

MES Weekly Update

from the Superintendent of Schools

Week of August 24, 2026



Marlborough Elementary School Vision: *To inspire wonder, awe, and curiosity and to motivate young minds to embrace learning.*

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.

~ Seneca

Thank you for the very warm welcome to your community!

Each week on Monday morning, I will share a Weekly Update with members of the school community.

I look forward to getting to know students, parents, and staff as we open school for another great year of learning.

Paul Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Welcome Back to Your School...

As another school year begins on Wednesday the 26th, we are energized by the promise of hallways once again filled with students' voices, curiosity, and creativity. Though I have only just arrived as Superintendent, it is already clear that our teachers and staff are ready to inspire, encourage, and help make this an exceptional year for every MES student.



We wish the best to the Grade 6 students at MES as they enjoy their last year in our classrooms at MES before heading off to exciting opportunities at RHAM Middle School.

We welcome our Kindergarten students along with their families as they start their journey at Marlborough Elementary School. Class of 2039, we're very glad you're here!



Better Together For Children!

Introduction



Superintendent of Schools – Mr. Paul K. Smith

Mr. Smith holds degrees from Boston University, the University of Rochester in New York, and the University of Connecticut. From 2016 to 2024, Mr. Smith served as Superintendent of Schools in East Hampton, where he championed a culture of compassion as the foundation for an ambitious vision of excellence for all children. He has also served as Superintendent of Schools in Bolton, Connecticut, and Griswold, Connecticut. Mr. Smith received the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Service Award in both 2020 and 2023, as well as the NEASC Jacob Ludes III Leadership Award. He regularly leads accreditation visits for schools across New England. He has also served on the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Board of Directors and as Chairperson of the Middlesex/Shoreline Superintendents' Association.

This Week

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	Teacher Professional Development	Teacher & Staff Professional Development	 Welcome Back!	Marlborough Board of Education MES Library 6:30 PM		
	Summer Reading Ice Cream Social Hosted by the Library 6:00-7:00 PM	Student Meet & Greet 8:15-9:15 AM Welcome Back Students/families				



September/October 2026

Send information on school sponsored events to psmith@marlborough.k12.ct.us for inclusion.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	September 1	2	3	4	5
				Coffee with the Superintendent 8:30 – 10:00 AM 	 National Food Bank Day Support your local bank!	
		Board of Selectmen Town Hall 7:00 PM		MES Instrumental Music Night 5:30 PM   		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	NO SCHOOL Labor Day 	MES Building Committee MES Library 6:30 PM			 Rosh Hashanah begins in the Evening	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Uncle Sam Day  HAPPY GRANDPARENTS DAY 	MES PTO MES Library 6:30 PM RHAM Board of Education @ RHAM Middle 6:30 PM	Board of Selectmen Town Hall 7:00 PM	National Guacamole Day 	Coffee with the Superintendent 8:30 – 10:00 AM  	EARLY DISMISSAL Professional Development	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
 Yom Kippur begins in the Evening	 Board of Finance Town Hall 6:30 PM			Marlborough Board of Education MES Library 6:30 PM		 Stay Unplugged for 24 Hours!
27	28	29	30	October 1	2	3
			 Picture Day!	 Picture Day! MES Open House Evening 6:00 PM	World Smile Day 	

Notes



Come in and join the Superintendent for a cup of coffee and some conversation.

Please join the Superintendent of Schools, Paul Smith from **8:30-10:00 AM** on the following scheduled coffee dates:



Thursday, September 3

8:30-10:00 AM



Thursday, September 17

8:30-10:00 AM



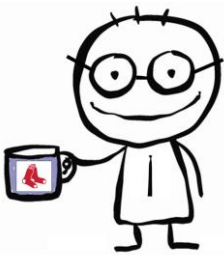
Thursday, October 15

8:30-10:00 AM



Thursday, October 29

8:30-10:00 AM



All parents and community members are invited to drop in! Coffee and Chat with the Superintendent will be held from **8:30-10:00 AM** and is held at the Central Office at **Marlborough Elementary School**.

If the above dates and times do not work for you, Mr. Smith is available for coffee and conversation at your convenience. Call the Central Office at (860) 295-6236 or email psmith@marlborough.k12.ct.us and make an appointment to ask a question, offer an opinion, and chat over coffee.

Please note: No taxpayer dollars are used for coffee, cream, sugar, cups, and stirrers.



Watch the Graduation Ceremony for the RHAM Class of 2026



Regional School District 8
RHAM High School

Graduation 2026



RHAM High School held its 69th commencement exercises for the Class of 2026 on Tuesday evening, June 16, 2026 and now the Class of 2026 is off and readying themselves for a very exciting future! Take the time to watch the video of the RHAM Graduation Ceremonies.

[Click here for video of Graduation Ceremony](#) (Starts at 32:15)

[Click here for new coverage in The Chronicle](#)





School attendance is crucial for student success



18 OR MORE DAYS

- Excused and unexcused absences represent lost time in the classroom and lost opportunities to learn.
- Missing just one day every two weeks can add up to 18 days in a year. Absences add up before you even know it.



10 TO 17 DAYS

- Students who are absent an average of 15 days a year miss a year's worth of school before their senior year.
- When students miss a day of school it actually puts them two days behind their classmates.



9 OR FEWER ABSENCES

- Students with good attendance generally achieve higher grades and enjoy school more.
- Children benefit and make the most of their educational opportunities if they attend school regularly and on time.

The month of September is **Attendance Awareness Month** and we urge all parents to make sure that their children attend every day this year unless they are ill.

We are working to ensure that every child excels in school – and **being present** is the foundation to success.

There is a strong connection between success in school and good attendance.

Where did your family fall on the scale to the left during the 202-26 school year?

Attendance is the Academic and Social Foundation (from the Teachers Institute)

School attendance is directly linked to academic success, especially in the early grades when students are building essential foundational skills. Each day of instruction helps students strengthen the base they need for future learning.

When students miss school, they miss important lessons that often serve as building blocks for more complex concepts later on. Over time, even a few absences can create gaps in understanding, making it harder for students to keep pace with their classmates and feel confident in their learning.

Beyond academics, school provides an essential setting for students' growth and well-being. Each day, students benefit from a safe, welcoming environment where they can learn, connect, and feel supported.

School is the primary place where children learn to interact with their peers, make friends, and build relationships with trusted adults. This prosocial environment is essential for educating the "whole child"—socially, emotionally, and academically. It's where they learn to collaborate, communicate, and navigate the social dynamics that will prepare them for life.

When students feel connected to school, attendance becomes more than an expectation—it becomes something they look forward to.

From the State of Connecticut (Click for information):

Chronic absence is different from truancy (missing too much school without permission) as well as average daily attendance (a school-level measure, not a student-level indicator, for how many students are typically in attendance at school each day).

Chronic absence and truancy are not interchangeable terms. They describe different aspects of the absenteeism problem and require different approaches. Truancy is a term that generally refers to unexcused absences. Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-198a (b)(1) and (2) defines truancy as four unexcused absences in one month or 10 unexcused absences in a school year. Responses to truancy are usually about school rule compliance and can lead to court intervention.

TRUANCY Counts only unexcused absences. Emphasizes compliance with school rules. Relies on legal and administrative solutions.
vs.
CHRONIC ABSENCE Counts all absences: excused, unexcused, and suspensions. Emphasizes academic impact of missed days. Uses community-based, positive strategies.

For more detail on determining if an absence is excused or unexcused, download the 2013 (but still current) [CSDE guidance document for excused and unexcused absences](#).

Congratulations Marlborough Public Schools! The rate of chronically absent students at 5.3% in 2025-26 is an improvement from 7.3% in 2024-25 – and is the **5th lowest rate** in the State of Connecticut for school districts. The CT State average for 2025-26 was 17.2%.

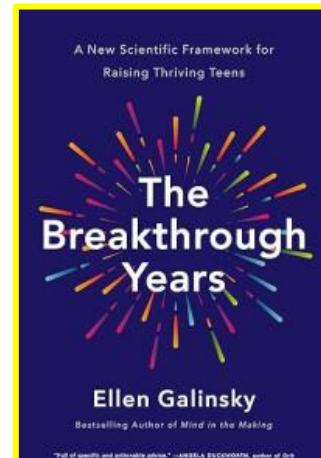
Book Recommendation

I enjoy reading and sharing educational titles that are designed to assist parents and/or teachers. I hope you'll consider some of the upcoming recommendations that you'll see in the Weekly Updates.

Consider ***The Breakthrough Years***. Growing up today is not like it was 10-20-30 years ago. We know more about neuroscience and the way children develop social and emotional skills. You may not have a teenager yet, but being prepared won't hurt!

Our students face situations that are unlike anything in our past.

[The Breakthrough Years: A New Scientific Framework for Raising Thriving Teens](#)



From Amazon.com

Blending cutting-edge research with engaging storytelling, ***The Breakthrough Years*** offers readers a paradigm-shifting comprehensive understanding of adolescence.

“Just wait until they’re a teenager!”

Many parents of newborns have heard this warning about the stressful phase that’s to come. But what if it doesn’t have to be that way?

Child development expert Ellen Galinsky challenges widely held assumptions about adolescents and offers new ways for parents and others to better understand and interact with them in a way that helps them thrive.

By combining the latest research on cognitive neuroscience with an unprecedented and extensive set of studies of young people nine through nineteen and their families, Galinsky reveals, among other things, that **adolescents don’t want to separate completely from their parents but seek a different type of relationship; that they want to be helpers rather than be helped;** and that social media can become a positive influence for teens.

Galinsky’s Shared Solutions framework and Possibilities Mindset show you how to turn daily conflicts into opportunities for problem-solving where both teens and parents feel listened to and respected; how to **encourage positive risk-taking in your child like standing up for themselves**, making new friends, and helping their communities; and how to promote five essential executive function–based skills that can help them succeed now and in the future.

The Breakthrough Years recasts adolescence as a time of possibility for teens and adults, offering breakthrough opportunities for connection.

Five Things Teens Wish You Knew About Them By Eden Ponts in *Greater Good Magazine*

*To allow teens to become the best adults they can be, family researcher **Ellen Galinsky** says we must reframe the way we view the teenage years.*

When Ellen Galinsky was trying to come up with a title for her massive research project and book about adolescence, ***The Breakthrough Years*** seemed fitting. After all, adolescence is a true “breakthrough” time when the brain is developing rapidly and is particularly sensitive to environmental influences. It’s when we seek new experiences, build and strengthen connections, and form essential life skills we will use in the future.

Since the founding of the field of adolescent development in 1904, researchers have viewed adolescence as a time of “storm and stress.” But our expectations—negative or positive—affect how teens behave. That’s why Galinsky believes it’s important to **reframe our understanding of adolescence from negative to positive**—from dread to celebration.

Across more than nine years, Galinsky surveyed more than 1,600 tweens and teens between the ages of 9 and 19 and their parents, asking them what they want to tell adults about people their age. She hopes parents and caring adults will take their messages seriously.

Eden Pontz: You’ve curated a series of five main messages from young people that they feel are key for adults to understand about them. What are they?

Ellen Galinsky: The first message from young people is **“Understand our development.”** In our nationally representative survey, we asked parents, “If you had one word or phrase to describe the teen brain, what would that be?” Only 14% of the parents used positive words about the teen brain. The most frequently used word by 11% of the parents was “immature,” and another 8% used similar words. Far too many of us are seeing adolescents as deficit adults. We wouldn’t say a toddler is a deficit preschooler. But we see adolescents as “not adults.”

Adolescents need to be explorative and have adventures. You need to be able to react quickly and know if a situation is safe or not. That’s what they need to do to survive. Much of adolescent research has been on negative risks, like taking drugs, drinking, and making what are often called “stupid decisions.” People wonder, “Do adolescents make these decisions because they feel they’re immune from danger?” That’s not true. Research by Ron Dahl from the University of California at Berkeley has found that when young people are doing scary things, they’re more attuned to danger. They’re learning to go out into the world—to move out and be more on their own. He describes it as “learning to be brave,” a characteristic that’s admired around the world.

The second message is **“Talk with us, not at us.”** Adolescents need to have some agency—to learn how to make decisions for themselves. I don’t mean to turn everything over to them—but to find an appropriate level of autonomy. They’re right in saying, “Don’t just tell us what to do.” As one young person said, “If we’re the problem, then we need to be part of the solution.” The best parenting, the best interventions, and the best teaching involve adolescents in learning to solve problems for themselves, not having problems solved for them.

The third message is **“Don’t stereotype us.”** Thirty-eight percent of adolescents wrote sentiments like *we’re not dumb, we’re smarter than you think, we’re not all addicted to our phones and social media. Don’t put us all in a big group and say we’re the “anxious or depressed generation” or the “entitled generation,” or the “COVID generation.” Let us be the individuals that we are.* Research shows if we expect the worst, we sometimes get the worst. When parents’ views of the teen years were negative—59% of parents had negative words to use about teens’ brains—their own children weren’t doing as well. They were more likely to be sad, lonely, angry, or moody.

The fourth message from adolescents is **“Understand our needs.”** There’s a stream of research in psychology called the “self-determination theory.” This theory suggests we don’t just have physical needs for food, water, and shelter; we also have basic psychological needs. These needs include having important relationships or caring connections, feeling supported and respected, having some autonomy, and finding ways to give back. I found the kids who had those basic needs met by the relationships in their lives before the pandemic did well during the pandemic.

The fifth message is **“We want to learn stuff that’s useful.”** That speaks to the importance of executive function skills. People who have these skills are more likely to do well academically, in health, wealth, and life satisfaction, than people who don’t. These are skills like understanding others’ perspectives, goal-setting, communicating, collaborating, or taking on challenges. They’re skills that build on core brain processes that help us thrive.

EP: In the second message, you say adolescents don’t want to be “talked at.” What does that look like, and why does it cause conflict?

EG: We’re likely to talk “at” adolescents versus “with” them for several reasons. The first is that we forget what it’s like to be an adolescent. It’s called “the curse of knowledge.” It’s like a doctor talking to you about a medical condition. The doctor assumes you know what they’re talking about, but you haven’t a clue. It’s because it’s hard for us to *not* know what we already know.

The second reason is they can look like adults so we can see them like adults.

There’s still another reason why adolescents don’t like to be talked “at.” Teens need some autonomy. Autonomy doesn’t mean complete control. It means being choiceful and feeling you are in charge of your life to some degree. We all need that, but adolescents particularly need it because they know their parents will not always be there.

EP: Instead, adolescents want to be talked “with.” What does that look like?

EG: The research on autonomy support is very useful here. I call it a “skill-building approach.” It includes the following: 1) Checking in on ourselves because our feelings can spill over into how we handle challenges. 2) Taking the child’s view and understanding why they might be behaving how they’re behaving. 3) Recognizing that we’re the adults so we need to set limits. Everybody needs expectations and guidance in their lives. Nobody wants to be without guardrails. 4) Helping adolescents problem-solve solutions.

What does problem-solving look like? Here’s an example—“shared solutions.” I’ve used this approach as a teacher and as a parent. If there’s a problem—for example, kids aren’t keeping their curfew, homework isn’t getting done, they’re on their devices, or they’re disruptive in class—you state the problem and what your goals are. Then, you ask the young people to suggest as many solutions as possible. They can be silly ideas, they can be wonderful ideas, you can even get jokey about it.

Then you go through each idea and ask, “What would work for you in that idea? What would work for me?” You are helping adolescents to take your perspective. Next, you come up with a solution to try together. Now you both own that solution. If you need consequences, that’s when you establish them—not in the heat of the moment. Finally, you say, “This is a change experiment. We’re going to see if it works.” You try it out. And if it does work, great. It probably will for a while, but when it needs changing, you go through the shared solutions process again.

EP: What are some things we do that may send unintended messages to adolescents, that leave them feeling unseen or unheard? And what can we do instead?

EG: The late child psychiatrist Dan Stern once said, “Every human being wants to feel known and understood.” It isn’t just our children or younger people. It’s all of us.

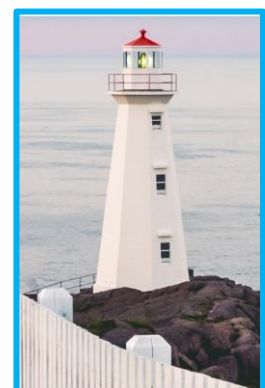
I asked some open-ended questions in my study. One of them was, “If you had one wish to improve the lives of people your age, what would it be?” A number of young people wrote about the things that made them feel unseen, unheard, and not understood—statements like “Get over it,” “You’ll grow out of it,” “Stop being such a teen,” or “It’ll get better.” To them, statements like those made them feel that the adults in their lives weren’t understanding, weren’t taking their problems seriously. We’re better off if we try to understand what our kids are trying to achieve with communication before we respond to it.

EP: What are things parents can do to ensure their child knows they are supported and a priority?

EG: Here’s an example from my own life. My daughter was upset at my grandson for loving technology as much as he does. And she told him so in no uncertain terms. He said, quietly under his breath, “But you’re on it all the time, too.” And he was absolutely right.

We had a family meeting where he told his mom how he felt, with her acting one way to him and living another way. And she listened to him and was more mindful of how she used technology. That made a big difference in their relationship. So many young people wrote in, “We see you,” or “You think we don’t understand, but we’re watching you,” or “We’re learning from what you’re doing, not just what you’re saying.” At our best, we need to live the way we want them to live.

Additional information from author, Ellen Galinsky at parentandteen.com.



Note – You may enjoy the website - <https://parentandteen.com/>.

*The site offers excellent information on “**Lighthouse Parenting**”*

Thoughts from the Superintendent



Teamwork Matters - “Better Together For Children”

“If you want to travel fast, travel alone. If you want to travel far, travel with others.”

~ African Proverb

Teamwork on the Dawn Wall

About 10 years ago, I was captivated by the **19-day free climb** of the Dawn Wall on El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. The Dawn Wall is considered the longest and most difficult free climb in the world. Their story stayed with me so strongly that, during a recent trip to San Francisco, I made time to visit Yosemite and see the site for myself—from the ground! The climb is an extraordinary example of human effort, but even more importantly, it is a powerful example of **team effort**. The article below, along with the National Geographic links that follow, offers a short reflection that anyone who works as part of a team should read. All of us who work with, support, or parent the children of MES are part of a very important team.

I admire these two climbers not only because they pursued an ambitious dream, but because they met the challenge together. Their success required months—if not years—of preparation, along with extraordinary patience, trust, and persistence. One moment captures that spirit especially well: during one section of the climb, **one teammate waited seven days for the other to complete the route**. That kind of patience and commitment reflects the kind of teamwork we should all strive to emulate.

Sometimes we get so caught up in what we do, we forget that we are indeed part of a team. I am honored to join the Marlborough team and I will work every day to include all staff members, students, parents, and the community as part of high functioning team to provide the best for our children.

Read the article below. Marlborough Elementary School’s own statement, “**Better Together For Children**” speaks to your commitment to teamwork. And, thank you for including me as part of your team.

Ascending Together by Dr. Scott Stoner in *Living Compass*

...Wednesday (January 14, 2015) rock climbers **Tommy Caldwell** and **Kevin Jorgeson** reached the summit of El Captain's Dawn Wall in Yosemite National Park after nineteen days of climbing. **Until they accomplished this amazing feat, no one had ever free climbed the vertical, sheer, 3,000-foot Dawn Wall. The climbers used only their hands and feet to ascend, using ropes only as safety precautions to catch either climber should one of them fall, and to hold their tent and sleeping platform at night. Free climbing, as you can imagine, is by far the most extreme and challenging form of rock climbing.**

To provide some idea of how difficult the climb was it is important to understand that one portion of the climb took Jorgeson seven days and ten attempts to complete. Caldwell, having already completed this difficult section, **was forced to wait on the wall for his climbing partner to catch up to him**. At other times during the climb, they were forced to pause their ascent as they waited until lacerations in their fingers and hands healed enough for them to be able to continue. It was not uncommon for them to use super glue to close the cuts in their fingers. Their patience and determination were tested in every way.

The sheer magnitude of what these two individuals accomplished is almost impossible for most of us to fully comprehend, especially if we are not climbers ourselves. Caldwell and Jorgeson will now clearly be seen as two of the most accomplished and skilled individuals in the history of rock climbing.

As I have read the stories of the amazing success of these two men, one thing that stands out to me is that **an essential ingredient in their success is the fact that they accomplished this climb together**. Their partnership is not just a nice addition to their success, but rather an essential and necessary ingredient. **Neither man could have done this alone.**

Caldwell and Jorgeson have spent many years and thousands of hours planning and practicing this epic climb up the Dawn Wall in Yosemite. They knew from the beginning that they would need to make this journey as a team and there was always the intention that they would both succeed in reaching the top together. During the climb, they of course cheered each other on and at other times belayed each other, assisting with the ropes to help keep the other person remain safe

even if one lost his grip and fell. Because this was a free climb, neither climber could ever use the ropes to help himself or his partner to ascend in any way, yet they could use the ropes to catch their friend if they were to fall.

There is a great wellness message in all of this. Each of our journeys in life is in many ways an individual journey. There is much in life that we can only do by ourselves. Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson could only do their own individual climbs--they could not do one another's climbs. At the same time, though, they could only achieve what they achieved because they did it with the support of each other. There is an African proverb that sums this up so well: "If you want to travel fast, travel alone. If you want to travel far, travel with others."

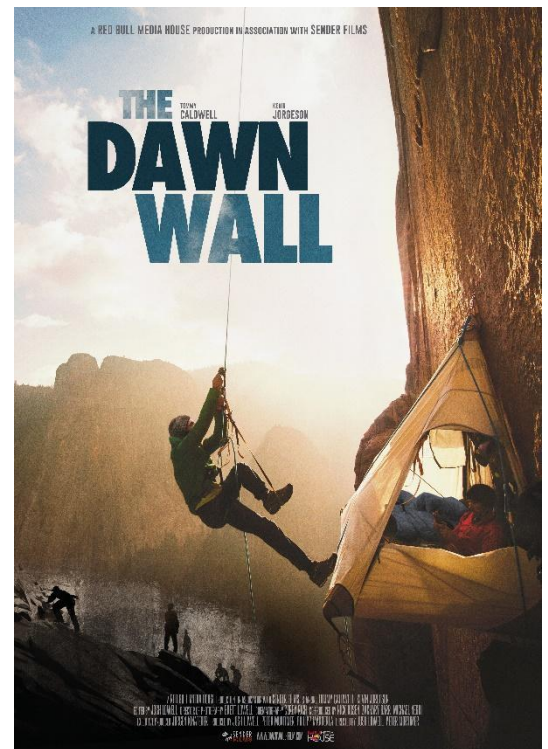
When asked by reporters at the top of their climb if they hoped that their feat would inspire others, Jorgeson replied, "I think everyone has their own Dawn Wall, some big goal they would like to achieve." With this in mind, may we look now to Jorgeson and Caldwell as a reminder that whatever challenges we find ourselves climbing or whatever difficult goals we have set for ourselves, we will always climb farther and higher together.

Read the National Geographic articles on their climb.

- [Duo Completes First Free Climb of Yosemite's Dawn Wall](#)
- [Yosemite Climber Tommy Caldwell Speaks on Risk, Reward, and Life After the Dawn Wall.](#)

From IMDb:

In January 2015, American rock climbers Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson captivated the world with their effort to climb the Dawn Wall, a seemingly impossible 3,000-foot rock face in Yosemite National Park, California. The pair lived on the sheer vertical cliff for weeks, igniting a frenzy of global media attention. But for Tommy Caldwell, the Dawn Wall was much more than just a climb. It was the culmination of a lifetime defined by overcoming obstacles. At the age of 22, the climbing prodigy was taken hostage by rebels in Kyrgyzstan. Shortly after, he lost his index finger in an accident but resolved to come back stronger. When his marriage fell apart, he escaped the pain by fixating on the extraordinary goal of free climbing the Dawn Wall. Blurring the line between dedication and obsession, Caldwell and his partner Jorgeson spend six years meticulously plotting and practicing their route. On the final attempt, with the world watching, Caldwell is faced with a moment of truth. Should he abandon his partner to fulfill his ultimate dream, or risk his own success for the sake of their friendship?



“Find your own *Dawn Wall*”

~ Tommy Caldwell after scaling the Dawn Wall of El Capitan



Marlborough Elementary School - Better Together For Children

Our mission is to educate, challenge and inspire each individual to excel and become a contributing member of society.



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If you have questions, come in for coffee at your convenience with the Superintendent of Schools.

E-mail Paul Smith at psmith@marlborough.k12.ct.us or call (860)295-6236.

<u>Family Resources State of Connecticut</u>	<u>Mental Health Resources</u>	<u>Emergencies</u>	<u>MES SCHOOL CALENDAR 2026-27</u>
		GET HELP 24/7 Call 2-1-1 in CT 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988 Crisis Text Line: 741741	



Total Number of Days Absent	Acceptable Reasons for a Student Absence to be Considered Excused	Documentation Required within 10 Days
1-9	Any reason that the student's parent or guardian approves.	Parent or guardian note or email to the appropriate school email address.
10 and above	- Student illness - Religious holiday - Funeral - Mandated court appearance - Extraordinary educational opportunity pre-approved by the Superintendent of Schools. Contact the school for further information.	Parent or guardian note or email to the appropriate school email address and additional documentation as required and outlined in the Board of Education's Attendance Policy #5113 .

Build the habit of good attendance.

[View Marlborough Board of Education Policy 5113 - Attendance](#)



Nondiscrimination Statement of the Marlborough Public Schools:

The Marlborough Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national/ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, status as a victim of domestic violence, Veteran status, disability in its programs, activities, and employment practices, status as a victim of sexual assault, or status as a victim of trafficking in persons. Equal access is provided to Scouting America and other designated youth groups.