



# From the Desk of the Superintendent

Volume IV No.4 OCTOBER NEWSLETTER October 31, 2020

For timely updates and information.... Twitter: @MaldenPublic Website: [maldenps.org](http://maldenps.org)

*One of our own, Jennifer Hedrington, receives state's top honor*

# Congratulations to the Mass. Teacher of the Year!

**By Steve Freker**  
For the Malden Public Schools

Just as coaching sports is never simply about the "X's and O's," nor does teaching mathematics deal solely with numbers and angles.

That's why Jennifer Hedrington, who teaches seventh-grade math at Malden's Ferryway School, has incorporated community service projects as part of her students' school worlds.

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Ferryway School 7th Grade Math Teacher Jennifer Hedrington

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

**Greetings to all in the Malden Public Schools Community,**

Time and again, during this year like no other, it has been appropriate and important to acknowledge the teamwork and unity our district has shown in navigating our way in this pandemic. To enable a collective approach toward establishing and then administering a capable, equitable distance learning model for our students, a solid group effort has been essential. We also highly value the individual **See P.6**



Superintendent John Oteri

*High Notes: Despite the pandemic, Middle School Band continues to flourish; Virtual concerts now being planned!*



**STORY, P.3**

# Malden Public Schools says 'Welcome Back' to its highest needs students

**By Steve Freker  
For the Malden Public Schools**

The Malden Public Schools welcomed back about 200 students to in-person learning on Tuesday, October 13. These students were among the group designated as highest needs in the MPS community.

The students were the first ones to return to MPS school buildings since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic closed all schools buildings on March 13. "It was great to see students and staff members return to their buildings," Superintendent of Schools John Oteri said. "It was nice to see how excited our students were when they arrived." A number of our staff members also returned to the school buildings on October 13, all of them for the first time since March as well. Most of Malden Public Schools students remain in a distance learning mode. Parents and caregivers of the highest needs students who returned to in-person were given the option to choose either to continue in distance learning or come to school for in-person learning. It was a big step toward an eventual districtwide goal of more in-person learning.



# *High Notes:* Middle School Band students continue to make gains and music despite some COVID-19 constraints

## *Stay 'tuned' for Virtual Concerts coming in 2021*

**By Steve Freker**  
**For the Malden Public Schools**

Middle school students are at that age where it could be a close call when it comes to signing up for Band class. On one hand, a lot of new teens and pre-teens are curious to try something new, and likewise, they are eager to continue a pastime they started at a younger age.

On the other side of the coin, middle schoolers can likely run straight into the web of self-conscious reflection where the choices can be stark: "Cool... or not cool?" That is the question. Sometimes that's the only question for kids that age.

Malden Public Schools music and band teacher George Weithman will be the first to tell you tales of the sometimes unpredictable ways and whims of the middle school band student. But the seventh-year veteran of leading the Ferryway/Beebe School Band remains proud of what his young charges have accomplished so far year.

This pride has reached a new level, considering the unforeseen changes the young musicians have faced, in both in their learning mode and lives in general due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There has been some uncertainty, for sure, but overall these students have really been resilient," Weithman said. "It has been really rewarding to see how many students have returned to the Band program this fall, as well as the students who were willing to try something new this school year."

Weithman is pleased to report that this fall, there



are approximately 100 Ferryway School students in Grades 5-8 are returning to the Band program this fall, and another 90 from the Beebe School from Grades 5-8.

The Ferryway-Beebe Band instructor and music educator explained that students who sign on to the Band program classes have the option of renting a musical instrument from a private company affiliated with the schools or being issued an instrument they borrow from the Malden district, if one is available for use.

Weithman acknowledged that the pandemic has created tighter economic times all over and that every effort is made to ease the burden on Malden Public Schools' students and their families, "We are working to secure more instruments for the district through donations and grants whenever possible to increase our inventory," Weithman explained.

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# Ferryway School educator Jennifer Hedrington is named Mass. 'Teacher of the Year' by DESE Board

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She also continually strives to create a positive mix of academics and social activism in ways such as celebrating Black History Month, involving both students and their families. Above all, the thread that brings all of her approach together, remains the relationships she forges and strengthens with her Malden students, every day.

Speaking at her award presentation, with her husband, Jamaal, and two young sons, Ethan, 10, and Isaiah, 8, by her side, Hedrington honed in on the ethos of her years as a successful educator: connecting with students, in and out of the classroom.

"If we can build a relationship with the kids, then everything else falls into place," she said. "I want to become the teacher that I needed when I was in school that I didn't have.

"It's the relationship that saves and that's what my principal always says," Hedrington added, referring to Ferryway School leader Abdel Sepulveda.

On Tuesday, the Malden educator's 16-year journey in the profession reached new heights. The Malden educator received a signature honor when she was announced as the 2021 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year by state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Jeffrey Riley.

It is the first time a Malden Public Schools educator has been so honored and the third time in the program's 59-year history a woman of color has been the statewide selectee. Hedrington is in the midst of her 10th year in Malden Public Schools, having previously taught in the Revere Public Schools and also in Houston, Tex. and Baltimore, Md. In announcing the award in her home district, fourth-



Malden educator Jennifer Hedrington is shown above outside DESE headquarters in Malden Square along with her husband Jamaal, and sons Isaiah and Ethan. *Courtesy Photo*

-year Malden Superintendent of Schools John Oteri noted Hedrington's leadership skills as well as the approach she takes in involving her students in the community and world around them, "Ms. Hedrington is an outstanding educator who is a true leader of students and staff in Malden," Supt. Oteri said. "She leads from the classroom and gives her students a greater voice in school and in the community."

The Ferryway School educator also drew congratulations from Malden Mayor Gary Christenson. "Ms. Hedrington is an asset to both Malden Public Schools and to the community," said Mayor Christenson, who also serves as chairperson of the Malden School Committee. "I'm grateful for all she has done for Malden students, and I'm thrilled to see her recognized in this way."

This year's field of candidates was robust, according to DESE Commissioner Riley, with over 100 initial nominations for the prestigious award.

# *It's in their DNA!:* Malden Public Schools educator shepherds lost youngsters back to family, safety

*A modern-day version of 'lost in woods' ends happily as Malden teacher's actions lead way*

**By Steve Freker**

**For the Malden Public Schools**

Elaine Ivy's been around kids long enough as an 8th Grade English teacher in the Malden Public Schools to know enough when something doesn't look right. That's why she took action when she spotted two young boys, alone, wandering in the Fells Woods.

"I am sure any other person in the woods would have been, 'Kids alone...bad idea,'" Ivy, who is an educator at Malden's Ferryway K-8 School, told Boston25 News. As it turned out, Brandon (shown below) and his buddy Anton, had gotten separated from Brandon's family during a walk in *Cont. Next Page*



Ferryway's Elaine Ivy



## **Malden Public Schools Mission Statement**

Malden Public Schools is a place where students are encouraged to follow their dreams and become well rounded members of our community. The Malden Public Schools prepare students to be independent thinkers and enthusiastic learners who: Work hard; Respect others; Cherish our diversity; Seek challenges; Discover and Develop their individual talents; Strive for academic excellence; and look to Demonstrate personal and social responsibility. Malden Public Schools graduates are prepared to be active participants in our economy and democracy.

# *SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE: The #1 priority of our response to the crisis caused by the pandemic has been the safety & well-being of our students and their families and that will not change*

## **Continued from Page One**

efforts of our educators, administrators and staff, as well as their accomplishments. We take great pride when one of our own is acknowledged for the superlative achievements they attain in the course of their profession in the Malden Public Schools District. That it why everyone in our district was so thrilled and excited when we learned that the Ferryway School's Jennifer Hedrington had been named Massachusetts Teacher of the Year for 2021 by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Board of Directors. Ms Hedrington is a prime example of the type of educator we are blessed to have mentoring and nurturing our students. We in the Malden Public Schools, have been well aware of Ms.Hedrington's vigor and passion in enriching the lives of her students and colleagues. She had started her career in Malden at the Salemwood School, where she left a solid legacy, before making the switch to the Ferryway, where she is a seventh grade mathematics educator. Please join me in congratulating Ms. Hedrington for this singular award, which brings honor and renown to our entire district, as well as wishing her much luck as her name is now in consideration for National Teacher of the Year. We certainly have had our share of good news in October, including the return of about 200 of our highest needs students and some of our staff to our buildings on October 13. I was on hand for some of the arrivals and the excitement on display by the returning students was apparent. It was also easy to sense the smiles under their masks. We commend all those who played a role in preparing our buildings and establishing protocols which ensure the health and safety of all of our students, staff and their families, which remains our highest priority, Our goal as a district is to have as many students and staff being educated in our buildings, with in-person learning, when the data and protocols we have all agreed to follow indicate it is safe to do so. We look forward to those days. The return of some our highest needs students was a great first step. We await the next one. **—Supt. John Oteri**



## **Malden educator helps reunite lost youngsters with family**

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the Fells Woods on Wednesday afternoon, October 21. The family had started their walk at Greenwood Park in Stoneham. Apparently the two boys had run up ahead of their group in full "exploration mode" and became separated. When they were spotted by the Malden teacher, they were about a mile away over the town line in Melrose, near Jerry Jingle Park.

"Brandon and his friend Anton went running ahead, which has happened when we've gone hiking before," said Justine Myers, Brandon's mom. "We got to an area where the woods split and we didn't see them."

By then, Brandon's mom was well on her way to mounting a search, having already called 911 and with police, fire personnel and an ambulance already on scene. Then, her cellphone rang.

It was Elaine Ivy, on Facetime, reaching out to Justine Myers to let her know Brandon and Anton were safe in another part of the woods. "She (Justine Myers) was very out of breath and very excited," Ivy said. "Screaming in the back 'They found them!'"

Young Brandon did not have a cellphone or his mother's number written down in his pocket. He told reporters that he remembered it because every night before he goes to sleep, he repeats the number in his head. It sure came in handy this time around!

# The Malden Public Schools: 'Our Diversity is Our Strength'

The Malden school district is ranked #1 as the most culturally diverse by *niche.com* in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with Malden High School rated the #1 most culturally diverse secondary education school overall. Throughout the district, all educators, administrators and students are unified in our stated mission to cherish and embrace our diversity, striving for excellence in the classroom and beyond.



## **Future Tornados @ Baseball Camp**

A group of over 40 Malden youngsters from all of the MPS K-8 schools on hand Oct. 3. Devin, Dillon, Enrique & Kendrick.

## **A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE**

*IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMON  
LANGUAGE USED, EXEMPLIFYING*

*THE BELIEFS, VALUES, STRENGTHS IN RELATIONSHIPS*

*AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY IN THE COMMUNITY*

# MALDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND STUDENTS

*Continued from Page 3*

"My hope is to one day have enough instruments available for every student to be able to use one."

**Anyone who would like to consider a donation to help middle school band students may contact him at [gweithman@maldenps.org](mailto:gweithman@maldenps.org).**

He noted that he and his colleagues in the middle school band group citywide have developed a strong, collaborative working bond with Malden High School Band Director Erin O'Brien Mazza and her program. They have worked together in the past on successful Band instrument donation drives and will continue to do so in the future.

"We've worked together on projects and (O'Brien-Mazza) and her band members have been very supportive of our middle school program," Weithman said.

He said the Malden Public Schools currently has about 200 working wind instruments that can be loaned out to students for use. "Many of these are already with students so they can practice music at home," Weithman said.

Weithman said there are obvious instructional challenges which arise with the switch to remote learning, which was adopted in the spring and has continued this fall. "These students have done a tremendous job overall in continuing their studies practicing on their own with their instruments at home."

Weithman said that music lovers will be in for a real treat early in the new year, when his Ferryway/Beebe Band members will be featured in a series of Virtual Band Concerts, including both individual solo performances as well as Band arrangements, featuring students across multiple grades. The Malden Band director said he will be "putting all the pieces together" and editing the final video productions before they are presented in January. "It will be the students at home practicing on their instruments that deserve all the credit for putting in the extra work to continue their musical studies."



Ferryway-Beebe Middle School Band Director George Weithman gets another helping hand, by way of Malden High Band Director Erin O'Brien-Mazza passing along an instrument for his students, on October 2. *Steve Freker Photo/For the Malden Public Schools*

## He's a Sax Man!

Malden Band Director followed same path his students navigate

It's unlikely he'll need it to win himself an election someday, but George Weithman could certainly pull a "Bill Clinton" if he chose. Just bust out the saxophone and lay into some rhythmic jazz! You see, growing up, the Malden Middle School Band Director followed a similar path as the one he leads his present-day students.

A "Sax Man" over all, he began playing the saxophone in the fourth grade, growing up in Natick, Mass., playing all through his years in the Natick Public Schools, as well at church every week through his high school years. Before COVID struck, he played tenor sax professionally and regularly, with jazz bands and wind ensembles. *See Next Page*

# Three Free meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner) are now available at ALL FIVE K-8 Schools and @ Malden HS, from 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

The Malden Public Schools continues to provide free meals, every weekday, Monday through Friday, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at all five of our K-8 schools: Beebe School, Ferryway School, Forestdale School, Linden School, Salemwood School and Malden High School. At this time, three meals may be picked up at one stop for each student in a household. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are now provided. Also, on Fridays, free meals for the weekend days (Saturday and Sunday) can be picked up. More information is available at: [www.maldenps.org](http://www.maldenps.org).



**The Malden Public Library is hosting a FREE English Conversation Class for adults every Wednesday from 1-2pm via Zoom. The instructors will discuss daily life & learn new vocabulary. Learn English at home on your computer, phone, or tablet. You must register for the class. For more information E-mail Stacy at: [mplenglishclass@gmail.com](mailto:mplenglishclass@gmail.com)**

*Free!*

**ENGLISH CONVERSATION CLASS**

at your own home via Zoom

Wednesdays: 1:00-2:00pm

NEW

To register e-mail: [mplenglishclass@gmail.com](mailto:mplenglishclass@gmail.com)

## **HE'S A SAX MAN: Malden educator follows similar path as his students** *Continued from Previous Page*

Weithman, who is in his seventh year as a Malden Public Schools educator, learned all the ropes by participating in many musical groups on his way up through the grades in school, He was a school band member from fourth grade all the way through his graduation from Natick High School. He also play saxophone in the Pep Band, the Jazz Band and in the pit band for school plays and other events. Weithman knew early on he would like to teach music and was a 2011 Keene (N.H.) State College graduate with a bachelor of science degree in Music Education. He completed requirements for his master's degree in Music Education in 2019.

He looks forward to the upcoming ski season, being an avid enthusiast of the slopes each winter, as well as making time to continue practicing his craft on the saxophone. "I use it as my stress reliever," he said.

—Steve Freker

# 2020-2021 MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALENDAR

## MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2020-2021 SCHOOL CALENDAR

AUGUST 2020				
(0 Day)				
M	T	W	T	F
31*				

8/31\* First Day for Teachers

SEPTEMBER 2020				
(11 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1*	2*	3*	X
X	8*	9*	10*	11*
14*	15*	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

9/1-15\* Prof Dev Days - All Grds  
9/4 No School  
9/7 Labor Day  
9/16\* First Day of School for Grades PreK, 1-12  
9/17-18 Kindergarten Orientation/Screening  
9/21 First Day of School for Kindergarten

OCTOBER 2020				
(21 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
X	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

10/9 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12  
10/12 Columbus Day  
10/19 Late Entry Day MHS

NOVEMBER 2020				
(17 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3*	4	5	6
9	10	X	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	X	X
30				

11/2 Late Day Entry MHS  
11/3\* Prof Dev Day-All Grds  
11/11 Veterans Day  
11/25 11:00 Dismissal - Thanksgiving  
11/26-27 Thanksgiving

DECEMBER 2020				
(17 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	X	X
X	X	X	X	

12/7 Late Entry MHS  
12/23 11:00 Dismissal  
12/24-1/1 Winter Vacation

JANUARY 2021				
(19 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
				X
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
X	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

1/4 School Resumes  
1/11 Late Entry MHS  
1/15 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12  
1/18 Martin Luther King Day

FEBRUARY 2021				
(14 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12*
X	X	X	X	X
22	23	24	25	26

2/5 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12  
2/8 Late Entry MHS  
2/12 \* Prof Dev Day-All Grds  
2/15-19 February Vacation

MARCH 2021				
(22 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12*
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

3/8 Late Entry MHS  
3/12 \* Prof Dev Day-All Grds

APRIL 2021				
(17 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
X	X	X	X	X
26	27	28	29	30

4/2 11:00 Dismissal - Good Friday  
4/5 Late Entry MHS  
4/19-23 Spring Vacation

MAY 2021				
(20 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
X				

5/7 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12  
5/10 Late Entry MHS  
5/31 Memorial Day

JUNE 2021				
(12 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17*	X
21	22	23	24	25

6/4 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12  
6/16 Last day w/o snow days (170 Days) - 11:00 Dismissal  
6/17 \* Prof Dev Day-All Grds  
6/18 Juneteenth (No School)  
6/25 Last day w/five snow days -11:00 Dismissal

**First Day for Teachers – Monday, August 31, 2020**

**Please note that five (5) additional days are built into the calendar in case of inclement weather**

- Early Release PreK-12
- Late Entry Dates for High School