MATAWAN–ABERDEEN CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Superintendent's Message



Dear Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Community,

The start of the school year is always a time of excitement and possibility! As we continue the 2025-2026 school year together, I would like to share some personal reflections, as well as important reminders and new opportunities to stay engaged.

As we recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, I am reminded of one of my fondest childhood memories: my parents telling my siblings and me, *"You can be whatever you want to be. Doors of opportunity are there to open / Puedes ser lo que tú quieras. Las puertas de oportunidades están abiertas."* Our parents were our greatest champions, and today, I carry that same pride in being a champion for our students.

While this month allows us to honor Latino culture, beliefs, and values such as family, resilience, faith, and the power of education, we must also remember that celebrating culture is not confined to a calendar. True recognition of heritage and tradition happens every day through the stories we share, the lessons we pass on, and the ways we lift one another up.

These observances are meaningful, yet the most authentic celebration of culture and tradition must take place daily in every classroom, in every conversation, and in the togetherness of celebrating milestones and holidays as one Husky community.



Thank you for helping us build a district where all students see themselves reflected, all families feel embraced, and where our shared experiences are our greatest strength.

Sincerely,
Nelyda Perez
Superintendent of Schools

Ways to Stay Connected



First, we know that attendance matters. Every day in school is a chance for our students to learn, grow, and connect. Throughout the school year, you'll see our new I AM HERE campaign, encouraging families to make daily attendance a priority and partner with us to ensure every student is present. We even have a helpful chart to help you decide if your child should stay home when ill or come to school.

Second, we want to hear from you! MARSD students, teachers, and staff are truly amazing – and we want to tell those stories. Please use this form to share story ideas with my team so we can highlight and celebrate them across our community. Feel free to also share your experiences on social media using the hashtag #MARSDConnections.

Also, remember each of your schools has a PTO/PTA, SEPAG, and POSP to stay connected and involved in each building and the community. Reach out to your Building Principal to find out who your liaison is.

CALENDAR REMINDERS

Oct. 2 – District Closed for Yom Kippur

Oct. 13 – District In-Service Day (Schools Closed for Students)

Oct. 13, 6:30 p.m. –Board of Education Committee of the Whole Meeting

Oct. 16, 6 - 10 p.m. - Battle of the Faculties

Oct. 27, 6:30 p.m. – Board of Education Regular Action Meeting

Oct. 31 – District Early Dismissal

View the full calendar: https://www.marsd.org/calendar

Governor's Educator of the Year Nominations

The Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District is excited to once again take part in the NJ Governor's Educator of the Year Program. This program celebrates the incredible teachers and educational services professionals who make a difference for our students every day.

Know an educator who inspires and makes a difference? Nominate them for the Governor's Educator of the Year Program! Submit the form to your building principal by November 28th. All are welcome to participate!

Eligibility Criteria

Nomination Form

MARSD Student Advocates for Type 1 Diabetes Funding in Washington, D.C.



This summer, Daniel McCue, a 13-year-old Matawan-Aberdeen Middle School student, went to Washington, D.C., where he proudly represented New Jersey at Breakthrough T1D's Children's Congress – a prestigious national advocacy event that brought together 170 children from across the nation to speak with members of Congress about the urgent need for funding and support for Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) research.

Daniel was one of the six New Jersey teens selected from more than 700 applicants to be part of this year's Children's Congress delegation, a program hosted by Breakthrough T1D, a leading global organization funding T1D research. The biennial event provides a platform for children affected by T1D to share their personal stories and educate lawmakers.

Read more about Daniel's story here





MARSD Receives Grant to Expand K.E.Y.S. ACADEMY Recovery High School

The district has been granted up to $800,000 ($200,000 per year for four years) from The Monmouth County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health to expand the services provided at the K.E.Y.S. Academy Recovery High School. With the funds provided by Monmouth County, the recovery high school can further the reach of its services.

“We are incredibly grateful to receive this funding, which will allow us to strengthen programming, improve outcomes, and ensure proper support for students,” said Superintendent Nelyda Perez. “Our mission is not only to educate, but to empower students to make healthy choices. This grant brings us one step closer to building a safer, more supportive community for all.”

Assistant Director of Student Wellness & Prevention Programs Jennise Nieves agreed, saying the recovery high school and district are grateful for the grant funding.

“We’re excited to move forward with this opportunity to enhance the quality of K.E.Y.S. Academy and reach more students who need these supports,” Nieves said. “This funding allows us to take a more proactive approach to supporting students in recovery as we address a critical need and align our work with best practices.”

The funding, awarded by the Monmouth County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health, comes from the National Opioid Settlement Funds. The National Opiod Settlements is a national agreement holding drug manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacy chains accountable for their role in the U.S. opioid crisis. The settlement aims to provide resources for treatments, recovery support and prevention.

Supporting Mental Health: September is Suicide Prevention Month

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the US.
- Over 49,000 people died by suicide in 2023.
- That is the equivalent of 1 death every 11 minutes.

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month marks a time to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and make sure every person in our community knows help is available.

Y Counseling through the YMCA of the Jersey Shore is accepting new patients right now. Call 732-290-9040 to schedule with a licensed behavioral health counselor or for more information.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, dial 988, the suicide & crisis lifeline, or 911 for an emergency.

District Community Update: Redistricting

As school districts evolve alongside community growth and demographic shifts, it becomes necessary to evaluate whether existing attendance boundaries continue to serve the community better. Redistricting is one of the primary tools districts use to address enrollment imbalances, respond to residential development, and ensure that facilities are utilized efficiently. *Sometimes this means taking a fresh look at our school boundaries to see if they still make sense for families today.*

What is School Redistricting?
School redistricting occurs when a school district updates the "attendance zones," or the boundaries that determine which schools students attend based on their residential location. In other words, it is how we ensure that students are matched with schools in a fair and balanced manner.

Why is our District considering redistricting?
Districts may need to adjust school boundaries for a few important reasons:

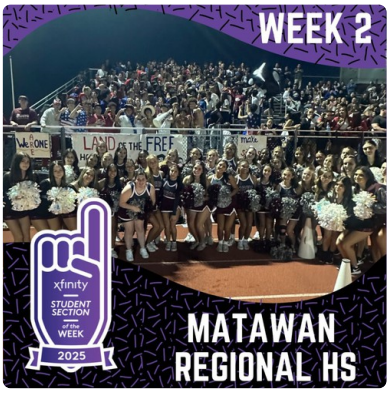
- *Balancing enrollment:* Some schools may have too many students, while others have extra space. Redistricting helps spread students more evenly.
- *Community changes:* As families move into different areas and new neighborhoods are built, it is crucial for boundaries to keep up with population shifts.

Our Commitment
While redistricting can be a significant change for families, the goal remains the same: to ensure every student has the best possible learning environment and opportunities to succeed. Currently, we are collecting data for potential redistricting in preparation for the 2026-2027 school year. We do anticipate that redistricting will primarily impact grades Pre-K to 5. More information on this process will follow, along with a forum for community feedback.

News From our Schools

Matawan Regional High School

Congratulations to MRHS for being named the Week 2 Xfinity Student Selection of the Week! Each week throughout the football regular season, one school will be recognized across the NJSIAA social channels. Each weekly winning student section receives rally towels and foam fingers courtesy of Xfinity! Don't forget to keep nominating the Huskies for the coming weeks.



Matawan-Aberdeen Middle School



This school year, MAMS students have a new option to enjoy their lunch outdoors. Because outdoor seating is limited, students have been taking turns. The feedback has been very positive! We look forward to working with the PTO during the year to expand the outdoor eating and learning space so that more students can enjoy spending part of their school day in the fresh air.

Lloyd Road Elementary School

Fourth grade students at Lloyd Road have been doing team building with physical education teachers Mrs.Carnovsky and Mr. Donovan. The goal of this team building to bring new fourth graders together, in groups of two classes, along with teachers to engage in activities designed to foster and reinforce the pillars of our school's character education program and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Students work together to complete challenges that require teamwork, responsibility, perseverance, and peer to peer communication. This fourth-grade team building builds on the MAEF grant from last year.







Strathmore Elementary School



Strathmore Elementary is proud to celebrate the diversity of our students. Students created a display to show that they come from all around the world, and together they create classrooms rich in culture, connection, and pride. At Strathmore, we honor who we are and where we come from.

Ravine Drive Elementary School

Ravine Drive is embracing its Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program this school year. Grade-level assemblies will help kick off the program and help set school-wide behavioral expectations around being respectful, responsible, and reflective. Students will receive recognition, reinforcement, and incentives for exhibiting positive behaviors.





Cliffwood Elementary School

The Cliffwood PTO recently held the annual Mum Sale, and it was a big success! Cliffwood families should also mark their calendars for several upcoming events, including the first Cliffwood Family Dinner on Sept. 30 from 4-8:30 p.m. at Texas Roadhouse, the First Cliffwood Color Run on Oct. 15, the Cliffwood Battle of the Faculties on Oct. 16, and Trunk or Treat on Oct. 29. October is a busy and special month for Cliffwood Elementary School.



Cambridge Park Elementary School



Cambridge Park Elementary School celebrated National Teddy Bear Day on Sept. 9 by inviting students to bring in a special stuffed friend to join them for the day. Learners shared their teddy bears and other cuddly pals during activities, making the day extra fun and comforting. It was a wonderful way to combine learning and play while building fun classroom memories!

Learn About the Matawan Aberdeen Educational Foundation!

The Matawan Aberdeen Educational Foundation (MAEF) is a volunteer-run 501c(3) non-profit that funds creative projects, usually teacher initiated, across the district. Each year they award approximately $10,000-$15,000 in teacher grants, supporting STEM tools, new books for special grade-wide or school-wide competitions and programs, new musical instruments, outdoor gardens that serve as living laboratories, and more. MAEF focuses on district-wide curriculum enhancements beyond a single year.

Recent grants included:

- An Aquaponics system at MRHS, which has allowed for expanded curriculum and classes
- Lending Libraries at Ravine Drive
- A new and improved sound system for the high school gymnasium

Keep an eye out for their lightbulb logo in your take-home communication and in virtual backpacks, and please consider supporting however you can.

MAEF is actively seeking community donations, but even more importantly, additional Board members to help it grow. Learn more about making a donation at https://www.maefgrants.org/, or reach out about getting involved or with an idea for a grant at infomaef@gmail.com.

Lastly – MAEF will be hosting the 2nd annual Battle of the Faculties on October 16 -- mark your calendars! Tickets can be purchased from the MAEF website.

Submit an Idea for a Story

Do you have good news to share about a student, staff member, team or club? We're always looking for opportunities to share school-community connections! Use this Google Form to tell us about it. We may feature it in some way on the district's newsletter or social media!