

MES Weekly Update

from the Superintendent of Schools

Week of September 21, 2026



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

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.

~ Cicero

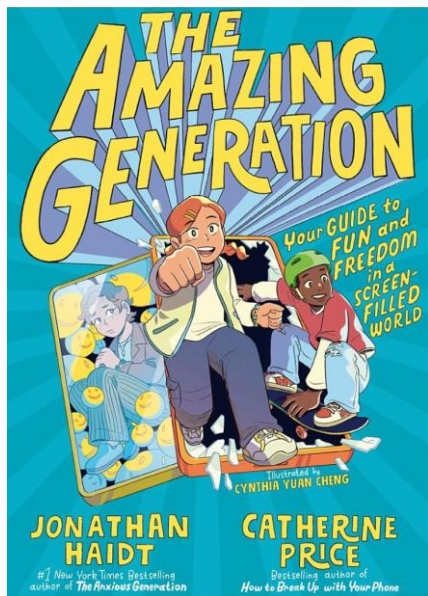
Read the Thoughts section later in the Update – and say, “Thank you” often.

Reminder: Breakfast is free to all MES students this year.

This Week

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Yom Kippur begins in the Evening	Board of Finance Town Hall 6:30 PM	First day of Fall	MES Book Fair	BOE Policy Subcommittee MES Library 5:45 PM Board of Education MES Library 6:30 PM PTO Ice Cream Social 6:00-8:00 PM		Stay Unplugged for 24 Hours!

Book Recommendation



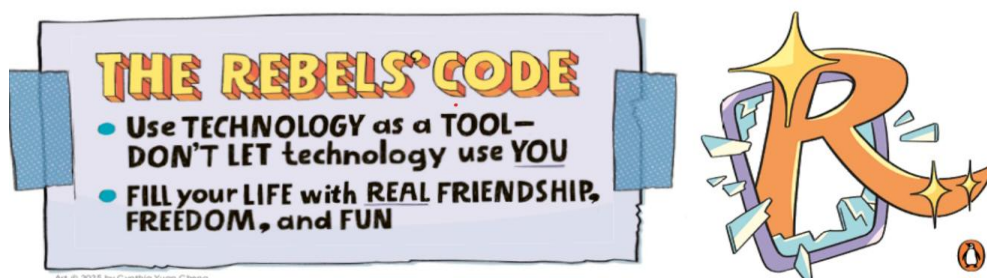
After writing *The Anxious Generation*, Jonathan Haidt's next project has been writing ***The Amazing Generation***, designed for students in Grades 5-8.

Haidt offers the following about his book,

Whether or not kids already have smartphones or social media accounts, this engaging guide is packed with surprising facts, a graphic novel, interactive challenges, secrets that tech leaders don't want kids to know, and real-life anecdotes from young adults who regret getting smartphones at a young age and want to help the next generation avoid making the same mistakes.

*But this isn't just a book about what not to do. It's a bold, optimistic, and practical guide to growing into your most authentic, confident, and adventurous self. Readers won't just discover how to avoid becoming the next Anxious Generation. They'll learn how to become **amazing**.*

[You can order here](#) or [read a sample here](#).





October 2026

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	October 1	2	3
		 NATIONAL COFFEE DAY All Town Boards meeting at MES 7:00 PM	 Picture Day! MES Building Committee MES Library 5:00 PM	 Picture Day! MES Open House Evening 6:00 PM	World Smile Day 	Town Wide TAG SALE 
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	National Fire Prevention Week National Do Something Nice Day MES PTO MES Library 6:30 PM				NO SCHOOL Professional Development Start of Columbus Day Long Weekend	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	NO SCHOOL Columbus Day	Board of Selectmen Town Hall 7:00 PM		Coffee with the Superintendent 8:30 – 10:00 AM MES Central Office Budget ideas welcome! 	National Boss's Day Shout out to our Principals!	
		National School Lunch Week				
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
 National Chocolate Cupcake Day	Board of Finance Town Hall 6:30 PM RHAM Board of Education @ RHAM Middle 6:30 PM	National Youth Confidence Day Board of Selectmen Town Hall 7:00 PM		RHAM Invitational Concert Marlborough Board of Education MES Library 6:30 PM	MES PTO 6:00 7:00 PM 	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		 National Black Cat Day MES Building Committee MES Library 6:30 PM		Coffee with the Superintendent 8:30 – 10:00 AM MES Central Office Budget ideas welcome! 	 Rain Date	

Notes



Help shape our Profile of the Learner – survey link will be sent out on Friday of this week



At Marlborough Elementary School, we believe that a great education includes developing students as a whole person. The **MES Profile of the Learner** will be a shared statement of the skills, mindsets, and character traits we want every student to carry with them long after they leave our classrooms. We hope to give teachers, families, and students a common language for what matters most. The Profile of the Learner will guide how we teach, what we celebrate, and how we grow together as a school community.

Right now, we're building that Profile — and we need your voice to do it. Below are two lists: one covering academic and cognitive skills (how students think, reason, and learn), and one covering character and dispositions (how students engage with themselves, others, and the world). These lists are intentionally broad — think of them as a menu, not a final answer.

The first step in the development of the Profile is to choose your top 5 priorities from each of the two lists. Teachers, parents, and community members will get a link to a Google Survey on Friday, September 25 to indicate your choices.

Focus on the skills and traits you believe are most essential for our students to develop by the time they leave our school. Your choices — combined with input from other families, teachers, and community members — will directly shape the final Profile of the Learner that guides our school for years to come.

Academic & Cognitive Skills	Character & Dispositions
☐ Critical Thinking ☐ Problem-Solving ☐ Analytical / Logical Reasoning ☐ Creativity & Innovation ☐ Communication: Written & Oral ☐ Collaboration & Teamwork ☐ Mathematical & Scientific Reasoning ☐ Scientific Inquiry ☐ Research Skills ☐ Information Literacy (evaluating sources) ☐ Digital & Technology Literacy ☐ Public Speaking & Presentation ☐ Organization & Planning ☐ Time Management ☐ Goal Setting ☐ Self-Directed / Independent Learning ☐ Decision-Making ☐ Design Thinking ☐ Civic Literacy & Citizenship ☐ Global Awareness ☐ Artistic & Creative Expression ☐ Conflict Resolution ☐ Leadership ☐ Applying Strategies Flexibly ☐ Metacognition & Self-Reflection ☐ Environmental & Sustainability Literacy ☐ <i>You will be able to add skills not listed here, as well</i>	☐ Curiosity ☐ Perseverance / Grit ☐ Resilience ☐ Growth Mindset ☐ Empathy ☐ Kindness / Compassion ☐ Respect ☐ Responsibility ☐ Integrity & Honesty ☐ Self-Awareness ☐ Confidence ☐ Humility ☐ Open-Mindedness ☐ Gratitude ☐ Optimism ☐ Courage & Willingness to Take Risks ☐ Initiative & Determination ☐ Work Ethic & Diligence ☐ Patience ☐ Trustworthiness ☐ Independence ☐ Cooperative Spirit ☐ Flexibility & Adaptability ☐ Enthusiasm for Learning ☐ Generosity ☐ Sense of Wonder ☐ <i>You will be able to add skills not listed here, as well</i>

After the final skills and dispositions are selected, they will be translated into clear, student-friendly language appropriate for elementary learners.

➡ ***As a family, on Saturday, 9/26 this weekend turn off your cell phone – or just block the internet.***

This weekend, disconnect from your phone or just the Internet and reconnect with your friends and family.

Our children model our behavior – and when we are connected to our phones, we normalize the action. Make a commitment to block the internet for 24 hours on Saturday. It may just be the best weekend your family has had in a long time. It may just boost your mood, too!

Here's How a Small Break From Your Smartphone Can Boost Your Mood by Allison Aubrey in **MindShift**

If you order up coffee on a mobile app while scrolling your social feeds, or can't stop watching videos and reading news articles on your phone at bedtime, listen up!

Researchers studied what happened when people agreed to block the internet from their smartphones for just two weeks. And turns out, **91% felt better after the break.**

"What we found was that people had better mental health, better subjective well-being and better sustained attention," says Adrian Ward, a psychologist at the University of Texas at Austin.

The researchers included 467 participants, ages 18 to 74, who agreed to the month-long study aimed at testing the theory that constant connection to everything, all the time, has unintended consequences.

The researchers included 467 participants, ages 18 to 74, who agreed to the month-long study aimed at testing the theory that constant connection to everything, all the time, has unintended consequences.

At a time when more than 90% of Americans have a smartphone, we forget that having an internet-enabled supercomputer at our fingertips 24/7 is a new phenomenon. **(By the way great data at the link in this sentence! - Paul)**

Ward, who is 38, remembers a dial-up connection in his home as a kid. In those days, the internet lived in a room in your home. "You used it at specific times because you had limited minutes and had to make sure nobody else was using the phone line," Ward recalls.

So, what would it be like to go back to those days? No social media scrolling, no mobile-app shopping, no streaming shows or media on your phone?

The researchers measured three different outcomes of well-being, mood and attention at the beginning, middle and end of the four-week study. While 91% of participants improved their scores in at least one category, 71% reported better mental health after the break, compared to before, and 73% reported better subjective well-being.

The participants completed a survey often used by doctors to assess symptoms of depression and anxiety. It includes questions such as: *How often in the past week have you felt little interest or pleasure in doing things you typically enjoy?* The participants' responses pointed to a significant lift in mood.

One of the surprising findings is that the decrease in depressive symptoms was on par — or even greater than — reductions documented in studies of people taking antidepressant medications.

"The size of these effects are larger than we anticipated," says the study's first author, Noah Castelo, an assistant professor at the University of Alberta in Canada.

Of course for some people, medications and/or talk therapy are key to managing mental health, and the researchers are not suggesting less internet time is a replacement for that kind of care.

A break from the internet on their phones also improved participants' attention spans, which was measured by a computer task. They tracked images that alternated between mountain scenes and cities. Prior research has shown that performance tends to drop off as people age, but to the researchers' surprise, after the internet break, there was a significant boost in scores. **"The effects on attention were about as large as if participants had become 10 years younger,"** Castelo says.



(Rob Dobi/Getty Images)

It's not clear how long-lasting the effect of less time online would be, but this study validates what has been found in observational studies. "It's one of the first experiments that does provide causal evidence that reducing time spent on your phone has all these significant benefits," Castelo said.

When the participants agreed to block the internet on their phones, they were permitted to continue to use laptops or iPads at work or home, and they could also continue to use their phones to talk or text. So, researchers weren't sure if participants would swap phones for another form of screen time.

But, as it turns out, breaking the habit of scrolling on their phones led to significant changes in how they spent their time. And, interestingly, each day the break went on, the benefits increased, almost like a positive feedback loop.

"It's not that you stop using the internet and magically you just feel better," Ward says. What happened is that people spent more time engaged in healthy behaviors.

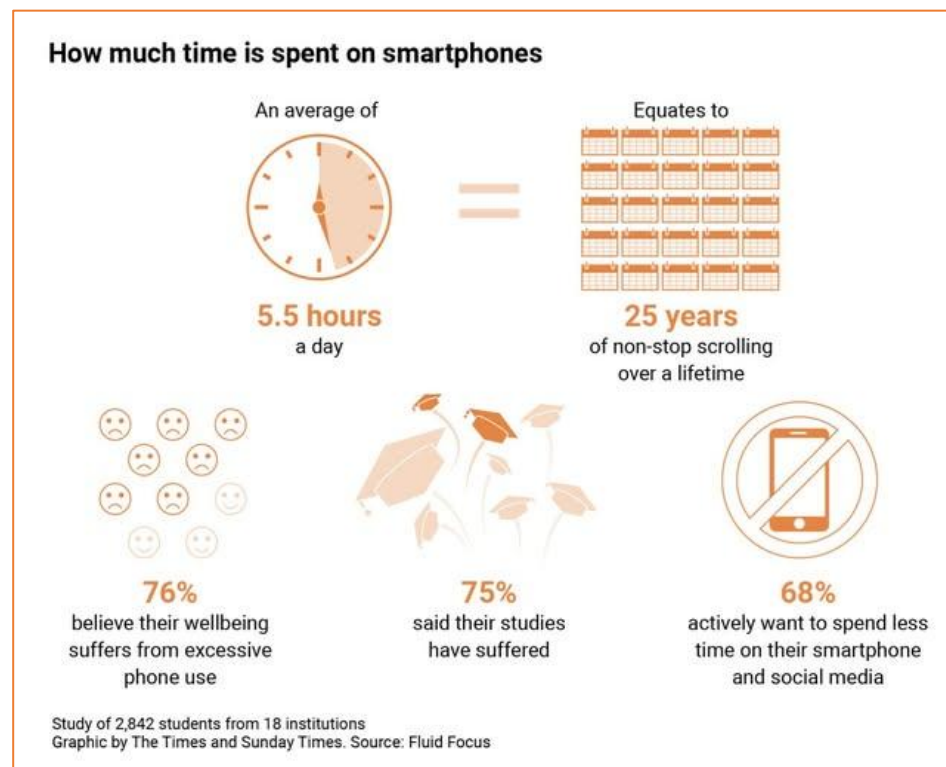
"People reported that they spent more time in nature, more time socializing, more time doing hobbies," he explains. They also got more sleep and felt more socially connected to other people.

"I'm not surprised by the findings," says Dr. Judith Joseph, a psychiatrist at New York University Langone Medical Center and the author of *High Functioning: Overcome Hidden Depression and Reclaim Your Joy*. She says surveys show that most people don't want to be tethered to their devices.

"They know their phones are a problem, but they just can't stop," she says. And she says when they start to engage in behaviors such as those seen in study — more exercise, time outdoors, good sleep, more social interactions — it's not surprising that they start to feel better.

"Helping people to retrain their brain to derive joy from healthy activities has an antidepressant effect," she says, so she says the findings pointing to a decrease in symptoms of depression and anxiety makes sense.

"If [people] see this improvement in joy in such a short period of time, then that gives us hope," she says, adding that simple changes can be beneficial.



New research shows that **dependence on smartphones can trigger similar brain responses to those seen in alcohol, drug, and gambling addictions**. Smartphones are like slot machines in your child's pocket—constantly persuading them to **crave more**. And it's no accident. The tech industry intentionally designs apps and social media to keep users—especially kids—hooked, because the more time they spend scrolling, the more money these companies make.

Children and teens are no match for the endless dopamine loops, persuasive algorithms, and autoplay features designed by teams of behavioral scientists. What may look like harmless fun often becomes a daily struggle to put the phone down and stay present.

From the Wait Until 8th Website



Of note is research by Ward et al from 2017, entitled: **“Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One’s Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Ability.”** The research includes the fact that “smartphone owners interact with their phones an average of **85 times per day**, including immediately upon waking up, just before going to sleep, and even in the middle of the night.”

The implications from this research are as follows:

- *We find that the effect of smartphone salience (prominence) on cognitive capacity is robust to both the visibility of the phone’s screen (face down, face up) and the phone’s power **suggesting that intuitive “fixes” such as placing one’s phone face down or turning it off are likely futile.***
- *However, our data suggest at least one simple solution: **separation.** Although this approach may seem at odds with prior research indicating that being separated from one’s phone **undermines performance by increasing anxiety.***
- *Our data suggest that the **mere presence of consumers’ own smartphone may further constrain their already limited cognitive capacity** by taxing the attentional resources that reside at the core of both working memory capacity and fluid intelligence.*
- *Because consumers’ smartphones are so frequently present, the mere presence effects observed in our experiments have the potential to influence consumer welfare across a wide range of contexts: when consumers work, shop, take classes, watch movies, dine with friends, attend concerts...*
- ***Younger adults – 92% of whom are smartphone owners – rely heavily on smartphones. Given that many of them are in school, the potential detrimental effects of smartphones on their cognitive function may have an outsized effect on long-term welfare.***



New Connecticut Legislation repeals flexibility on K starting age



According to Marlborough Board of Education Policy and older CT Legislation, a child younger than age five as of September 1 could be admitted to Kindergarten through a waiver process. Under this process, the parent or guardian made a request to the school principal, and the principal and an appropriate staff person conducted an assessment demonstrating the whether the child was developmentally ready.

The waiver option expires this coming June 30, 2027. For all subsequent enrollment cycles, starting the with the 2027-2028 school year and beyond, **a child must be five years of age on or before September 1 to be eligible to enroll kindergarten.**

New Law Phases Out Early Kindergarten Admission in Connecticut

Effective July 1, 2027, the early admission waiver process will be repealed in its entirety. Therefore, for the 2027-2028 school year and beyond, all children must be five years old on or before September 1 of the school year in which they seek to enroll in public school kindergarten, regardless of board of education policy. As such, boards of education that either maintain or adopt an early admission policy for the 2026-2027 school year will need to repeal the early admission provisions prior to the 2027-2028 school year to avoid having an early admission process described in board policy that is no longer authorized by state law.

The Marlborough Board of Education will discuss and vote on the necessary policy change at their meeting on Thursday, September 24.

Thoughts from the Superintendent



Say ***“Thank you!”*** more often. It’s good for you.

As a culture, we seem to be losing the basics of interpersonal communication. Courtesy is often not apparent even in simple interactions between people. Perhaps a good place for us to start is to model courtesy and with a simple, ***“Thank you”*** to those we encounter who are serving our coffee, holding a door, or letting us go ahead in line.

Researchers have indicated that expressing your gratitude is “good for your own health and happiness.” As well, the article below references research that indicates that your “thank you” could have a ripple effect on others.

A new study suggests that expressing gratitude not only improves one-on-one relationships but could bring entire groups together—inspiring a desire to help and connect in people who simply witness an act of gratitude.

Given the fact that a simple and sincere, “thank you” has positive impact on the one who says it as well as the ones who witness it, why don’t we hear it more often? I think we have the potential to start a huge ripple effect...



The Ripple Effects of a Thank You in Greater Good

A new study shows that expressing gratitude affects not only the grateful person, but anyone who witnesses it.

Researchers studying gratitude have found that **being thankful and expressing it to others is good for our health and happiness.** Not only does it feel good, it also helps us build trust and closer bonds with the people around us.

These benefits have mostly been observed in a two-person exchange—someone saying thanks and someone receiving thanks. **Now, a new study suggests that expressing gratitude not only improves one-on-one relationships, but could bring entire groups together—inspiring a desire to help and connect in people who simply witness an act of gratitude.**

In this extensive study, Sara Algoe of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her colleagues ran multiple experiments to investigate how witnessing gratitude affects people’s feelings toward the grateful person and the benefactor (the person who is being thanked).

They came up with a few different ways for participants to observe gratitude. In one experiment, participants were tasked with reading a movie review draft and underlining eye-catching passages for the reviewer’s benefit. Before they began, though, they saw an example (supposedly done by a previous participant). Several lines of text were underlined, as the assignment required, but many typos were also corrected, showing effort that went beyond the original assignment. In some cases, this help was acknowledged with a handwritten note from the reviewer saying, “Thank you so much for catching those typos!”

Afterward, participants underlined passages in another article by the reviewer, and researchers counted how many typos they corrected as a measure of their willingness to offer extra help. Then, people were asked how much they might like to be friends with the reviewer.

The results showed that people who had seen a note of gratitude were more willing to correct typos and help out, and more likely to want to become friends with the reviewer, than those who hadn’t.

“When people witness an expression of gratitude, they see that the grateful person is the kind of person who notices when other people do kind things and actually takes the time to acknowledge them—meaning, they’re a good social partner,” says Algoe. “People who are responsive as social partners are really desirable people.”

Based on other survey questions, Algoe and her team also discovered that participants wanted to help and affiliate with the person receiving the gratitude. That’s because receiving gratitude marks you as a person who is effective at being supportive or helpful, says Algoe.

“It’s helpful to know who the people in our environment who are will do nice things for other people, because they are attractive relationship partners,” she says.

What was the exact cause of participants’ reactions, though? It’s possible that people are attracted to others who seem positive in general, like the reviewer, or they simply felt elevated by witnessing the other participant’s generosity. To find out the active ingredient in gratitude and why it may have effects on bystanders, Algoe and her colleagues ran more experiments.

In one, they had participants watch videos where one member of a real-life couple expressed gratitude toward their partner. The videos varied in how much the grateful person praised their partner’s fine qualities—e.g., admiring their partner’s listening skills or their generous nature—and expressed how the partner’s generosity had benefitted them—e.g., helping them work through a difficult problem or save money they would have spent on a cab. The videos also varied in how warm, positive, or competent the person in the video appeared.

The results showed that participants were more drawn to videotaped individuals who praised their partner than to those who focused on how they’d benefitted personally. True, they were also drawn to grateful people who seemed warm, competent, and positive—but those traits didn’t matter nearly as much as praising another’s fine qualities.

To Algoe, this points to a particularly important element of gratitude—its other-focused nature—which may be key to influencing witnesses of gratitude.

“When a grateful person actually takes the time to step outside of themselves and call attention to what was great about the other person’s actions—that’s what distinguishes gratitude from other kinds of positive emotional expressions,” she says.

Interestingly, Algoe’s findings weren’t affected by the gender of the witnesses, grateful people, or benefactors. Although men might fear that gratitude makes them look weak or become indebted, even men who expressed gratitude were rated as more competent than those who didn’t.

These findings build on prior research by showing that expressions of gratitude not only provide social glue for the people involved—the grateful person and the benefactor—but also spread beyond the dyad, affecting witnesses in ways that could reverberate throughout a group.

“It’s easy to imagine how this might work in a workplace, where people are actually attending to and acknowledging other people’s good deeds and kindnesses,” says Algoe. “A whole group of people could be inspired to be kinder to one another, and, through this interwoven kindness, the group itself could become a higher-functioning group.”

Does this mean we should all be expressing gratitude more frequently? Yes, says Algoe—though how it’s expressed could differ by context and culture. For some situations, she says, it may be appropriate to be demonstrative rather than verbal—giving a hug, for example, or bringing a gift of flowers. In another context, a simple thank you—especially if it’s sincere and not manipulative—will get the ball rolling.

Whatever the case, though, it’s clear we can do more to increase social connection if we acknowledge the good in those around us. “Gratitude expression seems to be a unique kind of emotional experience that is really well-suited for relationship building,” says Algoe.

If you can’t connect in person, send a [Gratitude Letter](#)!

THANK YOU



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.



Join the Superintendent for a cup of coffee and conversation at the Central Office at MES from 8:30 – 10:00 AM.



Thursday, October 15
Thursday, October 29
Tuesday, November 3
Tuesday, December 8

No taxpayer dollars used for coffee or supplies!

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.

Family Resources State of Connecticut 	Mental Health Resources 	Emergencies GET HELP 24/7 Call 2-1-1 in CT 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988 Crisis Text Line: 741741	MES School Calendar 2026-27 	Important Annual Notices from MES 
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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.