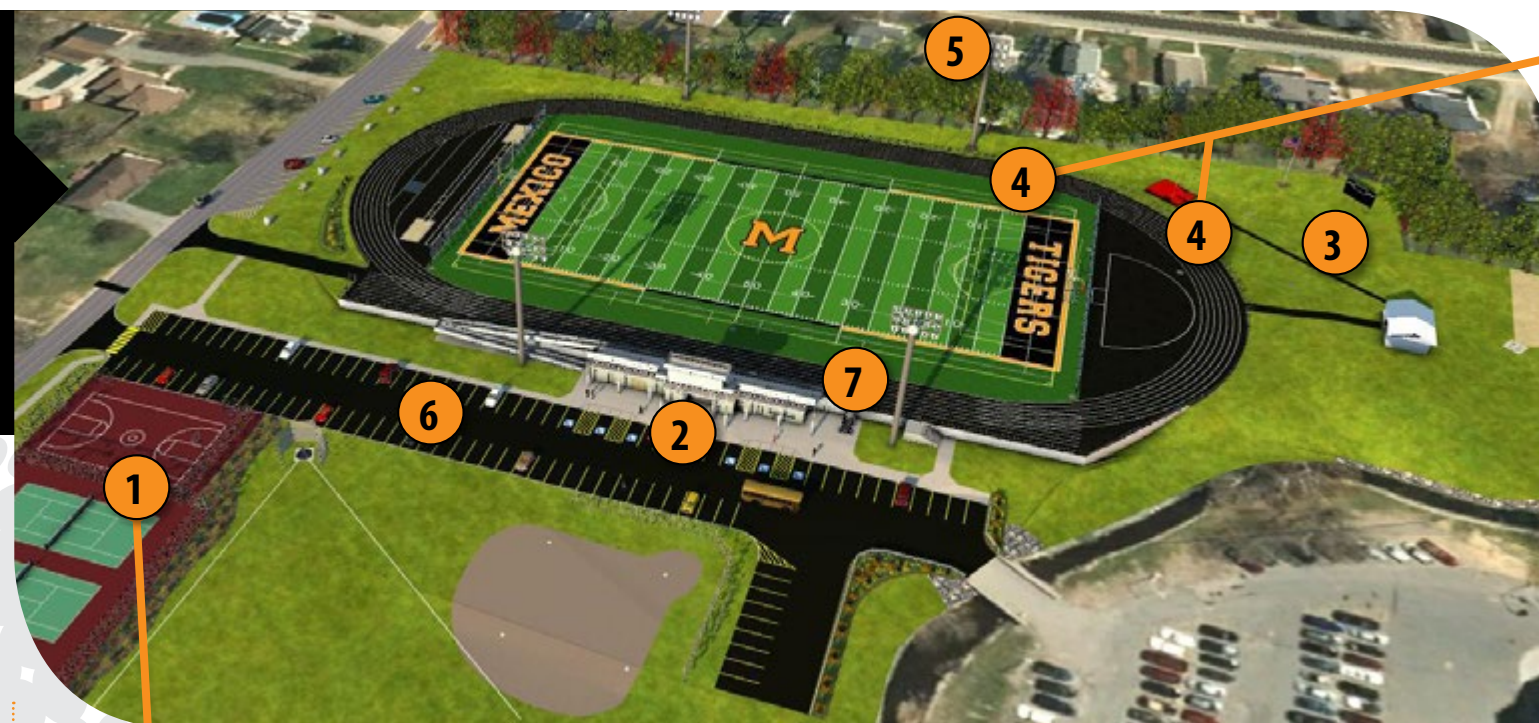
We are lucky to have such caring and dedicated Board of Education members who wanted to closely review the original 2013 plan last year. We were concerned that proceeding with the original plan might result in project completion delays and cost overruns. Additionally, we were especially concerned that the original plan would not have properly met the needs and expectations of all school and community members. Furthermore, we were worried that the late approval of the project by New York State Education Department (NYSED) would result in pushing back the bidding process. In short, we felt we could do better for you. As a result, we decided to delay the renovation for one year and take that time to ensure that every detail of the plan- including the bidding process and timing- would meet, or exceed, the needs and expectations of students, parents, staff members and the community. During that time, we reviewed the plans in more detail and assessed the area to be renovated. We also sought feedback and after that was collected, we found that there were areas where the original plan (which included tennis court resurfacing, track resurfacing, a new scoreboard, turf field, new 500 seat bleachers and press box) could be improved in a more fiscally-responsible manner. As stated in my last Tiger Traditions article, and as you will see here, we were able to follow through with your recommendations for improving our stadium in a fiscally-responsible and community-minded manner.

I truly believe this plan best meets the needs and expectations of students, parents, staff members, and the community at no extra cost to taxpayers.

Sincerely,



Sean C. Bruno



## 1 TENNIS & BASKETBALL

The original 2013 plan called for resurfacing of our tennis courts. By the time the actual work was NYSED approved, the surface had deteriorated to a condition requiring replacement. While this was unfortunate, it allowed us to re-think the location providing us with opportunity to widen our stadium to accommodate all of our athletic teams and an opportunity to increase parking spaces from the



original plan and move them closer to our high school building and stadium. We were also able to satisfy community member and student requests to add a basketball court, which also provides additional space for snow removal during the winter. Our renovation plan includes four new tennis courts and one new basketball court that will be located adjacent to Liberty Street. Due to NYSED approval timelines, the tennis court and basketball court construction will begin and be completed in Spring of 2018 as soon as weather permits.

## 2 BATHROOMS & CONCESSION STAND

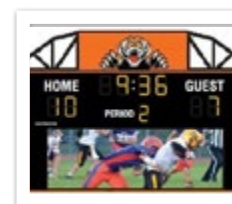
As you know, we have an elevation challenge with our stadium, however, we were also able to use that to our advantage by incorporating a new concession stand and bathrooms underneath our bleachers. In addition to the considerable cost savings, it provided us a space savings that contributed to ability to widen our fields and track, and additional parking from our initial 2013 plan. Our concession stand will have two 4x6 foot serving openings that will allow us to serve more people with greater efficiency. It



may even provide us with the opportunity to sell Mexico athletic and District apparel and memorabilia. In addition to concessions, we will finally have bathrooms! While our stadium is scheduled to be completed by November, we still await NYSED approval for our bathroom/concession building. The worst-case scenario is that approval and construction completion will be on schedule for Spring 2018. I am working closely with NSYSED to expedite approvals so we can begin and complete construction on our bathroom/concession building this fall.

## 3 NEW SCOREBOARD

Our new field will have a new scoreboard. The timing of having a new scoreboard could not be any better! They no longer make components to fix our old scoreboard, making it obsolete. Our new scoreboard has technological advancements that accommodates multiple sports, including soccer, lacrosse and football. It also has an animation mode and a pre-recorded video mode. There is also a new sound system, which accommodates on field wireless microphones. We have also placed a microphone receptacle on our field for those who prefer a wired microphone.



## 4 TRACK & TURF FIELD

The original 2013 plan called for resurfacing of our track. By the time the actual work was NYSED approved, the surface had deteriorated to a condition which required replacement. Furthermore, a large percentage of our track had to be removed to allow heavy equipment to complete all of the drainage and foundation work. While this was unfortunate, it allowed us to properly and proactively develop a comprehensive track plan that ensured there were no unexpected delays or costs. While developing our plan, we also found the opportunity to have an 8-lane track chute with a 6-lane track that better meets the needs of our student athletes, while also being fiscally responsible. This plan is also space conscious by allowing us the room to widen our field for soccer and lacrosse, as well as having additional parking.

As voted upon previously, our field will be turf. We have comprehensively investigated turf. We have chosen a turf product that is safe for our students and of high quality at a fiscally-responsible cost. Our turf will have 9 lbs. of in-fill, which provides optimal cushioning while simultaneously balancing running stability. It comes complete with lines for all of our current sports as well as lines for opportunities to add sport teams. As shown in the renderings, our turf will also have our colors as well as an "M" in center field and "Mexico" in one end zone and "Tigers" in the other.

## 5 LED LIGHTING

Our new field will also have new LED lighting. In addition to being a significant utility cost savings for our District, LED will provide better lighting for athletes. LED lighting will greatly reduce the "overflow" lighting that can typically disturb neighbors. Our new lights can light our field, our bleachers, the walking track or any combination of the aforementioned. The track lighting will support extended day community track use, especially during those times of year when daylight hours are limited.

## 6 ADDITIONAL PARKING

As with our original 2013 plan including parking lot renovations, the updated plan also provides additional parking spaces beyond those specified in the original plan that are closer to our high school and stadium. To ensure evening safety, there will also be parking lot lighting. We will have two electric receptacles on the parking lot light poles closest to our softball field and one near our basketball court.

## 7 BLEACHERS & PRESS BOX

We are very grateful to Marvin Vincent, who built our old stadium bleachers, and we will miss being able to say that he built them. While losing this history is sad, we can find comfort in the updates (required by current laws and regulations) that our new bleachers provide. Additionally, our new bleachers will provide over 200 additional seats. Our new bleachers will also be accessible to all and have additional safety railings.



We have eliminated our visitors' side bleachers and have planned for our visitors to sit on our new bleachers. In addition to the financial savings, eliminating a visitor side bleacher provides space for widening our field to better accommodate our other sports such as soccer and lacrosse. This elimination also supports extra space for the additional parking. Furthermore, having our visiting spectators sit in our new bleachers provides our visitors with closer access to our new bathrooms and concessions, which may increase our concession sales.

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Soil testing revealed that the soil under the portion of our field that was widened had "peanut butter" consistency, making it unsuitable to carry the weight of the new fill. As a result, we had to remove some of our soils, which was replaced by geo-foam. (These were the huge white foam blocks you may have seen being installed during construction.) There is a cost to removing soil. The further away the soil needs to be moved, the more the cost. Knowing our town park needed fill, we partnered with them, resulting in a cost savings for us and free fill Mexico Town Park.



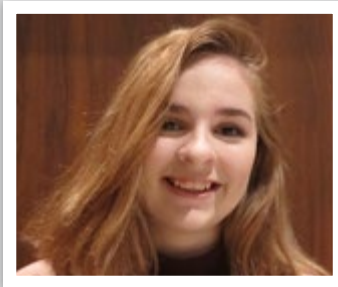
CHECK OUT the latest updates & see photos & video of the Stadium Project Construction on our website: [www.mexicocsd.org/caproject](http://www.mexicocsd.org/caproject)

## MACS BOE Student Board Member for 2017-2018 School Year

Mexico High School Senior Annie McDowell has been named the MACS Board of Education (BOE) Student Representative for the 2017-2018 school year.

Annie is the president of Mexico High School Student Council.

She is the daughter of Michael and Mary Jane McDowell.



Annie McDowell: MACS BOE Student Representative

## MACS students find joy in kindness rocks project

Mexico Academy & Central School District's summer school program rocks!

Program participants painted small rocks with various colorful designs and inspiring messages to spread positivity and kindness throughout the greater Mexico community. The summer school's kindness rocks project was initiated by student Charlie Roberts who found kindness rocks while walking from the summer school program at Mexico Elementary to the high school for lunch. He and his peers in Denise Bauer's classroom recently completed dozens of rocks they hid in and around MACS school property and the village of Mexico.

The summer school kindness rocks project correlated into art lessons the students received, social-emotional goals and other soft skills that help them to become successful and responsible citizens in the school and community. Bauer said all of her students were engaged with the hands-on activity, with special rocks featuring owl designs that were hidden in the Mexico Elementary library media center. All other rocks were hidden with a message on the back requesting those who find the rock to take a picture and post to the "Mexico New York Rocks" Facebook page, then re-hide or replace the rock with one's own creation. A special (SS) written in the message indicates that a summer school student or teacher painted the rock.



Mexico Academy & Central School District students Aaron Humphrey, left, and Charlie Roberts, right, show off a kindness rock they found while hiding their own around MACS school grounds.



## MACS' Learn to Swim program takes off

The Mexico Academy & Central School District's Learn to Swim program has made a splash with hundreds of participants this summer.

The renowned program has attracted several families from the greater Mexico community, Oswego and Jefferson counties and even the state of Ohio. Coordinated by MACS physical education teacher Lindsay Rodas, Learn to Swim taught children from six months of age up to adults various swimming skills, water safety, use of swimmer aids and knowing when to call 911 in emergency situations.



Oswego County Sheriff's Deputy Kristy Crast speaks to participants of the Learn to Swim program at Mexico High School about safety before they enjoy in-pool safety drills.

## Summer professional development opportunities abound for MACS staff members

Throughout the summer months, several MACS staff members were committed to exploring new professional development opportunities to improve their understanding of learning standards, gain personal growth, explore new curriculum and technology and collaborate, among additional professional development prospects.

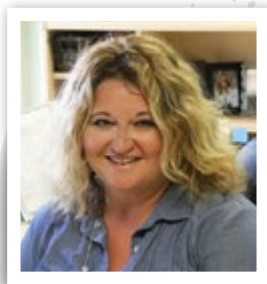
"We promote a lot of PD in the summer because that's when teachers have time to reflect and learn," said Mary Beth Horn, MACS' Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.

Summer also served as an opportunity for teams of teachers to come together to review what worked, or what didn't, for students throughout the past school year. First-grade teachers throughout the district got together to review math modules, the cohesiveness of English language arts grades, establish a 2017-2018 writing calendar and develop an assessment to target the "identify coins and their value" standard on the report card.

A few dozen MACS staff members participate in a "7 Habits" professional development training, one of several summer opportunities.



# Welcome NEW ADMINISTRATORS



**Jennifer Stanton**  
*Director of Pupil Services*

MACS recently welcomed Jennifer Stanton as its *Director of Pupil Services*.

As Director of Pupil Services for MACS, Stanton oversees counselors, special education programs and additional exceptional programs for students. Her goals for the 2017-2018 school year is to support teachers and staff members and to continue to make good decisions for students.

The Orwell resident has three children: one in college and two in high school. When not in school, Stanton said she enjoys spending time with the family animals: a cat and a Golden Retriever named Goldie. They also have 11 chickens. In her free time, Stanton said she attends her children's sporting events and live concerts.

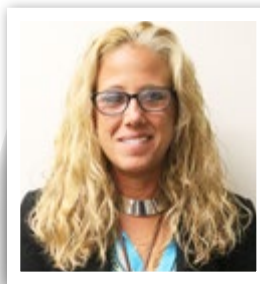


**John McKeown**  
*School Business Administrator*

Twenty-three years of experiences in financial management and business administration has led him to MACS as the new School Business Administrator.

The majority of his career – 17 years – was spent as a school business administrator for small, rural schools in Herkimer County. McKeown also spent six years in financial management for city and county governments. He comes to MACS with expertise in capital project management, strategic planning, long-term planning with budgeting and organizational management.

McKeown and his wife, Maureen, have been married for 24 years and have two boys in college. Outside of work, he enjoys kayaking, hiking and camping with his family.

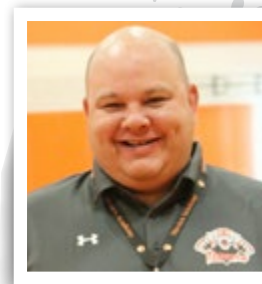


**Elizabeth DiCosimo**  
*Superintendent for Teaching and Learning*

The District's new Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning has 20 years of experience in education, as she began her career as a special education teacher before a natural progression to administrative roles. She arrived at MACS two months ago, having come from Chenango Valley Central Schools where she served as the Assistant Superintendent of Schools & Director of Personnel.

As the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, DiCosimo is in charge of personnel and 9-12 curriculum.

Outside of work, DiCosimo said she enjoys running, reading and spending time with her family. She has a husband, one daughter in middle school and a two-year-old Welsh Corgi named Elliott.



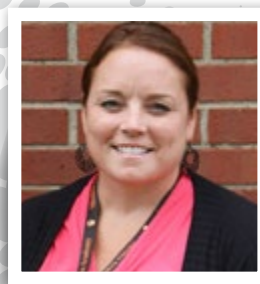
**David Gryczka**  
*Athletic Director*

Gryczka came to MACS with several years of student and athletic administrative experience and 16 years of experience as a coach for various sports.

He said he can't wait for the stadium project to come to fruition, to establish great rapport with students, their families and MACS staff members; and to see what happens with the Mexico High School's move from a Class A to a Class B school.

He received a bachelor's degree in physical education from St. Bonaventure University, a master's degree in health education from SUNY Cortland and a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership from Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

When not on the job, Gryczka enjoys spending time with his wife, two children and Jax, the family American bull dog.



**Jennifer Granholm**  
*New Haven Elementary Principal*

Jennifer Granholm knew that joining the Mexico Academy & Central School District would be the perfect fit for her.

"It feels like home here," said Granholm, who was recently named the New Haven Elementary School principal.

She arrived at the district with nearly two decades of experience in education, spanning from an elementary teacher to elementary school principal to an administrative intern to the assistant principal of the BOCES regional summer school in Cortland.

When not in school, Granholm enjoys the beach, live concerts, hosting family dinners and playing games, spending time with her Bull Mastiff, Sophie, and French Mastiff, Lucy; and supporting her husband at the race track.

## MACS Summer Band Camp Ends In Delightful Concert

The Mexico Academy & Central School District Summer Band Camp 2017 recently welcomed 30 students to a week full of group play, new music concepts and a reinforcement of instrumental instruction.

*Mexico Academy & Central School District middle school students perform "Red Hawk" during the Summer Band Camp 2017 concert.*



## BOARD OF EDUCATION

James Emery – President  
Darlene Upcraft – Vice President  
Chad Bigelow  
Janice Clark  
Connie Douglas  
Amy Shaw  
Susan Teifke  
Annie McDowell – Student Representative

## SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Sean Bruno  
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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sept. 27** PAL open house and book fair 6 p.m.
- Sept. 28** BOE workshop 6 p.m.
- Sept. 29** Free & reduced breakfast/lunch applications due
- Oct. 3** NH Open House 5:30-7 p.m.
- Oct. 3** HS Financial Aid Night 6:30 p.m.
- Oct. 5** BOE meeting 6 p.m.
- Oct. 6** 5 week marking period ends
- Oct. 9** Columbus Day, NO SCHOOL
- Oct. 13** HS homecoming parade; dance @ 8 p.m.
- Oct. 18** HS Fall concert, HS auditorium 7 p.m.
- Oct. 18** MS Early dismissal 1:55 p.m.
- Oct. 19** MHS Idol, HS auditorium 7 p.m.
- Oct. 19** NH Fall Festival 5-7 p.m.
- Oct. 23 to Oct. 27** School Board Appreciation Week
- Oct. 26** BOE workshop 6 p.m.
- Oct. 31** Elementary school Halloween parades
- Nov. 3** 6th grade elementary all-county festival @ APW
- Nov. 3** HS fall play 7 p.m.
- Nov. 4** 6th grade elementary all-county festival @ APW
- Nov. 4** HS fall play 7 p.m.

Palermo Elementary School Kindergarten teacher Penny Brizzi-Stark greets one of her new kindergarten students with a big hug during a recent orientation event. MACS held similar programs throughout all elementary buildings to allow the children to become acquainted with their new surroundings.



## Unique learning opportunities in summer



*MACS Summer School students work on a craft project for Administration, thanking them for all of the fun learning opportunities. At right is their teacher Denise Bauer.*

A couple hundred students attended summer school sessions to help them carry successes through the 2017-2018 school year.

Students enjoyed summer learning activities which targeted instruction, recovery of credits and/or social-emotional growth. Both the elementary and middle school Summer Skills Academy, held at Mexico Middle School, emphasized English

language arts and STEM lessons to help boost proficiency of Common Core learning standards for about 120 students. Summer School Principal Patrick Vrooman said those programs aimed to avoid the “summer slide” of academic progress before the start of the new school year.

## A summer in Spain for MACS graduate

Mexico High School 2017 graduate Ashton McCormack put the language skills he learned in Diane Bush’s Spanish classroom to good use this summer when he traveled to Spain with other local students. McCormack spent a week of his summer in Spain, as he toured the country’s beautiful landscape and saw first-hand the architecture, art and environment he studied in class. He joined a group that saw the Dalí museum, Spain’s serene beaches, Barcelona and other cities. He tried various new foods, excursions and shopping experiences; all while utilizing the Spanish speaking skills he has worked diligently to perfect.

