

MES Weekly Update

from the Superintendent of Schools

Week of September 28, 2026



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

We all take different paths in life, but no matter where we go, we take a little of each other everywhere.

~ Tim McGraw

This Week

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	October 1	2	3
		 All Town Boards meeting MES Cafeteria 7:00 PM	 MES Building Committee MES Library 5:00 PM	 MES Open House Evening 6:00 PM	 World Smile Day	 Town Wide TAG SALE

Take the Survey and help us craft our MES Profile of the Learner



Teachers, staff, and parents have received a [link to a survey \(click here\)](#) that will help us gather important data as we develop the **MES Profile of the Learner**. Our Profile of the Learner will establish a shared vision of the skills, character, and dispositions we want every student to develop throughout their educational journey at MES. We are hoping to establish a clear framework for shaping learning experiences and supporting students' academic, social, and emotional growth. By identifying the qualities and competencies that the school community values, a Profile of the Learner helps align educators, students, and families around a **common purpose**. It ensures that we focus not only on what students learn, but also on who they become as confident, capable, compassionate, and lifelong learners prepared to succeed in an ever-changing world.

Our first step is to gather data on the skills and dispositions that our own community members feel are crucial in the lives of our children. This is not a state-developed Profile; it will be crafted by the Marlborough School Community. It represents our community's commitment to our own children.



[Click here to take the survey!](#)

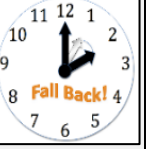
It's a 3-minute, 5-question survey in which you help choose the skills and dispositions that serve as the foundation of the MES Profile of the Learner.

If you would like to participate on a committee to review the data and begin working on the Profile, email psmith@marlborough.k12.ct.us or include your email at the end of the survey.



October /November 2026

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	National Fire Prevention Week				NO SCHOOL Professional Development Start of Columbus Day Long Weekend	
	National Do Something Nice Day MES PTO MES Library 6:30 PM	Lions Club Vision Screening Board of Selectmen Town Hall 7:00 PM	Lions Club Vision Screening	National Fluffernutter Day  Town of Marlborough Budget Kick Off Meeting		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	NO SCHOOL Columbus Day		Rotary Club Grade 3 Dictionaries	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 School Bus Safety Week					
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 Preliminary Budget requests due	
November 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
 Daylight Saving Time ends	MES PTO MES Library 6:30 PM	NO SCHOOL Professional Development Coffee with the Superintendent 8:30 – 10:00 AM MES Central Office 			National Nachos Day 	

Notes

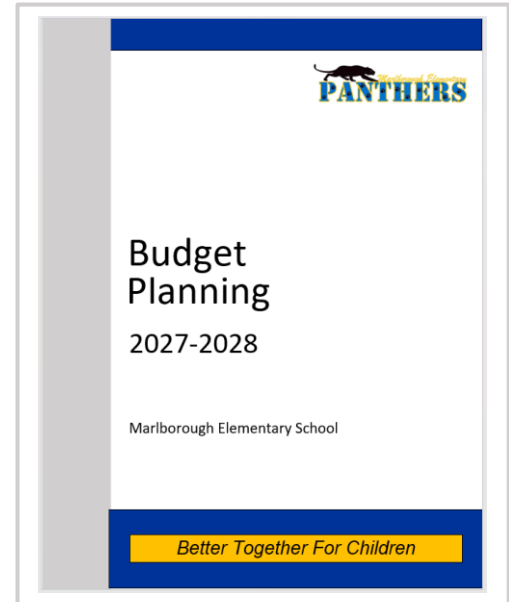


Planning for the 2027-2028 School Budget has begun – and we want your input!

In order to encourage open participation in developing the budget for 2027-28, **the entire school community including teachers, staff members, parents, students, and community members** are invited to make preliminary budget requests at this time.

In the spirit of transparency, every request will be shared with the Board of Education and the public. All requests will then go through a vetting process in order to be included in next year's budget.

Every request will be shared with the Board of Education and the public for consideration in the 2027-28 budget.



Instructions for School Personnel including teachers and staff members

There are three forms included in the **budget planning package**. The three forms are only to be used for **new items/programs** that are being requested. These **request forms** should be completed by teachers and staff members and forwarded to the Principal.

Form 1 – *request for additional funds in supplies or other ongoing accounts.*

Form 2 – *request for additional programs, texts, equipment or other one-time expenses.*

Form 3 – *request for additional staffing.*

All requests will be shared with the public and may be typed or hand-written. Details are included in the attached document.

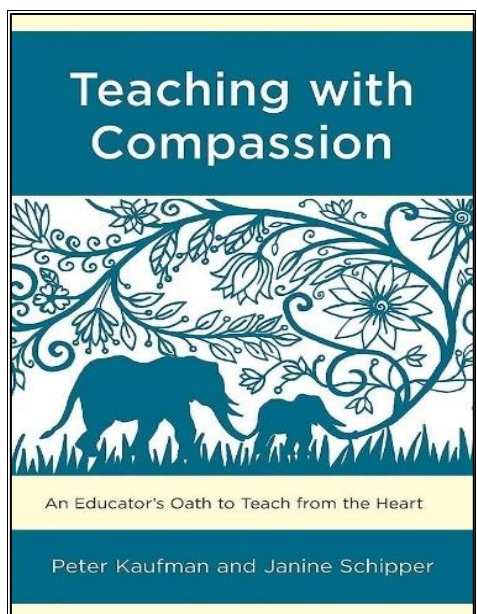
All request forms for new items, programs, texts, equipment, etc. must be submitted to the Principal no later than **Friday, October 30.**

Instructions for Students, Parents, and community members

Interested students, parents, and community members are strongly encouraged to offer suggestions as to new items or programs for consideration in the 2027-28 school budget.

Simply send an email to the Superintendent of Schools, Paul K. Smith - psmith@marlborough.k12.ct.us.

Describe the item or program for inclusion in your email. Do not worry about costs; details will be completed on our end. Please submit all requests no later than **Friday, October 30.**



In my [Update of August 31](#), I stressed that compassion matters in our schools and in our communities. As teachers and parents, promoting compassion is an important goal. As a cornerstone to an ambitious vision of excellence for all children, compassion takes its place as a high priority. I constantly use the term, “duty of care” when referencing the responsibility and priority for all adults in the field of education. Our duty of care is founded equally on **academic growth and wellness in our children**.

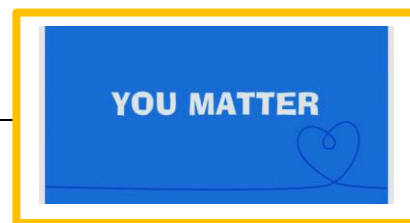
In order for students to thrive, they must be cared for by adults who pay attention to their mental health needs and their development as people. While we work every day to make sure our children excel in academics, the arts, and athletics, we must also ensure that they develop as caring individuals. That development is thwarted if they are not taught and mentored by caring adults.

I regularly borrow a quote from Anna Quindlen in her book, [A Short Guide to a Happy Life](#): **“All of us want to do well. But if we do not do good, too, then doing well will never be enough.”**

I love [Teaching with Compassion](#). It is a great read for anyone at any point in his or her teaching career. Substitute the word “parenting” for “teaching” and this book is a great guide for all.



Our children matter!



As we dive into the school year, confirming that **our children matter** is a stance that MES staff and parents can easily embrace. The article below offers guidance to ensure that our *students matter*. The most powerful line from the article included from ASCD below is...

“Each and every student will take away something from your time together.”

Think about your influence on your students as teacher and/or parent. Everything you do every day as a teacher (and parent) affects your students, your children. In most cases, you are among the most powerful influence in the lives of students. And, whether you realize it or not, children are taking away something from the time they spend with you – every day.

The responsibility we have as teachers and parents is remarkable. Each moment that a child is in your presence, you are affecting a child’s growth and development; happiness and confidence; grit and mindset. The relationship you have with a student is a powerful bond for them.

The good news is that we can shape every relationship we build with a child. Our children need inspiration, guidance in developing self-control, and consistent mentoring. Our daily thoughts should include:

- *What do I want students to take away from our time together?*
- *What did students take away from our time together today?*

Answering these questions honestly requires thoughtful—and sometimes difficult—reflection.

What Matters Most as a New School Year Begins By Sarah McKibben in ASCD

Carol Ann Tomlinson offers reflective questions to help educators center humanity and care in the classroom.

“One of the greatest opportunities that we have as teachers is to challenge ourselves to become the best human beings we can be,” says ASCD author and University of Virginia education professor Carol Ann Tomlinson.

That inspiring back-to-school message comes from Tomlinson's webinar, "[What Matters Most as a New School Year Begins?](#)" which distills lessons from Tomlinson's book, *So Each May Soar: The Principles and Practices of Learner-Centered Classrooms*. Though it was produced a year ago, Tomlinson's webinar offers timeless advice for building relationships with students and centering the human element in teaching.

... Research has shown that positive teacher-student relationships can lead to [more challenging instruction and better academic outcomes](#).

How Will You Get to Know Your Students?

In the webinar's opening, Tomlinson describes the importance of *seeing, knowing, and responding* to the learners we teach. Teachers enter the profession wanting to make a difference for kids, she notes, but relationship-building can seem incredibly overwhelming in today's schools. Many middle and high school teachers, for example, can have up to 150 students a day.

Still, **each and every student will take away something from your time together**, says Tomlinson. She offers the following questions to help shape your approach to getting to know students this year ([watch the webinar](#) for the complete list):

- What percentage of time would you say you spend thinking about, planning for, and talking with "the class" compared to thinking about, planning for, and talking with students as individuals?
- How do you keep negative comments from colleagues or stereotypes that exist in and beyond the school from shaping your sense of who a student is and might become?
- How do you try to ensure that each student leaves your room every day feeling as though the two of you shared a connection?
- How do you speak to students when they are being "fingernails on your blackboard" or someone else's? Why?
- How do you invest in getting to know your students better by the day, both in breadth and depth?
- How do you use new information and insights about a student to teach him or her more effectively? In what ways do you enable the student to be your partner in working for his or her growth?

The common theme in these questions is clear: Although content, how we shape instruction, and academic growth are all critical points of reflection, **relationships must come first**.

How Will You Center Your Humanity?

Relationship-building can be tough, however, if you're unaware of the way you show up for students. To avoid this, Tomlinson says, teachers can engage in another reflective practice at the start of the school year: **Taking an inventory of your own human traits. Where do you stand in the following areas?**

- *Beliefs about the capacity of every learner to succeed*: How firm is your belief in the capacity that every kid in your classroom can make startling progress with the right support?
- *Language*: How do you address students, talk to them? Does your language lift them up or do something else?
- *Patience*: How are you doing in terms of patience, when a kid is being a kid [i.e., exhibiting challenging behaviors]? Or that same kid is being a kid for three days in a row?
- *Empathy*: What do you do to practice empathy?
- *Scholarship*: How do you continue being a learner in a profession that keeps changing?
- *Clarity of thinking*: How clear and analytical is your thinking about what you're doing?
- *Trust*: How trustworthy are you to the young people you teach?
- *Optimism*: How do students see your optimism?
- *Work ethic*: What's your work ethic?
- *Persistence*: Are you persistent?
- *Flexibility*: Are you flexible?
- *Creativity*: Do you exercise creativity?
- *Leadership*: What is your capacity to lead kids?

"That's a book's worth [of questions], not just a first-day-of-school's worth," admits Tomlinson. To get started, **you may want to think about one or two areas in which you're succeeding—and keep growing in them**, Tomlinson adds. You might also want to **identify an area that needs more attention and dedicate time to increasing your capacity** in it.

Reflective thinking can be a powerful tool for teachers' personal and professional growth, suggests Tomlinson. This school year, as you get to know your students, spend some time getting to "know thyself" as well.

Thoughts from the Superintendent



It's the time of year to establish good routines and good practice.

Having made it through the first several weeks of school, it's now time to dig in for a long stretch of productive learning and well-crafted teaching. Making sure that students are engaged throughout the year is an art. The article below draws our attention to the importance of students having the opportunity to interact every day during the instructional practices in the classrooms.

4 C's for Better Student Engagement in Educational Leadership (ASCD)

Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, Alejandro Gonzalez

CHALLENGE: Students are less focused and engaged in the classroom.

Teachers, leaders, families, and policymakers have noted with alarm that student engagement has plummeted... Many educators perceive that students' attention is constantly diverted by digital distractions, making sustained focus nearly impossible. In fact, a recent poll of 1,400 teachers across grades 4–12 found that 80 percent expressed concerns about students' engagement with classroom learning (Gradient Learning, 2023).

... As practicing K–12 educators who've long written about various aspects of engagement, we believe a significant problem in discussing student engagement lies in how it's measured. Too often, measuring *behavioral* engagement, like physical signals of attentiveness, compliance in task completion, and the number of clicks on a digital learning platform, takes precedence. Cognitive engagement is routinely overlooked.

Real engagement isn't just engagement of students (signs of attentiveness and fulfilling requirements); it's also engagement by students, evidence that they are interacting with what they learn. Measuring "engagement by" means asking things like, How often do students pose questions about the content (not just task clarification)? Or make connections between ideas and concepts during discussions? Or act upon teacher feedback? Drawing on our experiences as educators and a book two of us coauthored on student engagement (Reeves, Fisher, & Frey, 2023), we offer four C's behind teaching practice that fosters engagement by students, and ways to put these four C's into practice.

1. Connections: Build the Foundation

Students thrive in classrooms filled with positive human connections. Healthy teacher-student relationships have strong potential to accelerate student learning (Hattie, 2023). But it's the *student* who gauges the quality of the relationship, so their perception matters. Students also feel connected to the learning itself when they perceive it as meaningful. Again, *perception* is key. We know why the content we're teaching is important, but do students? Two strategies can aid each kind of connection.

First, "campaign" for relationships. Fostering real teacher-student relationships, like most worthwhile efforts, requires frequency, duration, and intensity. So, identify a hard-to-reach student in your class and seek to establish (or rebuild) a relationship with them. Every day, for 10 days in a row, engage in a two-minute conversation with that student—in the hallway, during lunch, or in the bus line. Follow one rule: don't talk about school (Wlodkowski, 1983). Find out about their interests and let them learn a bit about you. Then identify the next student in need of connection and repeat the cycle. Doing this strategically throughout the year helps you continually reinvest in relationships.

The second strategy is *baking in relevance*. Relevance in learning can play a key role in student engagement—but relevance is mediated by the *student's* perception of the curriculum's value. At the lowest end of the scale of relevance posited by Stacy Priniski and her colleagues (2018) is *personal association*. For instance, a science teacher providing instruction about oceans may ask who has been to a beach before. While well-intentioned, the effect is short-lived. *Personal usefulness* is more sustained; the student sees how they can use what is being taught. That same science teacher might demonstrate how concepts about ocean temperature and wind speed will be used as variables in an upcoming lab experiment on hurricanes. At the highest level of Priniski's continuum is *personal identification*, in which learners link content to building their present and future identities. Sharing information on the high demand for data scientists and meteorologists could help students connect this content to possible future career identities.

Make relevance an intentional part of your daily practice by telling students why their learning is important. Why are we learning about word spacing in writing? *Spaces help our readers read what we've written*. Why are we learning about the product property of exponents? *Mathematicians use this as a tool to make very large calculations simpler*. When possible, link relevance to students' personal interests. *Taylor, you're a skateboarder. Check out how lift and thrust make it possible for you to do those big ollies*.

2. Conditions: Cultivate a High-Expectations Atmosphere

Students are incredibly sensitive to the expectations of their teacher. In one study, two groups of students in grades 2–7 who had similar levels of reading achievement at the beginning of the year showed markedly different achievement at the year's end (Rubie-Davies et al., 2020). The variable was the teacher's expectations: Students with teachers who overestimated their ability outperformed those whose teachers underestimated their ability.

High-expectations teachers set challenging learning intentions and success criteria, develop academic goals with their students, and rely on heterogeneous grouping. In contrast, low-expectations teachers ask more close-ended, low-level questions, group by ability, spend more time repeating directions, and reserve praise for correct answers (Rubie-Davies et al., 2015). To support high expectations, it's key to pair challenging learning goals with regular feedback so students can monitor their learning. Especially at the beginning of teaching content, assess formatively, using the learning intentions and success criteria in each lesson. Provide students with frequent opportunities to gauge their progress.

Research on teacher expectations reveals that even when low-expectations teachers try to differentiate lessons according to students' learning profiles, they ignore a central principle of differentiation: that the learning students ultimately achieve should remain constant while the paths to get there vary (Tomlinson, 2017). We telegraph low expectations when we accept a lower standard of work from a student in a misguided attempt to be kind. Instead, if a student struggles with the learning intention, scaffold and support their learning. Using heterogeneous groups—with academic diversity in each group—is one way to provide support, especially if a teacher designs group tasks such that collaboration is essential for success. ¹ For instance, a math teacher we work with hosts a 15-minute Mastery Monday each week. Each learning group selects one math problem from last week's challenge set that gave at least some kids in that group difficulty, and the group makes another attempt to solve it together.

A warm classroom climate also supports high-expectations teaching by giving students an emotionally safe space to learn. Pair student feedback with high expectations and warmth: *I'm giving you this feedback because I have high expectations for you and I know you can reach them.* Use digital voice feedback extensions like Mote so students can hear your supportive tone of voice, not just read your words. And deliberately foster an emotionally supportive peer climate. Students must understand that help-seeking is an essential dimension of learning at high levels. Teachers can create posters with sentence frames for offering and accepting help or create a "help wanted" area in the classroom in which students can post requests. Peers can be taught phrases to say to each other as emotional scaffolds (such as "We can do hard things. Let's keep going") and students can be encouraged to ask themselves: *Have I offered help today—and accepted help? Have I asked for help today? Have I politely declined help because I wanted to keep trying?*

3. Challenge: Choose Policies that Encourage Persistence

The failure in how educators talk about failure is that while we claim it's essential for learning, grading policies tell students otherwise (Reeves et al., 2023). **Teachers tell students a growth mindset is important, but then grade them on every attempt to learn.** Students sometimes find themselves so far behind that within a matter of weeks, they realize they can't overcome the point deficit no matter what. Engagement plummets: the hoodie goes up and the head goes down.

Grades are often perceived as a mechanism for motivating disengaged students—but they rarely are. The field knows a lot about what does motivate kids to challenge themselves, including:

- Feeling competent at what one is doing.
- Understanding the significance of what one is learning.
- Receiving actionable feedback about next steps in learning.
- Having opportunities to make decisions (Reeves et al., 2023).

Two overall practices help educators revise their grading policies to maximize these research-proven motivators. **First, separate product and process.** Grades should be used to report academic progress compared to the standards being taught. But in many cases, a single number or letter is used to also convey a stew of non achievement factors, including behavior, attendance, and effort. This practice demotivates many learners.

The solution: Separately grade product criteria (which capture students' academic performance toward goals and reflect how they demonstrated learning) and process criteria (which reflect non achievement data that impact learning, like citizenship, peer relationships, and persistence). A more nuanced grading system makes it possible to report, for instance, that a skilled learner has problematic habits when it comes to collaborating with others—or to acknowledge a student who is not yet achieving at expected levels for his resilience (Guskey, 2020).

Another way to make grading serve motivation is to reconsider what goes in the gradebook. Practice work throughout the unit, such as in-class assignments and homework, should be collected and returned with feedback. However, this is practice, not the

game; performance on it shouldn't contribute to the overall points earned. Reserve points for end-of-unit assessments of learning. We've successfully used such competency-based grading practices for 15 years at the school where we work. We also allow students who don't initially earn a passing score to retake another version of the exam after they've completed the unit's homework and attended tutorials (which cultivates persistence, resilience, and help-seeking). Students' motivation is reset because they've received actionable feedback, made a choice about whether to get help, and (hopefully) feel competent.

4. Control: Give It to Students!

Where does control of learning truly reside? Here's the news: it's not with us. Educators can create conditions and use evidence-based teaching practices, but it's the student who's in the driver's seat when it comes to learning. This doesn't mean we should fall back to the "I taught them, but they didn't learn" excuse; it means we should intentionally change instructional practices so that students drive their own

Sharing control involves teaching self-regulation. When students have habituated to an external locus of control, they look to us for what to do next; this reduces the teacher to a supervisor of tasks. Strengthening students' internal locus of control requires boosting their self-regulation skills, especially their ability to do six things:

- Know their current level of understanding.
- Know where they need to go next in learning.
- Select tools to guide their learning.
- Seek feedback and recognize errors as opportunities to learn.
- Monitor their progress and adjust their learning.
- Recognize their understanding and teach others (Fisher et al., 2023).

These learning skills accelerate achievement because they cultivate active learning—and give students confidence to take on challenges.

Talk with students individually about their results from initial assessments and learning intentions you've set, to help them understand where they are in their learning and where they are headed. Create more opportunities for students to exercise choice and decision making, and regularly schedule events through which students actively seek feedback. For instance, at a designated time each week, have students leave a piece of work on their desks for their peers to provide feedback. All members of the class rotate from one desk to the next, leaving signed sticky notes offering tips and advice.

A second strategy that helps students control their learning is empowering them to set their own goals. As students develop self-regulatory dispositions, they'll be better equipped to set goals and monitor progress toward them. In conferences, help students, especially disengaged students, formulate self-referenced, "personal best" goals. For example, reluctant readers aren't necessarily going to be motivated by a grade-level Lexile goal that seems too distant. Better to set incremental goals that let them gauge progress, not just mastery (Your reading gains this last month went from a 240 Lexile to a 280! That's your personal best. What's next?) Equip learners with the means to monitor their own progress, such as tracking how many pages they have read or how many math problems they have completed.

Tuning Them in to Learning

Getting students tuned in to learning requires more than getting them to pay attention and fulfill schoolwork requirements. It means seeing to it that students are enthusiastically engaging with content and fellow learners. Let's set up conditions to encourage such active participation. By thinking beyond the "grades-as-rewards" box in terms of motivation and focusing on the four C's discussed here, we'll increase the odds that students will focus on their learning, no matter the distractions.

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- Fisher, D., Frey, N., Ortega, S., & Hattie, J. (2023). *Teaching students to drive their learning: A playbook on engagement and self-regulation*. Corwin.
 - Gradient Learning. (2023). *2023 gradient learning poll: Student engagement*.
 - Guskey, T. R. (2020). Breaking up the grade. *Educational Leadership*, 78(1), 40–46.
 - Hattie, J. (2023). *Visible learning: The sequel. A synthesis of over 2100 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
 - Priniski, S. J., Hecht, C. A., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2018). Making learning personally meaningful: A new framework for relevance research. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 86, 11–29.
 - Reeves, D., Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2023). *Confronting the crisis of engagement: Creating focus and resilience for students, staff, and community*. Corwin.
 - Rubie-Davies, C., Meissel, K., Alansari, M., Watson, P., Flint, A., & McDonald, L. (2020). Achievement and beliefs outcomes of students with high and low expectation teachers. *Social Psychology of Education*, 23(5), 1173–1201.
 - Rubie-Davies, C. M., Peterson, E. R., Sibley, C. G., & Rosenthal, R. (2015). A teacher expectation intervention: Modelling the practices of high expectation teachers. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 40, 72–85.
 - Tomlinson, C. A. (2017). *How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms*(3rd ed.). ASCD.

- Wlodkowski, R. J. (1983). *Motivational opportunities for successful teaching* [Leader's guide]. Universal Dimensions.



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.