



Mantua Elementary School
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PTA website: www.MantuaPTA.org

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2009-10 PTA Board Members:

President	Nicole Armstrong	NicoleAArmstrong@aol.com
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Included in this Welcome Packet:

1. Information on the PTA and how to join / Volunteer Opportunities
2. FAQs for K-2 families
3. FAQs for 3-6 families
4. Where to get more information
5. PTA Sponsor Program for new families / Multicultural Parent Outreach

It's easy to join the PTA!

What the PTA does for the school

The PTA sponsors and/or organizes the basketball program for grades 3-6, Fall Book Fair, Spring Carnival, Drama Club, before- and after-school foreign/sign language and science programs, the volunteer program, teacher appreciation events, the weekly Alert News and much more.

Get a school directory

By joining the PTA, you receive the school directory! This valuable resource of family, teacher and staff phone numbers, e-mail addresses and more is distributed free to all PTA members.

How do I join?

You will receive a flyer in your "first day" folder with instructions. Also, at the beginning of each school year, the PTA has sign-up tables at the Open House before school starts and Back-to-School night in the first month of school. You can also sign up online at the PTA website at www.MantuaPTA.org. For more information, contact Shannon Murphy, PTA Membership Chair, at shannon.murphy29@verizon.net.

Volunteer Opportunities

Our volunteers make Mantua Elementary a very special school and all of our children benefit from any amount of time that you can give.

Volunteering gives you the chance to know your children's school, teachers, community and other parents better – AND kids love seeing their parents participate at their school!

There are many opportunities to volunteer at Mantua. If you would like information about any of them, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator:

Direct Classroom Involvement: Room Parent, Party Coordinators, Spring Carnival Booth Coordinator (March), Carnival Basket Coordinator (March), Teacher Appreciation Luncheon Class Coverage (May), Field Day Helper (June), Art Room Assistance and/or Computer Lab Assistance (with class 1x every other week), and Take Home Reading Parent for grades K-2.

School-Wide Volunteers: Book Fair (November), Cafeteria Assistance (Sept/Oct during lunch periods), Clinic Aide, Health Screening Aide (half day in Oct/Nov), Library Assistance, Office Assistance (Clerical or Receptionist 2-3 times per year), Secretaries Day Coverage (April), School Spirit and Hospitality Committees (family fun nights, ice cream socials, teacher luncheon, etc), and Spring Carnival Planning Committee.

To find out more about volunteering, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Teresa Willebeek-Lemair at teresalemair@aol.com or 703-560-9205.

FAQs for Mantua K-2 Grade Parents

I keep hearing about “families” of classes. What does that mean?

From kindergarten through second grade, students are placed into one of three Families – Family 1, Family 2 or Family 3. Each family has one or two classes each of kindergartners, first-graders and second-graders. Most students stay in the same family for kindergarten through second grade. All three families are supported by Mantua’s specialists (Reading, Learning Disabilities, ESOL, Technology and Total Communications).

The teachers within each family work together. Students sometimes have different teachers within his or her family. For example, your first-grader may be very strong at subtraction. For that subject, she might be in a classroom with mostly second-graders in her family. Likewise, if she needs extra help learning to tell time, she’ll be grouped with children with similar needs in the same subject, perhaps more first-graders and kindergartner from her family. This is called “flexible grouping.” Still, most of your child’s day will be spent with her primary classroom teacher. In addition to enabling the teachers to meet a wider range of student needs, the families also provide a comforting “small-school feel” to younger students.

What is a multi-age class?

Multi-age grouping is the practice of purposely placing children of more than one age and ability level together. Children in multi-age groups are expected to vary in experience, maturity and strengths. Mantua Elementary offers K-1 and 1-2 multi-age classes in addition to “single-grade” kindergarten and first- and second- grade classes. Each K-1 classroom has a balance of kindergartners and first graders. Our single-grade kindergarten classes as well our K-1 classrooms have a heterogeneous group of students with a variety of strengths and needs.

How does a multi-age approach differ from single-grade programs?

Single-grade classes, too, include students with a range of abilities and needs. Single-grade teachers plan for and differentiate instruction based the individual students. This is the essence of effective teaching! However, a mixture of ages places the emphasis on individuals and takes the emphasis off comparisons within a “grade level” framework. In a multi-age setting, the teacher constantly plans for a wide range of abilities, with many opportunities for small group and individualized instruction.

How long will a student stay in a multi-age class?

Students who enter a multi-age class as a “younger” will spend two years with the same teacher. Parents, teachers, and children develop a relationship that can begin immediately in September. In any given year, half the class will know the teacher’s routines, expectations, and management systems. Summer anxiety is reduced and September begins more easily as half the students can act as role models for their new classmates.

What students might particularly benefit from a multi-age classroom?

There is no right answer that fits all children. Some children may benefit from a single grade configuration, some from multi-age, and others from either setting. There are many similarities between both. A multi-age classroom may appeal to the child who benefits from projects, small group instruction, and cooperative work with peers. There may be more varied experiences occurring simultaneously within the multi-age setting, resulting in a carefully orchestrated but active environment. The personalities of children also should be considered, for some may gain confidence and leadership by assuming the role of “older,” if not this year, then the next.

Fortunately, at Mantua, your child will probably have the experience of both a single-grade and a multi-age experience during their K-2 years. Often our students who begin in a K-1 classroom then move to a second grade classroom. Other students who begin in a kindergarten classroom, then move to a multiage 1-2 classroom for the next two years. Parents report their children have benefited from both experiences!

*Excerpts taken from Kings Park Elementary Website

FAQs for Mantua 3-6 Grade Parents

Do students in grades 3-6 have “families” at the school?

No, students are not divided into families after second grade.

Are grade 3-6 students reassigned to new “flexible groups” throughout the year like the K-2 students are?

No, typically the students are grouped once at the beginning of the school year based on individual skill levels in math and word study, and stay with that group for the remainder of the year.

What is the “Blackboard 24-7” online tool?

Fairfax County Public Schools has extended learning beyond the traditional school day and beyond school facilities by using a tool called FCPS 24-7 Learning, commonly known as "Blackboard". Beginning in 3rd grade, students, parents, and teachers are invited to use FCPS 24-7 Learning to access homework and classroom assignments, view class calendars, explore links to enrichment activities, and much more. Visit <http://fcps.blackboard.com/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp> for more information.

What is an SOL?

The Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) are state-mandated standardized tests taken every year starting in third grade. They are taken in May and June. For more information, visit <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/home.shtml>.

I’ve heard Mantua has an extensive music program for older students.

Starting in third grade, all students learn to play the recorder. In the fourth grade, students may elect to also play a string instrument once a week in the orchestra or join the chorus. In fifth grade, students may elect to play a band or orchestra instrument, and may join the chorus as an extra-curricular activity. Every student takes general music education classes, whether or not they choose to participate in orchestra, band or chorus. Information from the music teachers will come home with your student.

What is Colonial Day and Ancient Cultures Day, etc.?

You’ll find that students in grades 3-6 study a specific subject throughout the year, such as Colonial Virginia, ancient cultures, etc. These themes culminate in a special day when the students dress up in period clothing and participate in related activities, often assisted by parent volunteers.

What is the AA (Advanced Academics) Program?

Mantua has a full-time Advanced Academics (formerly called Gifted and Talented or GT) Center. Students are tested in the fall of second grade for possible placement in the AA Center for grades 3-6. For more information about AA, please see the Fairfax County Public Schools website, <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/gt/index.html>.

What’s the basketball program?

Students in grades 3-6 are invited to play in the Mantua PTA Basketball League. Students are divided into boys’ and girls’ leagues. Grades 3 and 4 play together using an 8-foot goal and grades 5 and 6 play together using a standard 10-foot goal. The league is coached by Mantua parents/guardians and is designed for the kids to have fun while learning basketball fundamentals.

More Information, Please ...

The Alert News

The Alert News is the Mantua PTA weekly email newsletter. It is sent out in HTML format with important school updates, activity and event information, and comes complete with links to documents (such as registration forms for clubs) hosted on the PTA website. A paper copy is provided to families without access to email. E-mail info@mantuapta.org to get on the distribution list.

Mantua School and PTA Web Sites

Mantua PTA web site: www.mantuapta.org

Mantua Elementary School web site: www.fcps.edu/MantuaES

Fairfax County Public Schools web site: www.fcps.edu (you can sign up to receive FCPS-wide bulletins via e-mail at this site)

Translations are now available on the PTA website at www.MantuaPTA.org! Click Google translation button on the right side and follow instructions. Under the "Parent Resources" tab, there are also links to Fairfax County Public Schools-translated documents.

The Student Directory

When you join the PTA, you receive a FREE copy of the Student Directory, a 60-page phone and address book that will help you find your child's friends, as well as contact information for teachers, staff, PTA officers and chairs, and much more. If you've paid your PTA dues and have not received a directory, please contact PTA Membership Chair Shannon Murphy at shannon.murphy29@verizon.net. Additionally, most classrooms have a class roster, generated by a parent volunteer or the teacher. Be sure to ask for one!

The Sponsor Program

Dozens of Mantua parents remember what it's like to have a transfer student or a new kindergartner, and that's why we set up the Sponsor Program for new families. If you'd like to be paired with a friendly, knowledgeable parent to call or e-mail with your questions, please e-mail Marybeth Abell at tmbabell@aol.com. We also have Korean- and Spanish-speaking Sponsors.

FCPS Red Apple 21

For cable TV subscribers, channel 21 offers information about Fairfax County Public Schools.

The Mantua PTA Parent Handbook

The Mantua PTA Parent Handbook is on the PTA web site under the "Parent Resources" tab. The Handbook answers many questions about Mantua Elementary School and the many PTA programs offered. Additionally, you will receive a handbook from Fairfax County Public Schools in the fall via your child's Tuesday folder.

Got Questions? Get a Sponsor!

PTA Sponsor program helps new Mantua ES parents with transition

Many parents at Mantua remember what it's like to have a new kindergartners or a transfer student. That's why we've created the Sponsor program ... to help ease the transition to a new school.

Your sponsor can answer questions via e-mail, phone, in person ... whatever the two of you decide on. Some of the many answers a Sponsor can provide:

Help! How does the Kiss and Ride work? What happens if my child forgets his lunch? How can I volunteer at the school other than during the weekday? Which principal handles what?

Sponsors are friendly, patient, knowledgeable, and they really want to help new families find their way at Mantua. We have sponsors that speak languages other than English, as well. Best of all, it's easy to get one!

If you're new to Mantua ES and have a question or would like a sponsor, e-mail New Family Welcome Coordinator Marybeth Abell at tmbabell@aol.com or call 703-268-5190.

Multicultural Parents Program

Mantua Elementary is a diverse community of learners, and parents of many Mantua students come from around the globe.

The Multicultural Parents Program helps parents from every culture get involved at Mantua. The program provides ways in which you can contribute to the rich learning environment and become part of the larger volunteer community at Mantua.

Multicultural Parents activities include our popular Heritage Night to display world cultures.

For more information, contact Ken Moles at kenmoles@cox.net.

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