MOUNT ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LAKER NEWS

2026-2027 School Year, Marking Period 1 Edition

School is in Full Swing!

A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Mount Arlington Families,

Mount Arlington Public Schools is off to a wonderful start! Our classrooms and school buildings have been filled with learning, enthusiasm, and meaningful opportunities for students to connect and succeed. This fall newsletter highlights just some of the exciting events, accomplishments, and experiences that have brought our school community together.

Our **Gifted and Talented program** has officially launched, and we are excited to see our new supplemental resources put into action. We are equally enthusiastic about the enhancements to our **Grade 8 STEAM program**, including new instructional resources such as iBlocks, funded through Title I. These investments provide additional opportunities for students to explore their interests, engage in hands-on learning, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

We are also continuing to strengthen our special education programming and expand inclusive learning opportunities through our work with ALL IN for Inclusive Education and Progressive Therapy of NJ. We warmly invite **all families to join us for an Evening on Inclusion Education on November 19, 2026 at 6:30 presented by ALL IN**. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the benefits of inclusion and how inclusive school communities positively impact all students. *All families are encouraged to attend!*

In athletics, we are proud to announce that **Mount Arlington Public Schools has been awarded a $6,000 Unified Sports grant, which will fully fund the district's first Unified Sports bowling team**! This exciting initiative will provide students with opportunities to build friendships, promote inclusion, and experience the teamwork and camaraderie that make school athletics so special. Please see the sports section of this newsletter for additional information.

Regular school attendance remains an important district priority. Being present each day helps students build academic skills, maintain friendships, and develop a strong sense of belonging. While we are making progress, we will continue partnering with families to address barriers to attendance and ensure that every student has the opportunity to benefit from consistent participation in school.

I am incredibly grateful to our students, staff, families, and community partners for the care, dedication, and support you bring to Mount Arlington Public Schools. Wishing all of our families a wonderful upcoming holiday season filled with joy, gratitude, and meaningful time together!

Warm regards,

Dr. Jessica Neu, Superintendent of Schools

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A Message from the Principal

Dear Mount Arlington Families,

It has been an absolute pleasure getting to know the students, staff and families these last two months. It is truly a joy to walk our hallways and see our students engaged, curious, and building strong connections with their peers and teachers.

The beginning of a school year is always a whirlwind of new routines and community building. Thank you for partnering with us-whether that means ensuring your child gets a good night's rest, attending Back-to-School Night, or simply supporting learning at home. Strong home-school partnerships are the heartbeat of our school community.

For such a short time, we have so many things to celebrate, as you will see throughout this newsletter, and there is more to come, with the winter season coming upon us. As temperatures drop and the weather changes, please remember to send your child to school with appropriate outer layers (sweatshirts, jackets) for recess and outdoor time. Please take a quick moment to label clothing, lunchboxes, water bottles, etc. with your child's name so we can easily return lost items. Our lost and found is overflowing!

We are excited to announce that we are launching a new student recognition program at MAPS, titled the **Student Spotlight Program**! The purpose of this program is to celebrate student achievements, driven by student leadership. Each marking period will focus on a different character trait. Staff members will have the opportunity to nominate a student in grades 3-8 that they teach, in an academic, performing arts, or athletic setting. This marking period's character trait is KINDNESS. We are also bringing back **Super Sundaes,** where students who earned honor roll and a student receiving a Citizenship Award will be honored at the next Board of Education meeting. **Decker Day** will continue as a time-honored celebration of student successes at Edith M. Decker School as well.

We understand that every student has unique academic, social, and emotional needs. Our dedicated support teams, including teachers, counselors, and specialists are working diligently to provide targeted interventions, resources, and encouragement so all students get the support they need. If you ever notice changes in your child's behavior, academic confidence, or well-being, please reach out to their teacher or our counseling department. We are here to listen and help.

We are deeply grateful to work alongside such a dedicated staff and a supportive, caring family community.

Wishing you and your family a healthy, cozy, and vibrant winter season!

Marina Williams, Principal

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Marking Period 1 2026 Edition

Marking Period 1 in Review

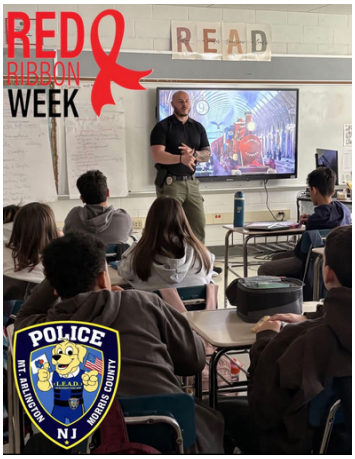
In September, a **new fence** was installed around the field and playground at Edith M. Decker School to enhance student safety and security while preserving a welcoming outdoor space for learning and play.



During the **Week of Respect** (October 5-9), our students celebrated with a fun-filled Spirit Week, daily morning announcements, and meaningful classroom lessons focused on kindness, inclusion, and treating others with respect. Our school counselor, Ms. Krissoula Tzavarous, led engaging lessons to encourage students to demonstrate kindness, make positive choices, and appreciate one another's differences. It was a wonderful opportunity to reinforce the importance of creating a welcoming, safe, and respectful school community!



A special thank-you to the **Rotary Club** for visiting us on October 20 and for their generous donation of dictionaries to our third-grade students! This annual tradition provides students with a valuable resource to support vocabulary development, reading, and writing while encouraging a love of learning.



During **Red Ribbon Week** (October 26–30), our students celebrated the importance of making healthy choices and living drug-free through daily morning announcements, classroom lessons, and special visits from the Mount Arlington Police Department (MAPD). These activities reinforced the importance of taking care of ourselves and one another while encouraging students to make positive, healthy decisions every day.

A huge thank-you to the **Mount Arlington Fire Department** (MAFD) for visiting Decker School on October 22! Our students were mesmerized by the fire trucks, learned important fire safety tips, and had the opportunity to ask some terrific questions. The excitement was contagious, especially when students received their very own red fire truck helmets! We are grateful for MAFD's partnership and for taking the time to make fire safety both educational and fun for our students!



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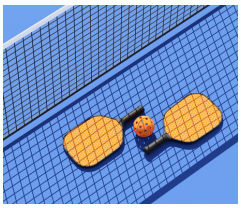


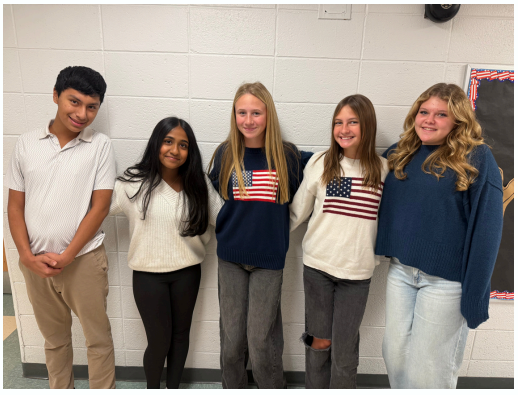
Theatre Week Hee-haw! A huge thank-you to our outstanding PTO for sponsoring a wonderful Theatre Week for our students in grades 1–5! This year's production, *The Ballad of Goodbye Gulch*, was a tremendous success. Our students showcased their amazing talents, and we are so fortunate to have such dedicated parents who helped make this experience possible. It was a fantastic opportunity for our students to shine, build confidence, and celebrate the performing arts!

Our annual **Halloween** parades for students in grades PreK–5 were filled with spooky announcements, festive Halloween music, creative costumes, and plenty of sunshine! Students enjoyed showing off their costumes while celebrating with friends, crafts, and lots of Halloween spirit. A special thank-you to our wonderful classroom parents for helping make the day extra special and creating a memorable experience for our students.



Family Pickleball Fun in Physical Education! A huge thank you to all the MAPS parents/guardians (grades 6–8) who joined their children's P.E. classes on the court for Mr. Merker's pickleball unit, during the weeks of November 2 and 9. It was wonderful to see so many parents and guardians stepping into the gym, picking up paddles, and playing alongside our students, who have been working incredibly hard on their coordination, strategy, and teamwork. Getting to share those new skills with families made the unit truly special!





This Election Day, our student body participated in an exciting race to elect members of our **Student Council** Executive Board! The votes are in, and we are thrilled to announce our newly elected leaders!

- President: Jacob Villalba
- Vice President: Hannah Philip
- Secretaries: Lexi Olic and Ava Braico
- Historian: Anna Chukas

We are so proud of everyone who participated in the election and look forward to an exciting year of leadership, teamwork, and school spirit!

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Mount Arlington Public Schools proudly hosted its annual **Veterans Day Celebration** on Wednesday, November 11, 2026. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the veterans who have served our country and to the family members who joined us for this special occasion.

A special thank you to Ms. Megan Hahn for her time and dedication in organizing this meaningful event, Ms. Tanya Occhiuzzo for her partnership and collaboration with Ms. Hahn, and Ms. Marie Van Rossen for her assistance in coordinating and gathering RSVPs from our honored veterans. We are grateful to everyone who helped make this celebration a memorable tribute to those who have served our nation--what a wonderful MAPS tradition~!







It was an exciting and action-packed fall for **MAPS Athletics**! Our soccer teams and cross country athletes demonstrated tremendous effort, determination, and Laker pride throughout the season. From the competition on the field and course to the friendships and fun along the way, our athletes made the most of every opportunity. As we wrap up fall sports, we're looking ahead to basketball! Athletes are preparing for the upcoming season, building their skills, and working hard at practice. We look forward to cheering on our Lakers as they take the court!

As mentioned by the Superintendent, we are thrilled to introduce Unified Bowling at MAPS for the first time! This opportunity is made possible through a Special Olympics Unified Sports grant and will be open to students in grades 5–8 through a lottery process. Unified Sports brings together students with and without disabilities to build friendships, develop teamwork, and experience the joy of being part of a team. Additional information, including registration details, will be shared with families soon. **GO LAKERS!**









In **MAPS Alumni News,** Charlie Bacinsky, was the recipient of the Art Ondish Scholarship sponsored by the BOE. Charlie started college this year at Seton Hall University. Keep up the great work, Charlie!

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Your Attendance Matters!

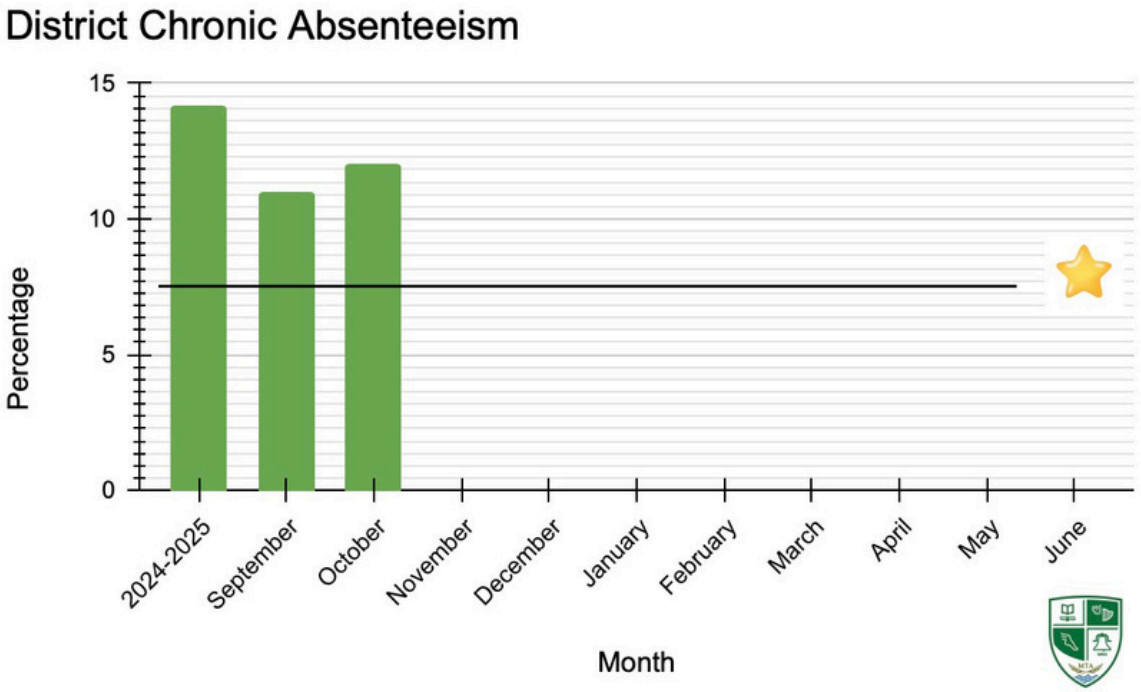
Regular school attendance is essential to student success! We encourage families to make every effort to ensure that children are in school every day, ***as long as they are feeling well enough to attend.***

Please remember that the NJ Department of Education does not recognize illness, even with a doctor's note, as a state-excused absence. The only state-recognized excused absences are for:

- Veterans Day,
- Take Your Child to Work Day, and
- religious holidays.

While we are making progress as a district in improving student attendance, our goal is to keep chronic absenteeism below the state expectation of 10%. Please keep in mind that missing more than 2 days of school per month can put a student at risk of becoming chronically absent. Over the course of the school year, missing more than 17 days of school (10% or more of the school year) is considered chronic absenteeism.

Every day in school provides valuable opportunities to learn, grow, and connect with others. The more students are in school, the more they learn! If your family needs assistance or support with attendance, please reach out to our school counselor or Principal Marina Williams. We are here to help! Attendance Policy and Regulation 5200



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IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

NOVEMBER



Day/Date	Time	Event
Tuesday, 11/17	N/A	Picture Day Make-Ups
Wednesday, 11/18	5:30 PM	PTO Meeting
Wednesday, 11/18	7:00 PM	Board of Education Meeting
Wednesday, 11/25	12:50 PM	Early Dismissal
Thursday 11/26-Friday 11/27	N/A	Thanksgiving-District Closed

December



Day/Date	Time	Event
Monday, 12/7	9:30 AM	Special Education Parent Advisory Group Meeting
Wednesday, 12/16	5:30 PM	PTO Meeting
Wednesday, 12/16	7:00 PM	Board of Education Meeting
Friday, 12/18	10:30 AM	Winter Concert (for community and seniors)
Wednesday, 12/23	12:50 PM	Early Dismissal
Thursday, 12/24-Thursday, 12/31	N/A	Winter Break-District Closed

JANUARY

Day/Date	Time	Event
Friday 1/1	N/A	Winter Break-District Closed
Wednesday, 1/6	7:00 PM	Board of Education Meeting - Reorganization
Thursday, 1/20	5:30 PM	PTO Meeting
Thursday, 1/20	7:00 PM	Board of Education Meeting/Super Sundae
Monday 1/18	N/A	District Closed - Staff Professional Development Day

ALL IN for Inclusive Education



Mount Arlington Public Schools, in collaboration with All In for Inclusive Education, invite you to attend:

Parent Information Night

An Evening on Inclusive Education: All families are welcome!

Thursday, November 19, 2026

6:30 - 7:30 PM
Media Center in Mount Arlington Public School

What to Expect:

- Inclusive education is more than physical placement of students with disabilities—it's about all students feeling welcomed as members of their school community who actively participate in learning together. During this session attendees will explore:
- How supports can work inside general education to benefit all learners (not just those with Individual Education Programs);
- What meaningful inclusion looks like day-to-day; and
- How families and schools can collaborate to make inclusion successful for all learners.
- Light refreshments will be served and funded under Title IA.

If you plan on attending the session, please complete the RSVP form: https://forms.gle/Qk8qE8jseQwGj3sH8

For any further questions, contact:
Dr. Jessica Neu, Superintendent, at jneu@mtarlingtonk8.org.

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Our Athletic Department Welcomes Unified Sports to Mount Arlington



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Nurses' Corner: Staying Healthy This Fall

As we welcome the fall season, we would like to remind families that the PreK flu vaccine requirement deadline is November 30 this year. Please be sure to meet this deadline to ensure your child remains in compliance with state immunization requirements.

The Health Office website is updated regularly with important health information and reminders. Please visit the Decker Health Office website for updates.

Unfortunately, flu season arrived early this year at both MAPS and Decker. We appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we work together to keep our students and staff healthy. Please take a moment to review the informational poster below for helpful reminders about staying healthy.

Families may also wish to explore the resources available through the Mount Olive Health Department, which serves Mount Arlington residents and offers a variety of community health services, including free and low-cost healthcare and immunizations. Visit the Mount Olive Health Department website or follow them on Instagram to learn more.

Thank you for helping us maintain a healthy school community!



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Parent Teacher Organization

Mount Arlington PTO was so excited to bring back Theater Week for the second year in a row! It was wonderful to see the excitement, creativity, and smiles throughout the week. Thank you to everyone who helped make it such a success! We look forward to doing it all again next year!

Parents, don't forget to follow us on PTBoard for Holiday Shop sign-ups at both schools! Stay tuned for updates and important information!

Mount Arlington Schools PTO
mta.ptboard.com

School code is 93KANX



