



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 9 - February 2, 2026

Principal's Message

MJ,

I wanted to provide updates on both the district budget and the MJ PEER Program. Two Wednesdays ago, Superintendent Piwowar presented the FY27 Budget to School Committee. At that time, the proposed budget fell \$510,000 short of maintaining current service levels. To bridge this gap and meet legal mandates for Special Education and English Learner (EL) staffing, the district proposed significant personnel reductions. The proposed cuts would impact student learning and district improvement efforts.

However, this past Wednesday, School Committee began their open forum with a discussion of the initial proposed budget, in conjunction with the overall town budget picture. During this, they asked Superintendent Piwowar to prepare two different budget scenarios for their meeting this Thursday - an addition of \$300,000 over what was proposed, and a level-services budget scenario (roughly a \$510,000 increase). These budgets and their impacts will be presented at the next school committee meeting (Thursday, February 5 at 6:30).

Additionally, at the January 21st School Committee meeting, a proposal was presented to reorganize our preschool and elementary specialized programs. This move shifts us away from years of reactive, short-term solutions toward a model that improves instructional quality and operational efficiency in support of students.

The following transitions will take place for the new school year:

- **Preschool & WABA:** To resolve long-standing DESE class-size waivers, the Preschool WABA program will move from Pine Hill to Downey, accompanied by the expansion of one Integrated classroom.
- **PEER Program at MJ:** The Downey PEER program will relocate here to MJ. We will host both an upper and lower PEER classroom, which offers an exciting opportunity to improve instructional efficiency and build a stronger student community.
- **FOCUS Expansion:** Moving the WABA program out of Pine Hill allows the FOCUS program the necessary space to expand and meet growing student needs.

Change—both in budget and programming—is a big part of this coming year. However, I am confident in our community's resilience. I am eager to welcome the PEER program families to MJ, and I look forward to working together to build a stronger, more inclusive student community.

Matt

Report Cards Available

Your child's report card will be available for you to review through our [Aspen/X2 portal](#) last Friday, January 30.. [Directions for accessing the report card are linked here](#). If you need support, you can visit [the Aspen self-help site](#) or email our Aspen support team at aspen@westwood.k12.ma.us with questions. Report cards will not be mailed home. They are printable through Aspen, should you desire a hard copy.

MAEA Youth Art Month Poster Contest

This year's theme was The World Needs Art and MJ's own, Scarlett X. in 5th grade was recognized as the winner in the 3-5 grade category. Congratulations!



Director of Student Services Finalist Visits

Monday, February 2: Heather Geary

Heather Geary is currently the Chief of Student Services for the Codman Academy Charter School in Dorchester, MA. Immediately prior to this, she served as the Director of Special Education for the Winchester Public Schools.

Wednesday, February 4: Aimee Studders

Aimee Studders is currently the Director of Special Programs for the Caledonia Community Schools in Caledonia, MI. Immediately prior to this, she served as a Special Education Administrator in the Harvard Public Schools.

On each site visit day, we invite parents/guardians/caregivers to join us from 5:30-6:30pm for a forum where you can engage with the candidate. The forum will be held in the Professional Development Room at Westwood High School, and will include the option to join remotely through the links below:

Heather Geary Forum - February 2, 5:30pm ([Zoom link](#))

Aimee Studders Forum - February 4, 5:30pm ([Zoom link](#))

Community Dialogue on Equity, Access & Inclusion

Dear Westwood Families,

We are pleased to invite you to an upcoming community dialogue facilitated by Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson, Founder and CEO of DLAJ Consulting LLC, in partnership with the Westwood Equity and Community Partnership Office. This community-wide event is hosted by the Westwood Public Schools School Engagement Committee and co-sponsored by all six PTOs.

During this session, Dr. Amante-Jackson will facilitate a dialogue focused on equity, access, and inclusion during challenging and polarizing times. With experience supporting more than 500 community members, educators, district leaders, and families, she brings a proven approach to persuasive communication—helping participants build clarity, confidence, and practical tools to engage in meaningful conversations around race and equity.

We encourage all adult members of the Westwood community to attend. Please join us on February 9th from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM in the Little Theater at Westwood High School. Further details are available in the attached flyer.

We hope you will join us for this important opportunity for learning, reflection, and connection within our community. Thank you for your continued partnership and engagement.

[2/9 Community Dialogue Flyer](#)

Warm regards,
Lateefah Franck
Westwood Public Schools

UPCOMING PSM REVIEW

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Public School Monitoring (PSM) will conduct an Integrated Monitoring Review of Westwood Public Schools during the week of February 9th, 2026. Each school district, charter school, vocational school, and virtual school undergoes an Integrated Monitoring Review every three years. The areas addressed during an Integrated Monitoring Review are organized into two groups, known as Group A Universal Standards and Group B Universal Standards. Please [click here](#) for more information.

MJ STEM Fair

Registration is open for the Martha Jones STEM Fair

Thursday, March 12, 2026 at 6:30 pm

The STEM fair is an annual event for students to explore Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math projects and present them to the Martha Jones community. Scientists can work individually or in groups of 2 or 3. Projects are completed outside of school and showcased at the fair. Each project will have table space to display a posterboard and materials.

Please register projects by **March 3rd**

Registration: [Registration link here](#)

Project ideas: [Project Ideas](#)

International Night

Save the date! Our International Night Celebration is happening on Friday, March 27th from **6:00–8:30 PM**, and you're invited! We're moving the event to cooler weather for everyone's comfort, and we can't wait to come together for a night of fun, food, and culture. Enjoy exciting performances, tasty international dishes, and lots of great moments with friends and family as we celebrate what makes our school community so special. Mark your calendars and get ready for a joyful evening of connection and global flair!

[Host a Table](#)

Safe Routes to School Sign Contest

The Massachusetts SRTS Program's Yard Sign Design Contest is a way for students to use their creativity to help promote safe roads for cyclists and pedestrians in their communities. The contest is open to students in grades 2-8 who are enrolled in a Massachusetts SRTS partner school (MJ is a partner).

This school year, the contest will launch in January. Multilingual signs are encouraged!

[Link to how to enter](#)

Math Newsletter

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

Student Council

Martha Jones Food Drive - ends Friday (2/6/26)

The MJ Student Council has partnered with the Westwood Food Pantry, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization serving approximately 100 families and senior citizens in Westwood to hold a food drive this winter. The WFP often hears "Is there really a need in Westwood?" The short answer is yes, even if that help is only temporary.

The MJ Student Council is coordinating this event, please consider donating. Students will bring donations to the classrooms where they will be collected.

Our Student Council Advisors this year are:

MaryKate Stimpson mstimpson@westwood.k12.ma.us and

Katharine Fader kfader@westwood.k12.ma.us

Important Upcoming Events

- Wednesday, February 4 - Early Release
- Friday, February 6 - Valentines Dance
- Wednesday, February 11 - Gr 5 Field Trip - McAuliffe Center
- Monday, February 16-Friday February 20 - No School - Vacation
- Monday, February 23 - School Resumes
- Wednesday, February 25 - Early Release
- Wednesday, March 4 - Book Fair

Food Drive
We're looking for people to donate non-perishable food items.

Each grade has been assigned items to collect.
Dates: 1/14/26-2/6/26

Kindergraten	Sugar, Flour, Cake Mix, Syrup, Cookies, Body Wash
Grade 1	Peanut Butter, Jelly, Cereal, Crackers, Shampoo
Grade 2	Salad Dressing, Salsa, Olive Oil, Vegetable Oil
Grade 3	White Tuna, Cans of Chickens, Cans of Carrots, Soap, Bars of Soap
Grade 4	Baked Pasta, Pasta Sauce, Baked Beans, Mayonnaise
Grade 5	Toothpaste, Toothbrushes, Paper towel, Toilet Paper

Each classroom will have a box to put the cans in. These will benefit the Westwood food pantry!

Student Council is excited to partner with our families to support the community!

- 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
- Monday, April 6 & Tuesday, April 7 - Grade 5, Our Changing Body Program
- Wednesday, April 8 - Early Release
- Thursday, April 9 - Art Show
- 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
- Tuesday, April 28 - K Field Trip - Discovery Museum
- Wednesday, April 29 - Early Release
- Tuesday, May 5 - Gr. 3 to Fisher School
- 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 \(nutrislice.com\)](https://www.nutrislice.com). Please check daily as the menu may change.

News from the Front Office

CORI Forms

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 for this calendar year. 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.



Dismissal Changes (SDM & MiniCourses)

MJ PTO MiniCourses will begin soon. If you have signed your child up for a MiniCourse please be sure you are updating your child's dismissal in SDM.

For dismissals directly to MiniCourses:

You can set up all dates automatically by using the "Recurring Dismissal" feature. Follow these directions:

1. Click on Recurring Dismissal
2. Select student name
3. Select "Mini Courses" under Dismissal Instructions and add the Mini Course name in the "notes" field
4. Select your mini course day(s)
5. Apply to: Every Week
6. Include the Start Date & End Date



For dismissals to MiniCourses from Extended Day:

Please note if your child is going to MiniCourse from Extended Day the only dismissal note in SDM should be EXTENDED DAY.

If your child is NOT returning to Extended Day at the end of a MiniCourse you must change the dismissal instruction in SDM to reflect MINI COURSE (as listed in the "dismissals directly to MiniCourse" instruction)

Please understand we are all striving for student safety, delineating a clear chain of custody for your child.

All children will be dismissed per the parent instruction in SDM.

And remember... you should also use SDM if your child will be late, absent, or is being dismissed early. For the change to take effect in the system it should be made before 11:00AM.

TY

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](#).



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



CLASSROOM NEWS

News from 4W (Mrs. Waldner)



In 4W, science is in full motion! Our young engineers have been investigating the physics of energy transfer by building "Bumper Jumpers." Working in partnerships, students made predictions and tested how energy is stored, moved, and transferred when a marble collides with an object to clear a jump. Beyond the science of collisions, this project was a masterclass in collaboration; students practiced dividing work equally, solving design flaws together, and sharing the responsibility of every launch. It's been an incredible week of watching energy—and teamwork—in action!



News from 1D (Mrs Dunn)



First grade scientists in Mrs. Dunn's class are beginning an exciting unit on Sound & Light. To kick off this learning, we were fortunate to experience a fascinating and fun program on Sound from the Discovery Museum in Acton. Students learned that sound is vibration by engaging in a variety of hands-on explorations. They dipped a vibrating tuning fork into a bowl of water and found that the vibration created quite a splash! They also discovered the power of sound waves by making a ping pong ball on a string swing through the air just by placing a vibrating tuning fork near it. Finally, they enjoyed the music created by gently striking metal household objects, such as a spoon or spring, against a surface while holding the attached string up to their ears to listen. The students were brimming with insights and wonderings throughout the lesson. Many thanks to the PTO for bringing this valuable and memorable program to our budding scientists!



News from PE - Mr Foley



What's Happening in Physical Education!

The Martha Jones students have been very busy learning about Fitness! This unit introduced fitness concepts such as: Cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility. Warming up and cooling down, stretching, target heart rate, proper form and safety concepts were taught through circuit training, fitness challenges, and games. These activities emphasized the importance of keeping physically fit. The students also learned about the importance of keeping their heart and other body muscles strong! A variety of highly active games were introduced to teach and re-emphasize fitness concepts. The kids had a blast! Learning to enjoy physical fitness activities an important motivational factor for staying physically fit!



I hope you are well!
Patrick Foley
Physical Education Teacher



Martha Jones School PTO

Be Kind, Be Curious, Be Respectful, Be Responsible

February is here (almost!) That means the **Valentine's Dance**, STEAM Fair Registration and not to mention February Break. Have you signed up for Mini Courses? [Register](#) before they all fill up! Thanks to all who supported the **Jake n Joes Dine Out** fundraiser. As always, every little bit helps and allows us to support the MJ community. Speaking of support, we are actively looking for volunteers to **join the PTO Board for the 2026/2027** and 2027/2028 school years. Feel free to reach out with any questions!

All bundled up,
Your PTO

SAVE THE DATES

Valentine's Dance - February 6th

SEPAC Coffee Meet Up - February 11th ([details](#))

Read-a-thon Starts - March 2nd

PTO Meeting - March 3rd

Book Fair - March 4th

STEAM Fair - March 12th

International Night - March 27th

VALENTINE'S DAY DANCE

The Martha Jones PTO is excited to welcome our school community to the **Martha Jones Valentine's Dance on Friday, February 6th**. This special evening will be a fun celebration of **friendship and school spirit**, featuring a DJ, photobooth, crafts, snacks, and sweet treats.

This event is designed for **MJS students and their caregivers** to enjoy time together in a festive, welcoming space. Please note that this is **not a drop-off event**, and attendance is limited to students who attend MJS and their caregivers. We kindly ask that siblings who do not attend MJS not attend.

This year, families are also invited to spread a little extra love through an **optional donation** to the **Westwood Youth & Family Services Birthday Giving Program**. Donations may be made by bringing an item from the Amazon Wishlist or purchasing directly from the list and having it sent to WYFS. Amazon Wishlist: <http://bit.ly/3LvJzw4>

We look forward to celebrating with you! ♥

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!

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.



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



istockphoto.com - 1402084190

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

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](#).



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

[Talking to Children about hate crimes and anti-semitism](#) - National Child Traumatic Stress Network

[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 lplouffe@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 lplouffe@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 lplouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us أو على البريد الالكتروني 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 lplouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us Спасибо.



Matthew Kuklantz

Matthew is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters

