MAINE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT NO. 35
Serving the communities of ELIOT & SOUTH BERWICK

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Dear Marshwood Families,

There is so much to celebrate and share across our district! As we move through November, our schools are filled with opportunities to come together, recognize others, celebrate student accomplishments, and continue the important work of supporting our students and communities.

Honoring Our Veterans

We are currently in the midst of our Veterans' Day celebrations, and we could not be prouder of the way our students and staff are coming together to honor those who have served our country. Our students have worked incredibly hard preparing performances and special tributes to recognize our veterans. These events are meaningful opportunities for our school communities to express gratitude, learn from those who have served, and recognize the sacrifices made by veterans and their families.

Thank you to everyone who has helped make these celebrations possible, and especially to our veterans. We are grateful for you!

A Thank You to Our MMS Community

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we worked through the water issue at Marshwood Middle School on October 26. Fortunately, once the pump was unearthed, we discovered that it only needed a minor repair. I want to extend a special thank-you to our facilities team for their quick response and resourcefulness. While we completed additional water testing to ensure the water was safe for drinking and cooking, our staff brought in bottled water and water bubblers well after hours to support students and staff in the meantime. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated team looking out for our school community!

Board of Directors Updates

We have several updates to share following our recent Board of Directors meeting.

Welcome to our newest Board members!

Congratulations to Perrin Chick, who will serve a one-year term, and to Heather Holland, who will serve a three-year term on the Board of Directors. Perrin will be stepping in to fill the final year of Lisa Flynn's seat.

We wish Lisa all the best and sincerely thank her for her time, dedication, and service to our Board and District. We are grateful for the commitment of all those who volunteer their time to serve our communities.

Student voices and learning in action

A big thank-you to the students and staff at Eliot Elementary School for providing the Board with a wonderful presentation and interactive activity highlighting the regulated classroom. It was a great opportunity for Board

members to learn more about the work happening in our classrooms and to experience student learning firsthand. We appreciate the time and effort that went into sharing this important work!

Annual enrollment update

As we do each year at this time, we shared district enrollment data with the Board. Overall, district-wide enrollment is down 3.9% from five years ago.

One important point of context is that while enrollment is down 3.9% over the past five years, the staffing for our classroom teachers is down 3.7%, which almost matches the enrollment drop. This reflects a reduction of five positions over the past five years as we continually align our resources with student enrollment while maintaining our commitment to strong educational programming.

Looking ahead: 2027–2028 school calendar

We also presented a draft of the 2027–2028 school calendar. The proposed calendar largely mirrors this year's calendar.

Our process includes working with our partner districts, particularly those sending students to the Sanford Regional Technical Center, to align calendars as much as possible. We will share the draft with teachers, administrators, and the Board before communicating the finalized calendar to all families. We want to be thoughtful about coordination across our schools and the broader educational community.

Behind the Scenes: How School Board Policies Are Developed and Approved

At our recent meeting, the Board approved several policies for their first reading. This is a great opportunity to share a little about the work that happens behind the scenes before a school board policy is adopted.

Policies help guide district operations, establish expectations, and ensure that we are meeting legal requirements and best practices. New policies or revisions may be prompted by changes in federal or Maine law, the creation of new laws, the elimination of existing laws, our regular review of policies, or other district needs.

Who reviews our policies?

The Board's Policy Committee is a standing committee that meets monthly from September through June. The committee includes up to three members of the Board of Directors, the Superintendent, and district administrators. Depending on the policy being reviewed, additional staff members may participate, including District Nurses, the Athletic Director, and the Business Manager.

The committee reviews policies and recommendations presented by the Maine School Management Association (MSMA) and/or our district attorneys at Drummond Woodsum. The committee then develops or modifies policies to bring forward to the full Board for discussion and consideration as it applies to Marshwood.

How does a policy become official?

The Board follows a two-reading approval process:

1. First Reading: Initial Review and Public Input

- A draft policy is presented to the Board for its first reading.
- Board members receive a copy of the draft in advance of the meeting.
- Copies are made available to the public at the meeting.

- Community members have an opportunity to provide public comment during the designated public comment portion of the agenda.
- The Board votes on the policy. At this stage, the Board may approve moving it forward, deny the proposed policy, or send it back to the Policy Committee for additional review.

2. Second Reading: Final Review and Decision

- If revisions are needed following the first reading, an updated draft is provided to the Board.
- The updated policy is posted online with the Board meeting agenda on the Friday before the meeting.
- Community members again have an opportunity to provide public comment.
- The Board votes on the policy. It may approve the policy, deny it, or return it to the Policy Committee for further review.
- Once approved, the policy becomes official and takes effect immediately.

This process ensures that policies receive careful consideration, appropriate legal review, Board oversight, and opportunities for public input before adoption. While much of this work happens behind the scenes, it is an important part of ensuring that our district operates with clear, thoughtful, and legally sound guidance.

We appreciate the community's engagement and encourage families to review Board agendas and participate in public comment opportunities.

Coming Up: Tuck Everlasting!

Next week, performances of *Tuck Everlasting* begin, and we could not be more excited! Our students and staff have put tremendous time, energy, and creativity into bringing this production to life. School performances are such a wonderful way to bring our communities together and give our students an opportunity to shine. Whether on stage, behind the scenes, or supporting the production in countless other ways, our students demonstrate the power of creativity, collaboration, and commitment. We hope many of you will have the opportunity to attend and celebrate the incredible talent of our students!

Performances will be on Friday, November 13, Saturday, November 14, Friday, November 20, and Saturday, November 21 at 7 pm, with a special matinee showing on Saturday, November 21, at 1 pm. Tickets are available here.

Friday Night Football!

Finally, we are looking forward to the big football game this Friday night 11/6 at **6:00 p.m.!** We are excited to see our school community come together to cheer on our team and celebrate our students. Please keep an eye out for updates, as the rainy forecast may require a rescheduling of the game. We will communicate any changes as soon as information becomes available.

Parent/Guardian Listening Sessions

Please join me for an opportunity to introduce yourself, ask questions, share your thoughts, and discuss what matters to you and your family. I look forward to connecting with you, hearing your ideas, and learning how we can continue to support our students and families. The virtual listening session on **Monday, November 9, from 1:00–2:00 p.m.** Please email caroline.arakelian@rsu35.org to RSVP, and I will send you the meeting link.

Best Regards,



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Superintendent of Schools

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