

From Jim Agostine

Monroe's Superintendent of Schools

March 2017



Welcome, once again, to the Superintendent's Newsletter. It is my hope that you will find the contents of it informative. This newsletter is one aspect of our commitment to better communicate with you. If you would like to see more information on a particular topic or if you would like to make a comment, please feel free to email me at jagostine@monroeps.org or visit our website at www.monroeps.org.

The 2017-18 budget process, which began in October for us, is well underway. The BOE adopted a \$56,252,314 budget for the 2017-18 school year. This budget is 2.95% above the current year's budget. The four main drivers of this increase are Medical Insurance, Special Education costs, Contractual Obligations, and Transportation increases.

Over the past six years we have had an average budget increase of 1.02%. The budget is now in the hands of the First Selectman, The Board of Finance, and the Town Council. I expect much discussion over the next month or so as we approach the referendum on April 4, 2017. To view the proposed budget, please find the link on our website at www.monroeps.org. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Our curriculum initiatives in Math and Teachers College Readers and Writers Workshop continues to be a focus at the elementary and middle school level. Numerous course offerings at Masuk have been added or changed to reflect student interest and post secondary preparation.

The Stepney roof project is working its way through the process of approvals. Hopefully, we will be doing the construction as soon as school lets out for the summer.

As spring approaches, my thoughts turn to our students completing another year in their journey. I am beginning to hear our 12th graders talking about the decisions they are making for their post high school experiences. But, before we end the year, there is still much work to be done as well as many celebrations. I look forward to being a part of this exciting time of the year along with some warmer weather and sunshine.

Wishing you all the best,

Jim Agostine

Monroe Public Schools Dates

March 29, 2017

Elementary Conference Night

March 30, 2017

*Elementary Schools
Conference Afternoon
Elementary Early Dismissal*

March 31, 2017

*Celebration of Reading
At Each Elementary School
9:30-10:30 AM*

March 31, 2017

*4th Annual
da Vinci Festival
3:00 - 7:00 PM*

April 1, 2017

*4th Annual
da Vinci Festival
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM*

April 10-14, 2017

*Spring Recess
No School*

April 26, 2017

*JH/STEM Orientation
for Grade 5
6:30 - 8:30 PM*

May 25, 2017

*Gr.12 Capstone Presentation
Masuk High School
Early Dismissal*

May 29, 2017

*Memorial Day
No School*

June 19, 2017

*Projected last day with
three snow days*

Visit Monroe Public Schools Website
www.monroeps.org



MONROE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
— MONROE, CONNECTICUT —

Masuk Ecology Students Donate Fresh Produce!

Each year, Mr. Pagel's Ecology students plant and cultivate various fruits and vegetables in the Masuk green-

house and garden. This successful fall crop produced cabbage, carrots, various lettuces, and Swiss chard that was all given to Monroe Food Pantry on November 21. Over the past few years, the crops have also included fruits such as apples, peaches, plums, and strawberries. The vegetables have included beans, okra, peppers, potatoes, tomatoes and zucchini. The students take great pride in planting seeds and



watching them grow into full crops that they then share with Chef Diaz's culinary classes, So-dexo, and the Monroe Food Pantry.

Monroe Public Schools Presents:

The 4th Annual da Vinci Festival

Monroe's Grades K-12 Arts Show

Masuk High School

Friday, March 31, 2017 • 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM
 Saturday, April 1, 2017 • 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Model United Nations

Three Masuk students attended the University of Connecticut Model United Nations (UCMUN) in November, restoring Masuk’s presence at the event after a 30-year hiatus.

Chief Delegate, Anika Veeraraghav, and delegates, Nisha Honnaya and Ji-Won Lee, led by adviser, Ben Strange, attended convocations and committee meetings over the weekend of Novem-

ber 4-6, representing the interests of their assigned nations, drafting and proposing motions in parliamentary form, and contributing to reports out of the various committees.

UCMUN was started in 1999 after decades of occasional Statewide Model UN meetings, and it has continued annually since then. The 2016 meeting drew some 300 juniors and seniors from around the State.

Honnaya sat on the United Nations Human Rights Council representing the Syrian Arab Republic. Honnaya was given one of the committee awards at the closing convocation.

Masuk was abundantly present among the organizers at UCMUN, whose staff included Avinash and Anand Veeraraghav, Charith Tirumani, and Monica Anthony.

Masuk’s Model UN will next send delegates to the regional MUN meeting at Trumbull High in May.



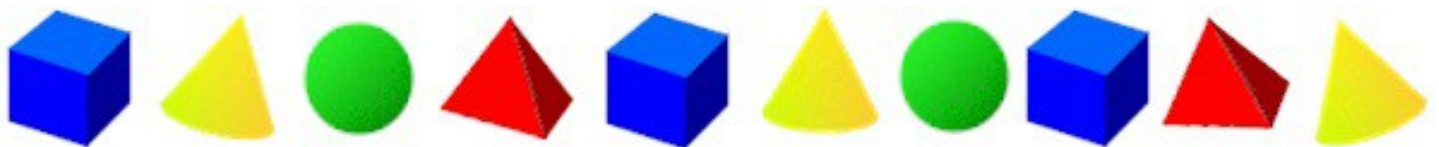
Veeeraraghav represented the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Lee represented the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, both on the International Law Commis-

Grade 6 Geometry Day


In late November, the Jockey Hollow and STEM sixth grade spent the day learning about several Geometry topics. This was the first time the grade six mathematics teachers planned a whole school day focused solely on mathematical concepts. Throughout all the disciplines, students rotated through different cooperative learning activities guided by their academic teachers. These activities ranged from discovering areas and volumes of different two and three dimensional shapes, using technology to learn and practice finding the area and volume of shapes, as well as reading an article about calculating the volume of living space on the International Space Station.

The goal for this day was to expose the sixth grade students to the calculations and applications of area and volume as well as give the students an opportunity to work with each other to discover and practice these geometric concepts. The feedback from the students and teachers was very positive. One student said, "I liked it and learned a lot about area." Another student asked if he could do this every day. Teachers felt the students were given the opportunity to really learn and understand about the area and volume of the different shapes, as well as apply what they learned to real world problems.

During a future collaboration meeting, the sixth grade math teachers plan to meet to review how the day went and to begin planning the follow up activities. The sixth grade teams are excited to plan another discipline wide activity in the coming months.



DECA at MASUK



D E C A (Distributive Education Clubs of America) is an international Marketing, Management, and Entrepreneurship club found in over 5,200 high schools worldwide. Through integrated classroom instruction, applied learning, international competition, and a comprehensive network of teachers, administrators, and business owners, DECA prepares its nearly quarter of a million members to be:

- Academically Prepared
- Community Oriented
- Professionally Responsible
- Experienced Leaders

Masuk DECA was founded in 2007 and is proud to be one of the most

active chapters in Connecticut. Masuk DECA has 67 members this year. The 13-person officer team is led by president, Maddi Knise, who has been a DECA member for three years.

Masuk DECA had a busy fall. DECA members welcomed two guest speakers into the classroom, attended a leadership conference, completed a fundraiser, and organized two major service-learning projects. The winter months are dedicated to preparing 43 club members for the DECA State competition that will be held at the Aqua Turf on March 13.

Masuk students who are interested in joining DECA are encouraged to enroll in one of three marketing classes offered: Marketing I, Mar-

keting II Honors, and Sports & Entertainment Marketing.

For additional information on Masuk's marketing program and DECA, email adviser Richelle Cline at rcline@monroeps.org.



Celebration of Reading

On Friday, March 31, 2017, the Monroe town-wide Celebration of Reading will be held in all our elementary schools.

Each year, we invite Monroe community members to read a story to our students. Our guest readers start with a reception at our schools and then go into a classroom to read to a

class. A committee of elementary reading staff selects the children's books, Linda's Storytime orders the books for us, and the Monroe America Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) sponsors the event.

We are looking forward to another wonderful event encouraging our students to have a love for reading.

If you are interested in becoming a reader for our Celebration of Reading, please contact Jennifer Lafferty at jlafferty546@gmail.com.



The mission of the Monroe Public Schools is to ensure that all students reach their full potential as innovative thinkers and responsible citizens through a challenging, inquiry-based curriculum delivered by skilled, dedicated, and engaging educators.

Masuk Students Join Historical Society for a Walk Through Time

Just in time for Halloween, the Monroe Historical Society sponsored a Historical Fall Foliage and Creepy Cemetery Tour for Families. Masuk students, Taggart Weiss and Katherine Lee, were joined by their families and Ian Lowell, the Instructional Leader for History and Social Studies, on the trip.

The tour began at the East Village Meeting House where several local historical items were on display, including a collection of arrowheads that were discovered near Cargill's Pond.

The walking tour next met up with Ranger David Solek who guided a

tour of the Paugussett Trail, including the former site of Cargill's Pond, and the remnants of a stone and earthen dam that was used to power one of Monroe's early factories. The factory on Barn Hill Road, which began weaving wool by harnessing water power by way of a water wheel, created many products. Eventually, it converted over from local wool to dyed cotton fabrics and hoop skirts. Owners included local families such as the Wheelers and the Beardsleys.

The tour ended with a walk through the East Village cemetery where one of the factory's owners, Foster Cargill, is buried not far from a man he

killed in a fight, his neighbor William Tucker. Cargill was found innocent for reason of self-defense, but the story was not without its share of controversy. Some said Cargill and Tucker feuded over their positions on business and slavery--Cargill's cotton was the product of southern slave labor, while Tucker was a noted abolitionist. Others say it was over family and repeated abuse.

Stories of murder, intrigue, and local industry were woven together for an interesting journey through the history of Monroe.



Katherine Lee, Taggart Weiss, and local residents hear about Cargill's Factory on Barn Hill Road (above).

For more information on the Monroe Public Schools, go to:

www.monroeps.org

World Language Honor Society

Each year, Masuk's Department of World Languages offers honor society membership to seniors who demonstrate continued dedication to and superior effort in language study. Twenty-nine students representing the French, Latin, and Spanish programs were inducted on December 7.

French language students Ed Lucano, Natalia Savkovic, and Ben Townsend became members.

For their progress in the study of Latin, the following students were inducted: Elizabeth Cataldo, Andrew Cohen, Spencer Dai, Samantha Goldfarb, Kelly McCauley,

Sabrina Romansky, and Kyle Weiss.

The following students of Spanish were admitted: Allison Bajorinas, Corinne Batsu, Victoria Ben, Emerson Carlson, Lucas Ciaccio, Michelle Cobuzzi, Taylor DiMeiro, Maya Dougherty, Michael Fedorko, Emily Kitchener, Patrick Lazzaro, Ryan Lee, Arkin Mukherjee, Eric Naposki, Stephanie Potash, Justin Sadownick, Ana Carolina Sardinha, Natalia Savkovic and Isabella Vaccaro.

Congratulations to all!



CT Commissioner's Council on Mathematics

In early Fall 2016, the Connecticut Education Commissioner's Council on Mathematics released a report detailing recommendations in response to the 2015 Smarter Balanced test results in mathematics. Commissioner Dianne R. Wentzell asked the Council to identify best practices and explore promising innovations in the areas of mathematics instruction. The Council developed a series of recommendations that would serve as a resource and guide to State agencies, school administrators, teachers, higher education personnel, business and community leaders, and parents to improve mathematics in the State.

As we reflect on the findings of this Report, we recognize that many of the recommendations by the Council are currently being implemented in the Monroe District. These recommendations identify four characteristics of best practices: Leadership,

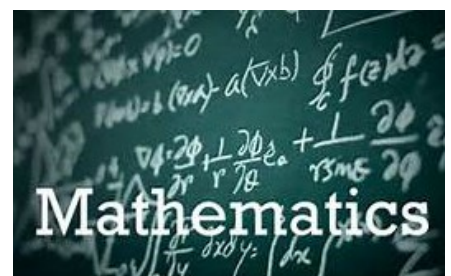
Professional Development, Time, and Collaboration.

- Leaders have identified individuals who possess the math expertise to provide support and training within the school community.
- The District provides ongoing embedded support through professional development to teachers and support staff by math coaches or instructional leaders who possess strong content knowledge and teaching practices.
- Teachers are provided release days, common planning time, after-school and summer hours for curriculum writing, pacing revisions, and assessment creation.
- Monthly grade level and department meetings are held with the District Instructional Leaders to provide teachers

time to collaborate on best practices of mathematics instruction.

We believe the recommendations provided by the Commissioner's Council of Mathematics offer an opportunity for us to reflect on what next steps are needed to maintain the high quality of math instruction that is provided to every child in the Monroe Public Schools.

To view the entire report, please go to http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/curriculum/math/commissioners_council_on_math_report.pdf.



Shakespeare on the Masuk Stage



Student actors at Masuk are preparing to bring the Bard back to the Monroe stage. Continuing the tradition of presenting a Shakespeare play every four years, the high school theatre department will produce the comedy *Much Ado About Nothing* from March 30 to April 1.

All students at Masuk study William Shakespeare’s work in the classroom, but seeing it live on stage brings those words to life. English Language Arts Instructional Leader, Mike Crowley,

is directing this group of 23 students, helping them navigate the challenging language and embody the eclectic group of characters.

This farce centers around young love, jealousy, and the need to be true to oneself. *Masuk’s Much Ado About Nothing* is set in a mall in the 1980s and will be filled with preppies, Madonna wannabes, and the memorable music of that decade. It will certainly be an entertaining romp through a well-known classic.

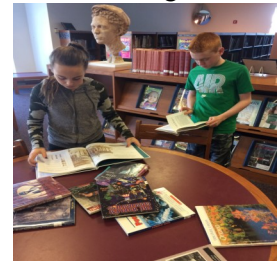
Dating a Book

Sixth graders in Gretchen Conte’s Language Arts classes know that picking a new book can be quite a commitment, so they have recently had some help from the Jockey Hollow Media Specialist, Jan Birney. To introduce their unit on informational reading, Birney designed a “Speed Dating” experience where students were taught how to quickly assess their interest in a specific

book by looking at titles, book covers, and opening paragraphs.

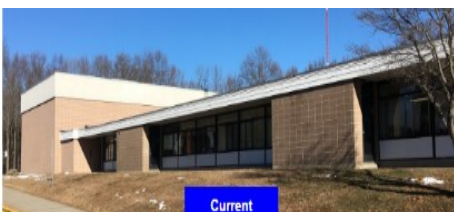
She set up tables throughout the library with an array of books, giving students a limited time to make a choice. They would then take that choice to the next table and exchange it for another book if they wished. By interacting with a variety of titles in a short amount of time, students discov-

ered some books they never would have chosen. This was a rousing success for all involved and looks like the start of a new reading tradition.



Proposed Stepney Elementary School Roof Project

A new roof is proposed for Stepney Elementary School. The proposed project will replace existing roof sections that are 24 to 27 years old. Areas of the current roof have 100% water saturation with active leaks coming into the school. The cafeteria roof is not part of the proposed project, because that roof was replaced in 2013.



Included in the project are structural repairs that will replace some of the existing footings and steel work in order to bring roof structures up to current codes. The new roof will include new insulation that meets current code requirements and will save energy costs in the future. With the new insulation added, the fascia and soffits - the areas along the perimeter of the roof and the roof overhang areas - will be replaced with a new steel system similar to Fawn Hollow (see photos). The new fascia and soffit will enhance the look of the school and will also reduce future mainte-

nance costs.

The pre-bid cost estimate for the project is \$2,700,000, and that cost will be reduced after competitive bidding is complete. To see a complete presentation about this project, go to the Monroe Website-www.monroeps.org.



Observant Scientists!



Young scientists in kindergarten through second grade demonstrate the foundations of analyzing and interpreting data! This is a Next Generation Science Standards, science and engi-

neering practice, that builds over time and through grade levels. Budding scientists begin to develop this practice by using their senses to observe closely. Next, they determine how to record their observations on paper. Students draw pictures, use authentic colors, add labels, and descriptions.

These scientific records provide a way for students to share their thinking and understanding with others. The drawings become evidence of their scientific discovery!

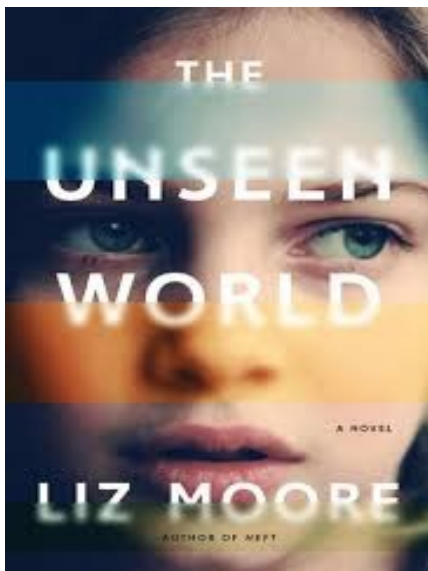
Young scientists at home can keep crayons and paper handy.

There are interesting observations to be made everywhere.

Family Science Night is coming in March! More information is on the way!



Monroe Reads 2017



The third annual Monroe Reads celebration will take place on March 16, at 7:00 PM, in the Jockey Hollow Auditorium.

This year, we are thrilled to welcome author, Liz Moore, who will be discussing her novel, *The Unseen World*. Her book tells the story of Ada, a homeschooled girl who is brilliant. Ada's quirky father develops Alzheimer's disease and leaves her a virtual orphan. As her father's mind slips away, Ada comes to realize he is not who he claimed to be.

The novel is available at all school libraries, the Edith Wheeler Memorial Library, and at Linda's Story Time. In addition to our author visit, the EWML has planned interesting events for all age groups related to the novel -- please visit their homepage (www.ewml.org) for more information. You can view the Monroe Reads press release and a video from the author at the Monroe Public Schools website (www.monroeps.org).

Rock Week at Jockey Hollow

Jockey Hollow is embracing diversity! A group of students created the bulletin board outside the main office in honor of ROCK Week February 13-16. ROCK Week is a week dedicated to promoting Random Opportunities for Caring and Kindness throughout the school and community.

Throughout the week, students were encouraged to complete suggested acts of kindness found on another bulletin board outside of Pupil Services. Students are also paying it forward by giving out gifts to staff members as a sign of appreciation for all that they do.

On Tuesday, February 14, Ryan Martin, a motivational speaker, shared his life experiences with all of our students. He was born with Spina Bifida, had both legs amputated, and through his determination and courage, played professional basketball in Phoenix and Spain. We are excited and thankful to the P.T.O. for the resources they shared with us to allow Ryan the opportunity to speak to our students.

On Thursday, students had “Kindness Day.” Students had a unique opportunity to take part in various hands-on experiences designed to gain an understanding of different disabilities

and/or challenges people face each day.



Diversity is not about how we differ.
Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness.

-Ola Joseph

Monroe Preschool



The Monroe Preschool, housed at Monroe Elementary School, is comprised of a variety of services designed for three to five year old children. These services include screening and evaluation, an integrated preschool classroom, therapy, and consultative services. Eligibility for services and all programs are determined on an individual basis.

The Monroe Public Schools is committed to provide a preschool program that embeds the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework with developmentally appropriate practices focusing on the development of cognitive skills, language skills, social/personal skills, and motor skills.

Students are provided with rich, hands on learning opportunities in a language-based program for them to explore and develop the skills necessary for kindergarten.

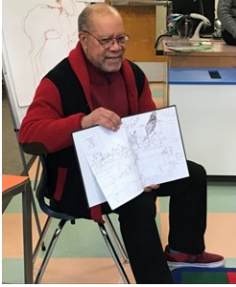
The program is supported by a highly dedicated and certified staff to offer the optimal learning environment for all students.

We will be seeking to enroll three and four year olds as "neighborhood kids" to serve as peer models for students participating in the program who require special education services.

A screening process is required for the Neighborhood Kids Program, which offers the option to attend two to five days per week, from 8:15 AM – 1:15 PM. Tuition costs are based on the number of days selected to attend this preschool program.

If interested, please call
(203) 452-2870 x. 2144
for additional information.

Imagination Comes Alive



In recognition of Black History Month, Fawn Hollow students had the amazing experience of meeting a very famous illustrator, Jerry

Pinkney. Jerry has been illustrating children's books since 1964, illustrating over one hundred titles. He has been the recipient of five Caldecott Honor Medals, a Caldecott Medal, and five *The New York Times* "Best Illustrated Books." He has received five Coretta Scott King Awards, and four Coretta Scott King Honor Awards. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and published in fourteen countries. Furthermore, he has received numerous awards for his body of work. For his contribution as a children's illustrator, Pinkney was the U.S. nominee in 1998 for the biennial, international Hans Christian Andersen Award, the highest international recognition for creators of children's books.

The first thing Mr. Pinkney shared with students was his delight at seeing the beautiful student artwork

displayed throughout the school. He went on to talk about what it was like for a person of color growing up in Philadelphia, and how parents of he and his friends would always encourage the boys to draw. He worked as a paperboy. Whenever he wasn't busy, he drew pictures, and was always using his imagination. He also loved nature so many of his illustrations include animals and plants, as well as pictures representing his childhood. He shared that people of color were told there were things they couldn't do, but that his favorite thing to do was draw. He illustrated his first book - a story about a Spider - at age 23.

Jerry Pinkney first met with students in grades K, 1, and 2, sharing with them the technique of personification - giving human characteristics to inanimate objects - and showing watercolor illustrations representing this method. When asked what his favorite book to illustrate was, he responded *The Legend of John Henry*, because over and over John Henry's actions showed him to be a strong and smart person of color. When asked what he is hoping to illustrate he

mentioned working on a book called *Seven Elephants* and his desire to illustrate a book about Dr. Martin Luther King.

When meeting with students in grades 3, 4, and 5, he shared the importance of using your imagination and hard work. As a young learner, he had difficulty keeping up, but he didn't know why until he discovered he was dyslexic. He was really good at drawing. With the encouragement of his parents, he worked hard at drawing and was eventually recognized by a cartoonist who encouraged him to pursue a career as an artist.

At noon time, he shared his craft with a small group of budding artists in grades 4 and 5. It was especially fun to see the artist's proof for his new book, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, and to hear how he created the trolls from his imagination.

Jerry Pinkney's visit was an enlightening and enriching experience provided through the generosity of Fawn Hollow's PTO.



Parent Lecture Series Returns

The office of Student Support Services invited parents to attend an informational session entitled *Sensory Processing and Regulation Part II* as part of its Parent Lecture Series, on January 25, at Masuk High School. District therapists Christy Machun - OTR/L, Medha Papadimitriou - OTR/L, Carrie Verilli - COTA and Diane Sell - DPT provided parents with a wealth of knowledge that included:

- Definitions of both sensory processing and self regulation
- Signs of sensory processing difficulties
- Sensory processing supports
- Creating a suitable environment both at school and in home
- Zones of Regulation

We would like to thank Constellations Health Services, Inc. and our district therapists for their willingness to present, the Masuk Vocational Program for providing coffee and snacks, and the parents who attended the program.

Plans for an April presentation have begun, and we hope to see you there. If you have any further questions or suggestions, please contact us at (203) 452-2856.

Anonymous Alerts App

Monroe Public School is announcing the implementation of a new state-of-art safety reporting app called Anonymous Alerts®. Anonymous Alerts® patented anti-bullying app helps combat bullying and other negative activity in schools by empowering students to come forward to help themselves and other students. Social and peer pressures are some of the hardest obstacles for students to overcome. Now they can report bullying and safety issues quickly using Anonymous Alerts®. The District will be implementing the app in March and will be communicating the app to all students and parents.

Students or parents in the school community can anonymously submit suspicious activity, safety threats, bullying, drug abuse, depression, harassment, family issues, and self-harm issues to school administrators or counselors. Students can establish one-way or anonymous two-way communications with a school official about an incident. The Anonymous Alerts mobile app is available for free to download from the Apple Store, Google Play Store, and the Chrome Store.



Monroe Public Schools
 Teacher of the Year

The *Monroe Teacher of the Year Program* seeks to honor and recognize excellence in the teaching profession by identifying outstanding educators in Monroe.

The Committee is happy to receive nominations from parents, students, and colleagues.

Nominations need to be received by March 17, 2017. Please return all nomination forms to the Assistant Superintendent's Office or email them to jbattista@monroeps.org.

Go to www.monroeps.org for the TOTY Nomination Form.

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Monroe Town-Wide Kindergarten Registration

Registration for children eligible to start Kindergarten in the Fall of 2017 is now taking place.

Under state law, to be eligible for Kindergarten in the Fall of 2017, children must be at least five years old on or before December 31, 2017.

Please pick up a registration packet to begin the Kindergarten registration process with Monroe Public Schools at your district elementary school office.

Fawn Hollow Elementary School
345 Fan Hill Road
203-452-2923

Monroe Elementary School
375 Monroe Turnpike
203-452-2870

Stepney Elementary School
180 Old Newtown Road
203-452-2885

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact your district school.