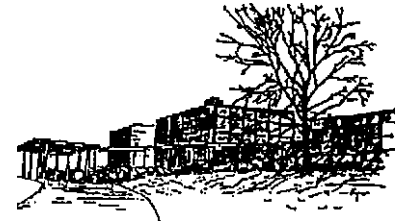


# GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## WESTERN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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**Mr. GORDON BEINSTEIN**

Principal

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August 2022

Dear Western Families,

I hope and trust that you are enjoying your summer. (Well, you have middle school kids, so 'enjoying' might be a stretch!) This is always a bittersweet letter for me to write...While I do miss your children, and even some of you, I do relish the peace that comes with July and August. However, the district does not pay me to sit in an empty building, so I guess I need your kids back here! In reality, I do miss the bustle....When people who work in middle schools tell others what they do for a living, they are often met with an inquisitive "Why?", or, more likely "Are you nuts?" But these people do not get it! Unless you live it everyday, it is difficult to understand the joy that comes with working with young adolescents who are self-confident yet insecure; possess a robust individual streak yet have an intrinsic need to fit in, are intelligent, yet capable of making mind-numbing decisions. It is this very dichotomy that provides the energy that makes middle schools special and my job imminently enjoyable.

That being said, the last couple of years have been rough, for us at school and likely for you at home. The pandemic has impacted our children. While the COVID protocols may be behind us, the academic and emotional impacts are not; and these two subjects are more aligned than ever. No longer do we as a school, nor does any individual teacher, have the option to choose to ignore a child's emotional state and expect him/her to learn. I saw this with my own eyes, and the test results bore this out as well. When staff took the time to connect on a personal/emotional level, the kids grew. It is truly connections before content: hearts before minds. I ask that you do not misinterpret this as 'going soft'. Quite the contrary; I am infinitely cognizant of how the last few years have impacted our kids, and I feel the sense of urgency to 'catch them up'. Our behavioral and academic expectations will be higher than ever. But I have learned after 35 years of working with this age group (I guess you can teach an old dog new tricks!) that you need to go slow to go fast. The same child who won't pick up a pencil for one teacher will run through the proverbial wall for another...the difference is in the connection the child has with the teacher. At Western, we are so fortunate to have a school full of the 'run through the wall for' teachers who will take the time to build the relations to allow for this growth.

So what's new at WMS? Like any organization that hopes to meet the needs of its constituents (students) we have to reflect every year and make the needed changes. This year brings a new, WAY less complicated schedule, new behavioral systems, a new advisor base plan, and a hyper focus on our AVID-School wide theme. More information on all of this will follow in the coming weeks.

[www.greenwickschools.org/wms](http://www.greenwickschools.org/wms)

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We also have quite a few new staff members. I really think it's important that you know that in a difficult hiring season, I had ZERO trouble finding excellent candidates. With just about everyone of our new hires, we were the ONLY school they applied to. They weren't looking for any new position, they were looking to teach at Western. These new hires were well respected members of their former districts. Through word of mouth, mostly through the teachers who already work here, they learned of the good work being done at WMS and wanted to be a part of this community. This speaks volumes about the quality of the staff at Western and the support of the community. The most important thing I do is hire and so long as the right staff is in front of your kids, we will continue to thrive as a school!

**We** do not do this work alone; **you** do not do this alone. The parent / school partnership is never more important than in these three formative years. **Middle school is not the time to become uninvolved in your child's education.** I implore you to log into Aspen to stay on top of your child's grades. Access Google Classroom and check your child's planner so that you can accurately monitor work production. Read the progress monitoring updates that your child will complete in their planner bi-monthly and speak with your child about his/her progress, (or lack thereof). Read my weekly emails (as painful as that may be) to learn what is going on in the building. If all else fails, PLEASE reach out directly to our staff. There are so many ways for you to get information regarding your child's progress that I will think it is fair for me to say that if you are unaware of how he/she is doing it is because you have chosen to be...don't make that choice! Work with us. Together, we got this!

While you will hear from us, we also need to hear from you. We need to know what you are dealing with at home so that, together, we can wrap around the support your child needs. In addition to the academics and school happenings, especially if this is your first middle schooler, you may need help in understanding if your child's new found hairstyle or music choice is 'normal' (Spoiler alert: It's not. They are in middle school so nothing is 'normal', but it is likely typical). Working together, we can ensure a successful year academically, socially and emotionally.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this. As you will soon learn if you are new to us, and likely already know if not, I write these newsletters as if I get paid by the word! Sorry! I look forward to seeing you soon and I am excited for what promises to be another outstanding year!

#WestsideBestside!

Gordon

PS: In the next week or so, if not sooner, I will follow up with logistics regarding the first couple days of school, when your child will be able to see his/her schedule, the ice cream social, pre-ordered supply pick up, requisite forms, and my favorite topic of all...student drop off (No, I haven't figured out how to get some of you to follow the rules...and the cops won't give me a taser no matter how often or how nicely I ask!)