

[Mohawk Trail students exploring forensic science, climate resiliency](#)

BY MADISON SCHOFIELD, Staff Writer Published: 11-03-2024 9:56 AM

SHELBURNE FALLS — New classes at Mohawk Trail Regional School are taking students into the field to explore career paths in forensic science and climate resiliency.

In addition to math, English and social studies, middle school students have had the opportunity to add some new electives to their schedule this year and explore topics relating to climate change, environmental protection, forestry, how death investigations work, toxicology, fingerprinting and more.

The forensic science course is co-taught by 8th grade STEM and reading teacher Travis Minnick and Shelburne Police detective Tucker Jenkins.

The class has taken students through mock investigations and crime scenes, showing the steps of investigation from obtaining a search warrant to writing up the report once a crime has been solved. To help teach the class, Minnick, Jenkins and their students have welcomed guest lecturers from various local law enforcement agencies, including a recent visit from the Greenfield Fire Department and their drone.

Students learned how the drones are used in emergency search and rescue situations as well as to monitor floods and fires, and even got to try flying the drone.

“Students are really invested in this class,” Minnick said. “They are responding to a real-life application of science and exploring the many career options in criminal justice.”

Meanwhile in the climate resiliency class students have been exploring topics relating to conservation while exploring the woods.

“My goal is to get students connected to their surroundings in the natural world so that they can better understand them,” said teacher Alia Woofenden. “If they can feel connected, what I’ve seen is, they are more inclined to take care of and advocate for what we have.”

Woofenden has taken her students for hikes through nearby trails with Stephanie Straud and Andrew Petit de Mange from the National Park Service and Chris Skelly from the Buckland Trails organization to learn how human involvement in the natural world can both harmful and helpful, and what they can do to be helpful. They also are learning about the park service and the Buckland Trails current projects to strengthen trails connecting west county towns.

Outside of the class, Woofenden has been working to provide students more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, and recently won a grant from the Deerfield River Enhancement Fund in order to construct an outdoor classroom.

Led by teacher Brett Billings, the MTRS Key Club then built a number of benches, a fire pit and a whiteboard kiosk.

Woofenden said the goal with the new space was to give students a space to connect with the outdoors, and so far the students have been enjoying the chance to get outside of the classroom. Reach Madison Schofield at 413-930-4579 or mschofield@recorder.com

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