

MES Weekly Update

from the Superintendent of Schools

Week of October 12, 2026



We want everyone's input!

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

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

~ Mahatma Gandhi

This Week

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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						

On Friday, October 16, help us celebrate our Principal, Paul Graef and Assistant Principal, Jennifer Renkiewicz on National Boss's Day. October is also National Principals Month, a celebration of PK-12 leaders.

Join the Superintendent for Coffee – and share your budget ideas



Join the Superintendent of Schools for
Coffee & Chat concerning Budget Ideas
for the 2027-28 School Budget.

Bring your ideas for the budget!
Your thoughts are welcome.

Thursday, October 15 & Thursday, October 29
MES Central Office 8:30-10:00 AM



Yes!

It's already time to
develop the budget and
we want *your* input.



Budget
Planning
2027-2028

Marlborough Elementary School

Better Together For Children

We want you to do more than support the school budget; we want you to help build the school budget!

Reminder: We want the voices of the entire school community including **teachers, staff members, parents, students, and community members** to share requests and ideas for next year's budget.

Each request made 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.

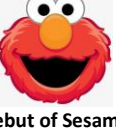
Teachers and staff [click here](#) to offer your ideas.

Parents & community members, send ideas to psmith@marlborough.k12.ct.us.



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
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 	 Last Day for Survey Responses - click here Thank you!
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		MES SPIRIT WEEK!				
		 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!  Assembly Japanese Drummers	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 	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
National Young Readers Week		 Debut of Sesame Street in 1969	NO SCHOOL Veterans Day  Thank you, Veterans!	Picture Retake Day	 Make Kindness the Norm	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Board of Finance Town Hall 6:30 PM RHAM Board of Education @ RHAM Middle 6:30 PM	Board of Selectmen Town Hall 7:00 PM	Mickey Mouse Day  Mickey Mouse Day!	In 1863, President Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address. Marlborough Board of Education MES Library 6:30 PM		World Hello Day Say "Hello" to 10 people! https://worldhelloday.org/ 

Notes

Scree Time at MES



The Marlborough Board of Education is working with the Superintendent, school administration, and teachers to **develop guidance on screen time** in the classroom. The goal is not less technology or more technology. **The goal is the right technology, for the right purpose, at the right time, under the guidance of an effective teacher.**

The issue being discussed surrounds the best and appropriate usage of Chromebooks in schools – and does not include banning screens completely. Educational tools designed with student learning and well-being at the center, evaluated on evidence, and used with teacher judgment are how districts prepare students for their futures.

The Board of Education is not looking for a one-size-fits-all answer. Blanket statewide screen bans, however well-intentioned, can override the educators and leaders who know their students, staff, and communities best. Decisions about when and how technology is used belong close to students, guided by local judgment rather than a single mandate.

The guidance that the Board will review responds to the growing attention around screen time for children. At this point, **these questions reflect curiosity rather than complaints or concerns.**

The Board will work to develop guidelines for the **maximum** screen time usage during the school day.

Currently, the Superintendent has shared the guidelines below with teachers already will share them with the policy subcommittee of the Board of Education on Thursday, October 22 at 6:00 PM. **Input from the community is welcome. Send your thoughts to psmith@marlborough.k12.ct.us.**

Purpose

The Marlborough Board of Education recognizes that digital tools, including district-assigned laptops, can be valuable learning resources when used intentionally and in support of instruction.

Instructional Balance

This guidance establishes reasonable limits on daily school-day screen time so that technology remains a purposeful complement to high-quality, face-to-face instruction, collaborative peer learning, and hands-on, offline experiences. These limits also reflect the Board's concern about the potential effects of excessive screen time on students' social-emotional well-being, physical health, and interpersonal development.

Grades	Maximum Time for Continuous Use	Maximum Cumulative Daily Limit	Recess, Lunch, & Transition Expectations
Kindergarten through Grade 2	15-20 minutes	60 minutes total	Strictly Screen-Free All devices powered down and stored
Grade 3 through Grade 6	30 minutes	90 minutes total	Strictly Screen-Free All devices powered down and stored

Guidelines:

Kindergarten through Grade 2: At least 80% of allowable instructional screen time must be active and interactive, such as phonics tracing, collaborative digital storytelling, or entry-level coding. Passive screen time, including educational videos without an interactive component, is limited to 15 minutes per day.

Grades 3–6: Instruction should be designed to balance device use with face-to-face collaboration and hands-on learning. Small-group rotations are encouraged so that while one student cohort uses district laptops, other cohorts participate in peer collaboration or offline work. During teacher-directed instruction, subject transitions, or peer presentations, laptops and tablets should be closed or placed face down on desks.

Temporary Increase to Daily Limit: When a specialized academic project, artistic endeavor, or other digital activity requires extended device use, a teacher may request permission from the building principal.

Student Accommodations: Students whose IEP, 504 plan, or English Language Learner (ELL) accommodation plan requires assistive technology, communication devices, or extended digital access are fully exempt from these daily limits.

State Testing: Mandatory state testing windows and related preparation time, including Smarter Balanced assessments, are exempt from daily instructional screen time calculations.

➡ *Have you shared your thoughts on our survey? Click below and share your ideas.*



**We only need 25 more people
to fill out our very short survey
to hit **200** responses!**

Help Shape the MES Profile of the Learner

All members of Marlborough School community—including teachers, staff, parents, students, and community members—are invited to complete a brief survey. Your responses will help shape the **MES Profile of the Learner**.

Our Shared Vision

The Profile of the Learner will define the skills, character traits, and dispositions we want every student to develop throughout their educational journey at MES. It will provide a clear framework for designing learning experiences and supporting students' academic, social, and emotional growth.

Why It Matters

By identifying the qualities and competencies our community values, the Profile of the Learner will unite educators, students, and families around a **common purpose**. It will help us focus not only on what students learn, but also on who they become: confident, capable, compassionate lifelong learners prepared to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Take the Survey

Our first step is to learn which skills and dispositions our community considers most important for our children. In this five-question survey, which takes about three minutes to complete, you can help identify the qualities that will form the foundation for our students' success.

[Click here to take the survey and get us to 200 responses!](#)

➡ *Reading at home is as important as reading at school*

WHY READ 20 MINUTES AT HOME?

Student A Reads

- ❖ 20 minutes per day.
- ❖ 3,600 minutes per school year.
- ❖ 1,800,000 words per year.



- ❖ Scores in the 90th percentile on standardized tests.

Student B Reads

- ❖ 5 minutes per day.
- ❖ 900 minutes per school year.
- ❖ 282,000 words per year.



- ❖ Scores in the 50th percentile on standardized tests.

Student C Reads

- ❖ 1 minute per day
- ❖ 180 minutes per school year.
- ❖ 8,000 words per year.



- ❖ Scores in the 10th percentile on standardized tests.

If they start reading for 20 minutes per night in Kindergarten, by the end of 6th grade, Student A will have read for the equivalent of 60 school days, Student B will have read for 12 school days, and Student C will have read for 3.

(Nagy and Herman, 1987.)

WANT TO BE A BETTER READER? SIMPLY READ.

**National Young Readers Week is
November 9–13.**

**One month early, start a 30-day
commitment to read every night
at home!**

National Young Readers Week is an annual U.S. observance that champions the power of reading, especially for children.

It encourages families, schools, and communities to explore books, build literacy skills, and make reading a fun daily habit.

Read every night at home and by National Young Readers week, it will be routine!

➔ As you plan your Halloween treats and events, be sensitive to children with allergies

Halloween can be tricky for children with food allergies because so many treats are packaged in small, mixed assortments where hidden allergens are easy to miss. Peanuts, tree nuts, milk, egg, soy, wheat, and sesame show up in many popular candies, and “fun size” versions sometimes have different ingredients or cross-contact warnings than their full-size counterparts, so it’s worth reading every label even on familiar brands.

Safety steps:

- Don’t have children eat anything until a trusted adult has checked it at home;
- Swap unsafe candy for children with allergies and switch to non-food treats like stickers, pencils, or small toys;
- If you’re hosting an event, ask families about allergies well ahead of time;
- Avoid candy-based games or crafts, and candy swapping.

Join the [Teal Pumpkin Project](#), where a teal pumpkin signals that non-food treats are available, which is a simple way to make the holiday more inclusive for kids with allergies.

Small choices make a big difference! ❤️

ALLERGY SAFETY

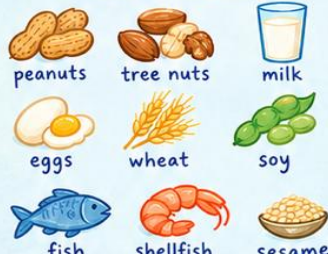
Be A Friend. Be A Helper. Be Aware.

Kindness and awareness keep our school safe! ❤️

FOOD ALLERGIES CAN BE SERIOUS. THESE SIMPLE REMINDERS CAN HELP KEEP EVERYONE SAFE AND HEALTHY!

1 Know the common allergens.

The most common food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, wheat, soy, fish, shellfish and sesame.



peanuts tree nuts milk
eggs wheat soy
fish shellfish sesame

2 Read labels.

Always check food labels and ask questions. Allergens can be hidden in unexpected foods (like sauces, dressings or baked goods).



3 Don't share food.

It's kind to share, but food can be dangerous for someone with an allergy. Keep your snacks and lunches to yourself and respect others' food, too.



Your food. Your safety. ❤️

4 Tell an adult.

If you think someone might be having an allergic reaction, get a grown-up right away. Time matters!



5 Be a good friend.

Look out for your classmates. If you see someone who might have an allergic reaction, help by getting an adult and staying calm.



Friends look out for each other! ❤️

6 Know the signs.

Allergic reactions can happen quickly. If someone has hives, swelling, stomach pain, trouble breathing or feels very different — get help right away.



hives swelling stomach pain
trouble breathing feeling very different

When in doubt, get help! ❤️

Let's Keep Our School Safe!



Let's Talk About It...

- ★ What are some foods you know can cause allergies?
- ★ What would you do if you saw a friend who might be having an allergic reaction?
- ★ How can we be more aware and kind at school?

Awareness + Kindness = A Safer School



Thoughts from the Superintendent

Do not underestimate the power of teamwork

Our work as teachers and parents is too important to feel that we must proceed alone. Working together as a team is always in the best interest of our students. Our collective talents make us strong. Every person's oar keeps us moving forward! Read the passage below from *The Wisdom of Crowds*.



A successful face-to-face group is more than just collectively intelligent. It makes everyone work harder, think smarter, and reach better conclusions than they would have on their own. In his 1985 book about Olympic rowing, *The Amateurs*, David Halbertam writes: “When most oarsmen talked about their perfect moments in a boat, they referred not so much to winning a race but to the feel of the boat, all eight oars in the water together, the synchronization almost perfect. In moments like that, the boat seemed to lift right out of the water. Oarsmen called that the moment of *swing*.” When a boat has swing, its motion seems almost effortless. Although there are eight oarsmen in the boat, it’s as if there’s only one person – with perfect timing and perfect strength – rowing. So you might say that a group which works well has “intellectual swing.”

From *The Wisdom of Crowds* by James Surowiecki

MES: Better Together For Children

The importance of teamwork (as proven by science) by Tracy Middleton in [TEAMWORK](#)

- Research shows that collaborative problem-solving leads to better outcomes.
- People are more likely to take calculated risks that lead to innovation if they have the support of a team behind them.
- Working in a team encourages personal growth, increases job satisfaction, and reduces stress.

Anyone who thought the rise of distributed work would be the downfall of teamwork has probably changed their tune by now. The truth is, teamwork is more important than ever.

“The use of teams and collaboration expectations have been consistently rising,” says [Dr. Scott Tannenbaum](#), a researcher and president of the Group for Organizational Effectiveness. “And when I say teams, I’m talking about all types of teams, whether it’s stable work teams [or] teams that now, in the current environment, are operating virtually.”

Teamwork is essential to a company's success, says John J. Murphy, author of *Pulling Together: 10 Rules for High-Performance Teamwork*. "Each individual has unique gifts, and talents and skills. When we bring them to the table and share them for a common purpose, it can give companies a real competitive advantage."

But here's the real magic of teamwork: when done right, it has benefits that go far beyond boosting the company's bottom line. (Learn about some classic models that can lead to stronger teamwork [here](#).)

10 benefits of teamwork

1. Teamwork enables better problem solving

Albert Einstein gets all the credit for discovering the theory of relativity, but the truth is that he relied on conversations with friends and colleagues to refine his concept. And that's almost always the case.

"Behind every genius is a team," says Murphy. "When people play off each other's skills and knowledge, they can create solutions that are practical and useful."

Science reinforces the idea that many brains are better than one. "We found that groups of size three, four, and five outperformed the best individuals," says Dr. Patrick Laughlin a researcher at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "[We] attribute this performance to the ability of people to work together to generate and adopt correct responses, reject erroneous responses, and effectively process information."

2. Teamwork unlocks potential for innovation

According to Frans Johansson, author of *The Medici Effect*, some of the most innovative ideas happen at "the intersection" – the place where ideas from different industries and cultures collide.

"Most people think success comes from surrounding yourself with others that are like you," says Johansson. "But true success and breakthrough innovation involves discomfort. Discomfort pushes you to grow. This is where difference of experience, opinion, and perspective come in. Diversity is a well-documented pathway to unlocking new opportunities, overcoming new challenges, and gaining new insights."

Research shows that teams made up of members from diverse backgrounds (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) are more creative and perform better, compared to more homogeneous teams. Instead of looking at an issue from your individual vantage point, you get a 360-degree picture, which can lead to an exponential increase in ideas.

Research from Tufts University suggests that just being exposed to diversity can shift the way you think. A study on a diverse mock jury found that interacting with individuals who are different forces people to be more open minded, and to expect that reaching consensus will take effort.

3. Teamwork makes for happier employees

As part of our ongoing research on teamwork, we surveyed more than 1,000 team members across a range of industries and found that when honest feedback, mutual respect, and personal openness were encouraged, team members were 80 percent more likely to report higher emotional well-being.

Having happy employees is a worthwhile goal in itself, but the company benefits, too. Research from the University of Warwick in England suggests happy employees are up to 20 percent more productive than unhappy employees. And who couldn't benefit from a happiness boost?

4. Teamwork enhances personal growth

Being part of a team can help you grow. "By sharing information and essentially cross-training each other, each individual member of the team can flourish," says Murphy. You might discover new concepts from colleagues with different experiences. You can also learn from someone else's mistakes, which helps you sidestep future errors.

You might even learn something new about yourself, says Dr. Susan McDaniel, a psychologist at the University of Rochester Medical Center and one of the guest editors of *America Psychologist's* special edition on "The Science of Teamwork."

"We all have blind spots about our behaviors and strengths that we may be unaware of, and feedback from a team member can expose them," she says. Recognizing these strengths and addressing the weaknesses can make you a better team member, and even a better person. "Maybe working in a team you'll discover you could be a better listener. That's a skill you can grow in, and then take home and use to improve your family interactions," McDaniel points out.

5. Teamwork lowers the risk of burnout

A [Gallup study](#) of nearly 7,500 full-time employees found that 23 percent of employees feel burned out at work very often or always. Another 44 percent say they sometimes feel this way. What helps? Sharing the load.

Team members can provide emotional support to each other because they often understand the demands and stress of completing work even better than managers, says Ben Wigert, lead researcher for Gallup's workplace management practice.

And managers are not off the hook! The study also found that knowing your boss has your back protects against burnout too.

6. Teamwork gives opportunities for growth

Collaboration in the workplace isn't unlike teamwork on the baseball diamond. When the pitcher and outfielders each excel at their individual roles, the team has a better chance of winning.

Off the playing field, that idea is more important than ever. Changes in technology and increased globalization mean that organizations are facing problems so complex that a single individual simply can't possess all the necessary knowledge to solve them, says Wigert. When team members use their unique skills to shine in their own roles, it creates an environment based on mutual respect and cooperation that benefits the whole group, notes Murphy.

7. Teamwork boosts productivity

Getting a pat on the back from the boss can boost an employee's motivation, but receiving kudos from a team member may be even more effective.

The [TINYpulse Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture Report](#) surveyed more than 200,000 employees. Participants reported that having the respect of their peers was the #1 reason they go the extra mile at work.

8. Teamwork allows for smarter risk-taking

When you work alone, you might be hesitant to put your neck on the line. When you work on a team, you know you have the support of the entire group to fall back on in case of failure. That security typically allows teams to take the kind of risks that create "Eureka!" ideas.

But here's one place where size does matter. The most disruptive ideas often come from small teams, suggests recent research in the journal [Nature](#), possibly because larger teams argue more, which can get in the way of coming up with those big ideas.

Wharton Business School researchers also discovered that small is the secret to success: they found that two-person teams took 36 minutes to build a Lego figure while four-person teams took 52 minutes to finish — more than 44 percent longer.

There's no definitive ideal small team size, but consider following [Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' two-pizza rule](#): no matter how large your company gets, teams shouldn't be larger than what two pizzas can feed.

9. Teamwork yields fewer mistakes

If your team has good energy — you encourage and inspire each other, and you have fun together — you'll feel less stressed, says Murphy. "Studies show that stress makes us stupid, and leads us to make more mistakes," says Murphy.

Of course, the converse is also true: when your team feels less frazzled, you'll make fewer errors. That's worth keeping in mind, especially if you're one of the [61 percent of workers who cite work as a significant source of stress](#).

10. Teamwork sparks creativity

Stale solutions often come out of working in a vacuum. When people with different perspectives come together in group brainstorming, on the other hand, innovative ideas can rise to the surface — with one caveat. Research shows this can only happen when communication within the team is open and collaborative, notes Wigert. The most creative solutions can only come up when there's a level of trust that lets team members ask 'stupid' questions, propose out-there ideas, and receive constructive criticism.



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.

<u>Family Resources State of Connecticut</u> 	<u>Mental Health Resources</u> 	<u>Emergencies</u> GET HELP 24/7 Call 2-1-1 in CT 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988 Crisis Text Line: 741741	<u>MES School Calendar 2026-27</u> 	<u>Important Annual Notices from MES</u>
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Reminder to families: Breakfast is available and FREE to all MES Students this year.



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.