



# Growing by Leaps and Bounds

Martha Jones School - Westwood, MA

**Matt Kuklantz, Principal**

**Martha Jones Motto:**

**Be Kind. Be Curious. Be Responsible. Be Respectful.**

[Westwood Public Schools](#) | [Martha Jones School](#) | [Martha Jones PTO](#)

Issue 6 - December 5, 2025

## Principal's Message

MJ,

We have a guest writer in our newsletter, Erin Aaron, Martha Jones Math Specialist:

At school, we are working hard to help every child *enjoy* math, see themselves as capable learners, and build a strong, positive math identity. This means engaging students in flexible thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and celebrating mistakes as part of learning. Families play an important role too—simple conversations at home, such as noticing math in daily life, encouraging persistence, and sharing positive messages, make a big difference. Below is an excerpt that highlights what research tells us about how powerful adult messages can be in shaping children's confidence and achievement in math.

Excerpt from "Parents' Beliefs About Math Change Their Children's Achievement"

Written by Jo Boaler, Stanford University

We now know that the messages we give students can change their performance dramatically, and that students need to know that the adults in their lives believe in them. Researchers are learning that students' ideas about their ability and potential are extremely important, much more than previously understood. As well as the messages we give students about their potential, brain

research is now showing that messages students pick up from their parents about math and their parents' relationships with math can also change students' math learning and achievement.

In an important study researchers found that when mothers told their daughters they were not good at math in school, their daughter's achievement declined almost immediately (Eccles & Jacobs, 1986). In a newer study neuroscientists Erin Maloney and colleagues found that parents' math anxiety reduced their children's learning of math across grades 1 and 2, but only if parents helped their children on math homework (Maloney, Ramirez, Gunderson, Levine, & Beilock, 2015) If they did not help them on homework, the parents' math anxiety did not detract from their children's learning. The parents' math knowledge did not turn out to have any impact, only their level of math anxiety.

Both studies, again, communicate the importance of the messages students receive, as it was not math knowledge that harmed the students' performance but the parents' anxiety. We do not know what parents with math anxiety say to their children but it is likely they communicate the negative messages we know to be harmful, such as "math is hard" or "I was never good at math in school." It is critical that when parents interact with children about math they communicate positive messages, saying that math is exciting and it is an open subject that anyone can learn with hard work, that it is not about being "smart" or not and that math is all around us in the world. For more parental advice on ways to help students with math see the parent page.

[LINK TO PARENT PAGE and other resources](#)

Matt

**Jalabokafloð**

This month in the Martha Jones Library, students will be learning about an Icelandic tradition called *Jolabokaflod* (Yule Book Flood). *Jolabokaflod*, translating to "Yule Book Flood," is a unique and cherished tradition in Iceland, celebrated on Christmas Eve. This tradition involves giving and receiving new books, but its essence lies in the joy of reading them together.

**During the week of 12/8-12/12**

I would like to invite each student to bring in a donation of ONE or TWO gently used books from home that they would like to exchange.

**During the week of 12/15-12/19**

students will get to pick one "new" book from those brought in are invited to bring a small blanket and/or stuffy to library and we will spend our library time curled up with our new books!

Even if they forget or don't bring in a book, all students will get to pick a book to take home.

***.Happy Jolabokaflod!***

-Mrs. Swinning



image:  
©Anna Brones

## Gift Season and Technology In Schools

As we enter a time of year when we think about gifts for children, I want to remind families of the elementary expectations from our [student handbook](#) specifically about smart watches.

Mobile Phones, Smart Watches, Electronic Devices (iPad, Laptops, Gaming Devices)

These items are NOT allowed in school as they are a distraction to the learning environment. If a student brings these items into school the classroom teacher will ask them to turn off their device and place it in their backpack. If a parent needs to send a communication to their child during the school day, parents should contact the school's main office and leave a message with the administrative assistant

## Math Newsletter

Please see the [Math Newsletter](#) from our Math Curriculum Coordinator, Molly Singh, and Math Specialist, Erin Aaron.

## Inclusive Schools Week

The theme of inclusive schools week is *Children First - Building A Stronger Tomorrow*. In schools today, this theme challenges educators, school leaders, and communities to ask:

- Are all children reaching their full potential in our schools?
- Do our educational practices reflect a commitment to equity and access for every student?

- How can we ensure that students with disabilities are seen, heard, and valued in every aspect of school life?

All Westwood Elementary Schools will participate in a school wide project to celebrate Inclusive Schools week. At MJ, we will be reading All My Stripes in Library and contributing to an MJ wide project. [All My Stripes - Read Aloud and Activity Details](#)

In addition, All schools across the district will be celebrating each day, December 8th - 12th, with a different way to show support for inclusive schools week.

**Monday, December 8:** "Children First" Day – Everyone Belongs in Westwood

- Wear school colors or your favorite Westwood gear to show your commitment to inclusion. Invite students to share experiences of belonging and what it means to feel welcomed.

**Tuesday, December 9:** "Different Brains, Great Ideas" Day

- Wear mismatched clothes or socks to celebrate differences and embrace the unique strengths each person brings.

**Wednesday, December 10:** "Teamwork" Day

- Wear a favorite team jersey or shirt to highlight the importance of teamwork and being a supportive community member.

**Thursday, December 11:** "Empathy & Understanding" Day

- Participate in "Walk in My Shoes" by wearing mismatched shoes to acknowledge the different challenges people face and the importance of empathy.

**Friday, December 12:** "Champions of Inclusion" Action Day

- Wear your favorite superhero costume or superhero t-shirt to show that we can all be champions of inclusion through our words, actions, and advocacy.

## Special Olympics Massachusetts

### 2026 Winter Westwood Young Athletes Program

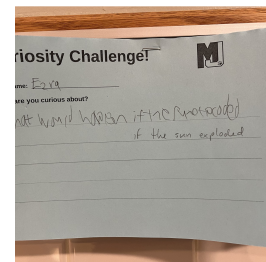
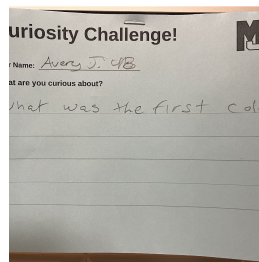
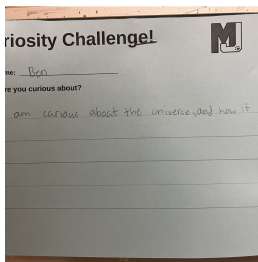
Young athletes program for ages 2 to 7 in Westwood focusing on fine motor skills and activities. Program will be occur on Sunday mornings from 9:30 am to 10:15 am, starting January 11th through March 15th.

Thank you for your interest in registering for this program. Please [click here](#) to begin registration.

## Core Values

At our second All Community Meeting, we focused on the Core Value of Curiosity. Students have been challenged to think about their own curiosities and questions. Here's a sampling of those lining our hallways.





## 5th Grade Band Concert

Dear Grade 5 Martha Jones Parents,

The Grade 5 Downey and Martha Jones Elementary Band Concert is **Thursday, December 11, 6:30 p.m.** at the **Westwood High School Auditorium**. The 5th Grade band will become a SUPER BAND of around 70 students from the Downey and Martha Jones Grade 5 Bands. The students have been working very diligently on the Band music and I am very proud of their progress!

Students will participate in an early evening dress rehearsal at the high school before the performance. Students will need to arrive by parent drop-off. The schedule for the evening dress rehearsal and concert is as follows:

**5:30 pm** Students arrive by parent drop-off at the Westwood High School Auditorium for a dress rehearsal.

**6:30 pm** Concert begins with the 5th Grade Band, followed by the Thurston 6th Grade Band and Jazz Band.

After the 5th-grade performance, I will walk the students to the back of the auditorium to watch the remainder of the concert. The concert should last around 45 minutes. We ask that students stay for the entire concert to support and hear the Thurston 6th Grade Band and Jazz Band. At the conclusion of the concert, parents will meet up with their musician in the High School Cafeteria to pack up and go home.

### Concert Attire

Students should plan to arrive at the dress rehearsal in their Concert Attire. Concert dress will be a step above casual. Collared shirts (polo or dress shirts), dark pants, or a skirt or dress are fine.

### Concert Volunteers

I will need a few parent volunteers to help out on the night of the concert. All Volunteers will be able to see the entire concert. I will need parents for the following: Helping students find the Auditorium on arrival, getting seated on the stage, Pre-Concert bathroom break, chaperones to sit in the back of the auditorium with the 5th Grade students when we are watching the Grade 6 Band perform, and walking students back to the cafeteria to pack up instruments. If you can help, please click the Volunteer Google sign-up below.

Volunteer sign-up link: <https://forms.gle/zpLTnUbnF9FkRn2j6>

Lori Labeledz

# Student Council

## Student Council Cards & Candy for Veterans

To honor our veterans, our student council has partnered with the VA Medical Center to donate Halloween candy and created cards for troops who are deployed. The care package was recently received and it was a big hit. Thank you to all our students and families who donated their Halloween candy and their thoughtful cards.

Our Student Council Advisors this year are:

MaryKate Stimpson [mstimpson@westwood.k12.ma.us](mailto:mstimpson@westwood.k12.ma.us) and

Katharine Fader [kfader@westwood.k12.ma.us](mailto:kfader@westwood.k12.ma.us)

## Important Upcoming Events

- Wednesday, December 10th - Early Release, 12:00pm
- Thursday, December 11th - 5th Grade Band Concert (see above)
- Friday, December 12th - 5th Grade Play, 6:30pm
- Friday, December 19th - WHS Winter Chorus Concert at MJ
- Tuesday, December 23 - Early Release
- Wednesday, December 24 - Friday, January 2nd - No School - Vacation
- Monday, January 5 - School Resumes
- Wednesday, January 7 - Early Release
- Friday, January 9 - MJ PTO Bingo Night
- Monday, January 19 - No School - Holiday
- Wednesday, January 14th - SEPAC Community Meeting, 7:30-8:30pm - Westwood Library/[Zoom](#)
- Wednesday, January 21 - Early Release
- Wednesday, February 4 - Early Release
- Monday, February 16-Friday February 20 - No School - Vacation
- Monday, February 23 - School Resumes
- Wednesday, February 25 - Early Release
- Wednesday, March 4 - Book Fair
- Monday, March 9 - Enrichment
- Wednesday, March 11 - Early Release
- Thursday, March 12 - MJ PTO STEM Fair
- Monday, March 16 - Enrichment
- Wednesday March 18th 2-3 pm (cafeteria), Combined Rehearsal All 5th grade
- Thursday March 19th 10:00 am (cafeteria), Concert
- Wednesday, March 25 - Early Release
- Friday, April 3 - No School - Holiday
- Wednesday, April 8 - Early Release
- Friday, April 10 - ELA MCAS (Gr. 3, 4, 5)
- Monday, April 13 - ELA MCAS (Gr. 3, 4, 5)
- Tuesday, April 14 & Wednesday, April 15 - ELA MCAS (Gr. 3, 4, 5) Make-Ups
- Monday, April 20 - Friday, April 24 - No School - Vacation
- Monday, April 27 - School Resumes
- Wednesday, April 29 - Early Release
- Tuesday, May 12 - Math MCAS(Gr. 3, 4, 5)

- Wednesday, May 13 - Early Release
- Thursday, May 14 - Math MCAS (Gr. 3, 4, 5)
- Friday, May 15 - Math MCAS Make-Ups (Gr. 3, 4, 5)
- Monday, May 18 - Science (Gr. 5)
- Tuesday, May 19 - Science (Gr. 5)
- Wednesday, May 20 - Science (Gr. 5) Make-Ups
- Wednesday, May 27 - Early Release
- Wednesday, June 3 - Early Release
- Tuesday, June 16 - Student Last Day (Tentative with no make-ups)

## School Breakfast and Lunch

Your school menu can be viewed at [Menus / Westwood Public Schools \(nutrislice.com\)](#). Please check daily as the menu may change.

## News from the Front Office

### Mini Courses

Fall Mini Courses are winding down (the 5th Grade Play will be on Friday, December 12th.) Thank you to the Mini Course Committee and all the instructors who helped to make these programs a success.

### School Dismissal Manager

Thank you to everyone for embracing the technology! SDM is designed to give you, the parent/guardian control over your child(s) dismissal, late arrival, early dismissal, and absence. This is just a quick reminder to please be sure to update SDM should you have any changes to your child(s) normal or default attendance or dismissal preferences. Changes must be made before 11:00AM.



### Bus Reminders

For those families who have signed up for bus services this is just a quick reminder that students may only ride his/her assigned bus. Transporting students to alternative, yet existing, stops on the student's same route may be granted if done so on a regular basis (example: three days per week). Requests for alternative stops should be made in writing to: Scherie Ciarrocchi, Bus Coordinator and sent to: Westwood Public Schools, 220 Nahatan Street, Westwood, MA 02090. Transporting students for play dates, lessons, or other reasons is not permitted. A full list of [Transportation FAQs](#) can be found on the [WPS District website](#).



### CORI Forms

Thank you to all our wonderful MJ Community Members for volunteering. Please note all volunteers **must** have a completed CORI background check before volunteering or chaperoning of any kind. People who have completed a CORI through another town department (ex. Parks & Rec) must still complete a CORI for the School Department.



WPS is implementing an updated CORI policy whereas **all volunteers must complete a CORI annually**. If you did **not** complete a new form when school started in September you WILL BE REQUIRED to complete a new form starting in the next calendar year (from January.)

Also note the CORI Form submission is not considered complete until it is also accompanied with a copy of your current picture ID (License or Passport).

Thank you for adhering to the District Safety practices.



## MJ Class Pictures

Class pictures (one per child) were distributed to classroom teachers today. Please check your child's backpack to receive your complimentary copy.

## Student Safety and Vehicle Traffic

Student safety is one of our utmost concerns. We kindly ask that you are extra mindful when you are coming to MJ to collect your child. **The safety of all students depends on all drivers obeying the rules and speed limits.**

Thank you



## Lost and Found

Please be sure your child's items are labelled with a name or initials. Here in the office we do our best to get labelled items back to their forever homes. Items without labels get sent to the donation bin after 4 weeks. *(For those who remember Ms. Santangelo uses the old Filene's Basement method - date and check 😊)*



## Message from the Extended Day Office

### Holiday Break Hours

Please note **Tuesday December 23rd** is an Early Release. Elementary students will dismiss at 12:00pm.

Extended Day will open at dismissal and will **close at 3:00pm** for the Winter Break. A cafeteria lunch will be available for Extended Day students.

## News from 1D (Mrs. Dunn)

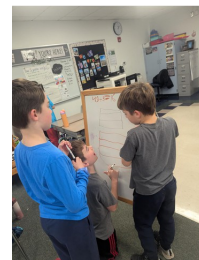
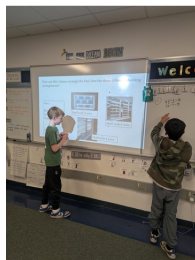




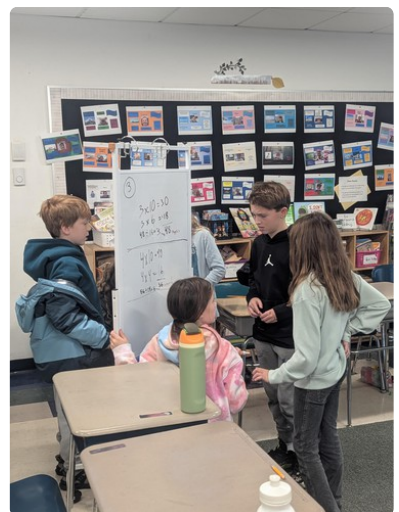
Mrs. Dunn's first-graders wrapped up their learning about Pilgrim and Wampanoag life with a Thanksgiving celebration last week. Students learned to play a board game called *Nine Men's Morris*, which was a popular strategy game played by both Pilgrim adults and children. They had fun trying to capture their opponent's pieces in this Tic-Tac-Toe style game. Students also learned to play the traditional Native American game *Ring and Pin*, which helped Wampanoag children strengthen their focus and develop the hand-eye coordination that would be needed for activities like hunting, fishing, and sewing. Students were surprised by how challenging this seemingly simple game could be! Finally, students made their own "turkeys" out of fruit, including ones native to MA like blueberries and cranberries, and made cards for their loved ones expressing their gratitude.



## News from 4W (Mrs. Waldner)



In fourth grade, students are beginning a new unit on division. This week, all fourth graders explored a multi-layered, open-ended math task involving a store owner deciding how to arrange different quantities of fruit on various sets of shelves. Working in groups of 2–3, students created different options and configurations for displaying the fruit. There was a lot of teamwork and discussion as they shared their ideas. In the end, students connected their work to division problems—recognizing that some equations make equal groups while others leave a remainder.



## News from Ms. O'Brien

In the PEER Program, we are working on incorporating sensory strategies into daily learning to help students better access and engage with instruction. By intentionally addressing students' sensory needs, we create an environment where they can regulate their bodies, sustain attention, and participate more confidently. Our classroom uses flexible seating options, such as bouncy balls, spinning chairs, floor seating, and even a small trampoline, to provide movement and comfort that support focus. We also weave sensory-based educational practices into lessons whenever possible, like writing in foam, using textured materials, or engaging in hands-on, tactile activities. These approaches help students feel grounded and ready to learn, promoting greater independence and academic success.



December! Holiday lights are everywhere and it's officially cold. We had a great turn out for our November PTO meeting. Superintendent Tim Piwowar shared great insight into the upcoming Facilities Plans. If you missed the meeting you can find minutes and links to the presentations [here](#). We had another successful **Dine Out at Playa Bowls** this past Wednesday. The **MJ Gear Shop** is still open (perfect for holiday presents!) Order soon for holiday delivery. Don't forget to follow us on IG and Facebook to get all the latest and greatest happenings.



'Tis the Season,  
Your PTO

### SAVE THE DATES

SEPAC Community Meeting - January 14th ([details](#))

**Valentine's Dance** - February 6th

### Join the PTO!

We are actively looking to fill board positions for next year. A board seat is a two year commitment, with a "shadow year" to learn the ropes. Questions? Reach out to Ally or Lisa to learn more!

### DO YOU FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK OR INSTAGRAM

Love the reminders about all things MJ when you're scrolling? Take a minute and like or comment to keep us showing up in the feed!

[Join our Facebook group](#) or follow us on [Instagram](#)

@marthajonespto



shutterstock.com - 1402584190

**Martha Jones & Westwood Gear Store is OPEN!**



We're thrilled to announce that the [Martha Jones Store](#) is officially **open!** This year, we're offering **brand new products** for both **Martha Jones** and **Westwood**.

Orders typically take about **two weeks** to process. You can choose to have your order **shipped directly to your home** or **pick it up at Amerasport in Holliston**.

Be sure to **place your orders soon** so your items arrive in time for the holidays! Proceeds from all purchases will **benefit the Martha Jones PTO**, helping support our students and school community.



## ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION DRIVE

*We are sooooo close!!* We aim to raise **\$7,500** from our [annual PTO drive](#). Every donation, no matter the amount, is appreciated and important in helping us continue to fund enrichment and community activities. Please consider making a contribution today! We recommend a contribution of \$50 for families with one student and \$100 for families with two or more students.

Donate based on what feels comfortable for your family and your financial situation. Every amount, big or small, is greatly appreciated.

As a reminder, we also have a [Corporate Match](#) option. Many employers offer matching donations because MJS PTO is a qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

## BIRTHDAY BOOKS

Participate in the [PTO Birthday Book Program](#)! Ms. Swinning has selected some fantastic books that students have requested, but the Martha Jones library does not currently have. During their birthday month, participating children are invited to the library to pick a brand new book from this collection. A bookplate commemorating your child's birthday will be placed inside the front cover and they will be the very first student to borrow this book! Once they've finished reading it, the book will be returned to the library's collection, where it can be enjoyed for years to come. The cost of this program is \$15 per student.



## MJ PTO General Information

### Martha Jones PTO Meeting Dates 2025-2026

*March 3, 2026, 7pm*

*May 5, 2026, 7pm*

### PTO CONTACT FOR EVENTS, NOTICES:

If you have an event or notice for our PTO update, please email it to:

PTO Co-Secretary - [Jenn Katsilieris](#), [Erika Gauthier](#)

Martha Jones PTO Board 2025-2026

[Ally Pavlic](#), Co-President

[Lisa Lennon](#), Co-President

[Abbe Lynch](#), Co-Treasurer

[Monisha Dabek](#), Co-Treasurer

[Jenn Katsilieris](#), Co-Secretary

[Erika Gauthier](#), Co-Secretary



[Priya Sharma](#), Co-Social Media  
[Gina Ciampolillo](#), Co-Social Media  
[Lauren Fortin](#), SEPAC

# District & Community News

## SEPAC News

The Westwood Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is a state-mandated, parent-run group working to promote a network of parents, guardians, and caregivers of children with special needs.

Information about SEPAC and events can be found at <https://www.westwoodsepac.org/events>. Please see their [informational video](#).



## Westwood Youth and Family

## Westwood Recreation Department

The Westwood Rec Department sent along the bellow flyer about an inclusive recreation program they will be running on upcoming no-school days around the winter break.

## Resources for Families and Students

Throughout the school year, there may be family, community, or broader world events that are impacting your family and child(ren). If you need some support with how to talk with your child about violence, loss, or scary events, please reach out to your child's teacher, me or our School Psychologist, Ms. MaryKate Stimpson. Additionally, I have found the following resources to be valuable:

How to talk to children about violence ([1 page](#)), ([full](#)) - NASP  
[How to talk about natural disasters and help children cope](#) - NASP  
[Helping children cope with terrorism](#) - NASP

[Interface Referral Service](#) is like a match.com for counseling providers. You contact them with insurance and presenting problem and they try to match you with an available provider.

[Westwood Youth & Family Services Website](#) has been supporting and advocating for the children and families in our community since 1986.

[Westwood Community Chest](#) is a 501(c)(3) Public Charity dedicated to helping Westwood residents in need through temporary financial assistance. Single parents in need of safe summer activities for their children through our "Campership" program. Children who need school supplies or medical treatment. Families who have experienced job loss or other financial crisis and are struggling to make ends meet.

The [Westwood Food Pantry](#), located in Westwood, Massachusetts, is committed to providing essential provisions to individuals and families in our community who need temporary assistance.

*Westwood Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation.*

If you need this document translated, please call the Westwood Public Schools' Student Services Department at 781-326-7500 ext. 1346 or email your request to [lprouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us](mailto:lprouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us). Thank you.

如果您需要翻译本文档，请致电Westwood的公立学校的学生服务部在781 326-7500 ext. 1346 或电子邮件您的要求 [lprouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us](mailto:lprouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us) 谢谢你。

ext. اذا بحاجة الى هذه الوثيقة المترجمة ، يرجى الاتصال على إدارة المدارس العامة ويستود 'الخدمات الطلابية في 7500-326 781 لك. لطلب كنتشكرا [lprouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us](mailto:lprouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us) أو على البريد الإلكتروني الخاص بك 1346

Если вам нужен этот документ переводится, пожалуйста, позвоните Вествудгосударственных школах "Студенческие службы Департамента по 781 326-7500 ext. 1346 или по электронной почте запрос на [lprouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us](mailto:lprouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us) Спасибо.



**Matthew Kuklantz**

Matthew is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters