



Mount Arlington Public School District

LAKER INSIDER

Issue No. 25-26-1

August 25, 2025

A close-up photograph of a koala clinging to a tree trunk. The koala is holding a large green leaf in its mouth and looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the tree and some greenery.

**WHAT DO YOU
MEAN**

**SUMMER VACATION IS ALMOST
OVER?**



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Notes from the Superintendent

Dear Students and Parents,

The 2025-2026 school year is rapidly approaching. As it is almost upon us, I wanted to reach out and welcome you back and thank you for welcoming me back for the summer. It has been a pleasure to return as your Interim Superintendent of Schools and assist in these times of transition. Also returning is **Mrs. Robin Tedesco**, Interim Business Administrator. Mrs. Tedesco and I have enjoyed working together again. We are both proud to be back in-district.

Over the course of this past summer the administration and staff have worked diligently to prepare for your arrival. Much has been accomplished thus far; the hiring of new staff, the management of finances, the ordering of supplies and instructional materials, new ChromeBooks have been readied, HVAC projects are nearing completion, the grounds at both buildings are being brought back to a presentable state, and numerous additional Back to School projects have been completed. Mr. Coladarci and Mrs. Ochoa have crafted a new schedule that will allow for maximized instructional time and smooth transitions between classes. Teachers have already been in to prepare their classrooms and get ready to start the new year. It's an exciting time for all.

You will note that in the "Meet the Superintendent" section of the website, I have reintroduced myself to you and have additionally introduced **Dr. Thomas J. Ficarra**, who will be joining you in September. My time here has been rewarding and very productive. Thank you for welcoming me back and please extend the same warm welcome to Dr. Ficarra as you did for me.

Please let me take a moment to share my most sincere thanks to **Mr. Justin Pickens**. Mr. Pickens, our Director of Technology, has single handedly made certain that in the absence of a Director of Facilities, our schools have been made ready for the 2025-26 school year. Mr. Pickens "stepped up to the plate" in our time of need and has gone above and beyond in dedication to our school community. Join me in thanking him for his exemplary efforts!

As always, the hiring of new staff is inspiring. Please join me in welcoming the following new staff members to Mount Arlington:

Please welcome **Mrs. Jill Jacobsen** to the Main Office at the Mount Arlington School as Secretary to the Principal/Main office secretary. Mrs. Jacobsen joins us from the Chester School district, where she worked in the Main Office. She has over 10 years experience working with students and families in various roles.



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LAKER INSIDER

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August 25, 2025

Notes from the Superintendent....continued

Joining us in the 2nd grade is **Ms. Carly Corrente**. Ms. Corrente will be the Maternity Leave Replacement for Mrs. Manney. Ms. Corrente is a recent graduate of Monmouth University having received her Bachelors degree in Early Childhood Education, Specialization in Elementary Education and an Endorsement in Teaching Students with Disabilities. Welcome to Mount Arlington, Ms. Corrente!

Of particular note, we are so very happy and wish the Manney family all the best as they welcome their new son!! Congratulations Manney's!!

Returning to our schools in a new role is **Ms. Jenna Shapiro**. Ms. Shapiro will be the maternity leave replacement for Mrs. Hutkowski in the Kindergarten from September through December. Ms. Shapiro is a familiar face in our schools as she has worked in the district for the past several years as a leave replacement teacher at numerous grade levels. Welcome back Ms. Shapiro! We are so happy you are here with us!

Additionally, **Ms. Caitlyn Errichiello** will be joining our staff teaching both kindergarten and grade one LLD classes. Ms. Errichiello is a recent graduate of Rowan University with a Bachelors degree in Inclusive Education. She holds certificates in Elementary Education and Teacher of Students with Disabilities. We are delighted to have you join our staff in this new position!

We look forward to greeting our students and families back to our schools. Have a wonderful school year and beyond! It has been my pleasure serving the district of Mount Arlington once again. I wish you all the very best!!

Dr. Jane Mullins Jameson
Interim Superintendent of Schools



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Principal's Corner

Welcome Back to the 2025-2026 School Year!

I hope everyone enjoyed a relaxing and memorable summer! It's hard to believe how quickly it has flown by, but we are excited and ready to kick off another incredible school year.

First, I want to extend my gratitude to Dr. Jameson for her guidance and leadership as we prepared for the year and navigated recent transitions. I also join her in welcoming Dr. Ficarra to our district. I look forward to working with him as we continue building on the strong foundation that makes our schools exceptional.

As Dr. Jameson mentioned, many changes and improvements have taken place across our district this summer, thanks to the hard work of numerous staff members. Their dedication is truly appreciated and has made a real difference.

One of the updates I'm most excited about is our new instructional schedule. While start and end times remain the same, we now have a more targeted approach to instructional time:

- At Decker School: All students will receive 120 minutes of Language Arts instruction, including a 40-minute whole-class multisensory lesson. Most Decker teachers have already completed 30 hours of training, and new staff will finish by mid-October.
- At MAPS: We've transitioned from the WIN and Enrichment model to Learning Lab—a 40-minute block for small-group, personalized instruction. This time also allows Basic Skills teachers to provide support without pulling students from core academic classes. Please see the Learning Lab Statement of Philosophy below.

Our schedule also includes an improved lunch/recess plan at MAPS. While one grade eats, the other will be at recess, switching halfway through. This not only reduces cafeteria noise by cutting the number of students in half, but also ensures grades 6–8 enjoy daily recess. The gym will remain available for indoor recess during inclement weather.

Thank you again to everyone who worked tirelessly this summer to prepare for an outstanding year. I can't wait to welcome back our amazing teachers, motivated students, and supportive families in just a few weeks.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, and we'll see you soon!

Truly,
Joe Coladarci, Principal



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Updated Attendance Policy – Chronic Absenteeism

At the May 14th meeting, the Board of Education approved this updated policy to the District Policy Manual and it is important that parents be aware of the changes. We are committed to working closely with families to ensure a smooth transition to this policy. Additional details will also be shared during Back-to-School Nights.

Chronic Absenteeism is defined as 18 or more (10% of the school year) unexcused absences within a school year. In the past, our District recognized several “excused” absence reasons that did not align with N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14 through 16. As a result, some absences were considered “excused” by families but still had to be reported to the State as unexcused, which significantly contributed to our high Chronic Absenteeism rate.

To address this, the Board of Education has updated Policy and Regulation 5200 – Attendance. As we prepare for the new school year, please take a moment to review the updated Regulation 5200 for more detail [\[HERE\]](#).

Important Change: What Counts as an Excused Absence

Under the updated policy, the only reasons considered “excused” are:

- Take Our Children to Work Day
- Religious observance, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14 through 16
- Participation in Veterans Day observance, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-13.2
- Attendance at a civic event(s), pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-33.2
- Closure of a busing school district that prevents a student from being transported to the receiving school

Please also know that **student arrival will be from 8:20am - 8:30am.** After 8:30am students must be signed in by a parent or guardian and will be marked tardy.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or need clarification, please contact **Mr. Coladarci** directly.



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LAKER INSIDER

Issue No. 25-26-1

August 25, 2025

Learning Lab - Statement of Philosophy

Learning Lab is grounded in the belief that every student can grow and succeed when provided with targeted support, time, and the right tools for learning. This 40-minute class period serves as an intentional, focused opportunity to help students strengthen academic skills, close learning gaps, and build the confidence needed to succeed in all areas of school.

Our approach is student-centered, responsive, and data-informed. We aim to meet learners where they are—academically, socially, and emotionally—by identifying specific areas of need and delivering individualized or small-group instruction, reteaching, practice, or enrichment as appropriate. Learning Lab is not simply a study hall or make-up period, but a structured, purposeful environment that prioritizes progress and achievement.

Ultimately, Learning Lab reflects our commitment to equity and excellence. It ensures that all students have access to the support they need to meet high expectations, while fostering skills like self-advocacy, accountability, and perseverance. This dedicated time empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey and move closer to realizing their full potential.



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LAKER INSIDER

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August 25, 2025



- 8/27/25 - Orientation for new students to the district
 - MAPS - 10:00am
 - Decker - 11:00am
- 8/27/25 - Board of Education Meeting in MAPS Media Center - 7:00pm
- 8/28/25 - Kindergarten Orientation at Decker - 10:00am
- 9/2-4/25 - Teacher In-Service
- 9/5/25 - First Day for Students (arrival between 8:20am - 8:30am)
- 9/11/25 - Back to School Night @ Decker - 6:30pm - 8:00pm
- 9/16/25 - PTO Meeting in MAPS Media Center - 7:00pm
- 9/17/25 - Board of Education Meeting in MAPS Media Center - 7:00pm
- 9/18/25 - Back to School Night @ MAPS - 6:30pm - 8:00pm
- 9/23/25 - Schools Closed - Rosh Hashannah
- 10/2/25 - Schools Closed - Yom Kippur



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LAKER INSIDER

Issue No. 25-26-1 August 25, 2025

MOUNT ARLINGTON SCHOOLS

MEET THE PTO

2025-2026



BROOKE ORTIZ, PRESIDENT

I was super excited to join the PTO. Being involved in the school is something that's very important to me. I love being able to come up with new and creative ideas to give all of the kids in the district an amazing school experience. I look forward to what the next few years will bring.

RANDI CIRELLI, VICE-PRESIDENT

As an alumni of Mt. Arlington Schools, and I am so happy that I have the ability to give back to the community. I really enjoy being a part of the planning and execution process for events at our schools. Seeing how much fun the children have is the best! We also have the best teachers and I'm happy to be able to support them!



LAURA D'AMICO, SECRETARY

Being involved in the PTO allows me to play an active role in my child's education, contribute to the school/ community, and make a positive impact on the learning environment for all students! We are all in this journey together. I want to make it memorable, filled with love, kindness and positivity.

JOELLE SUTERA, TREASURER

This is my first year with the PTO and I'm so excited! I'm looking forward to an opportunity of being connected with not only other parents, but also the kids, and giving them memories they will have forever. Also, being able to work along side 3 other wonderful moms to make the school a better place not just for our own kids, but for everyone's.



**LEARN
MORE**

MEETINGS: JOIN US ON PTBOARD TO VIEW OUR SCHEDULE

Come learn about the Mt. Arlington PTO, opportunities to get involved, and the positive change you can make in the lives of our school & students!

mta.ptboard.com (use code 93KANX) or facebook.com/mapsptonj



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August 25, 2025

THE MT. ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS PTO NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025

IMPORTANT DATES

9/5- 1st Day of School!
9/10&11 - Decker Book Fair
9/11 - Decker Back to School Night
9/16 - 1st PTO Meeting
9/17&18 - MAPS Book Fair
9/18 - MAPS Back to School Night

BOARD MESSAGE

Hello Laker Families! We are so excited for all of the amazing events, fundraisers, and projects we have planned to make this community even stronger! Please reach out with any questions or interest in getting involved!

-Brooke, Randi, Laura and Joelle

UPCOMING FUNDRAISERS

- Book Fair
- Mums Fundraiser
- Drive-In Movie Night

SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

- Theatre Week will be making a return this week for the first time in 10 years!
- No school on September 23rd in observation of Rosh Hashanah

HELP MAKE OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY STRONG!

TEACHERS, STAFF, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS CAN JOIN THE PTO!

Visit MTA.PTBOARD.COM and use code 93KANX to sign up. All PTO-sponsored events, activities, volunteer opportunities and more are all communicated through PT Board.

CONNECT WITH US

[instagram.com/mountarlingtonpto](https://www.instagram.com/mountarlingtonpto)
[facebook.com/mapsptonj](https://www.facebook.com/mapsptonj)
mtarlingtonpto@gmail.com



REMINDERS

- The first day of school for students is on Friday, September 5th!
- Register for PT Board!



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PLEASE JOIN US FOR MT. ARLINGTON SCHOOLS



1ST PTO



MEETING

of the 2025-2026 school year!

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
6:30PM IN THE MAPS MEDIA CENTER**



EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



Come learn about the Mt. Arlington PTO, opportunities to get involved, and the positive change you can make in the lives of our school & students!

**TEACHERS, STAFF, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS,
STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS CAN JOIN THE PTO!**

PLEASE EMAIL MTARLINGTONPTO@GMAIL.COM WITH ANY QUESTIONS!

We hope to see you there!