

Westport Community Schools Out of School Time Program Handbook



Westport Community Schools
Out of School Time Program
Westport, MA 02790
T:774-309-4359



Updated September 3, 2024



Dear Families,

Welcome to the Westport Community Schools Out of School Time Program (OST). We are pleased that you have enrolled your child in our Program! The OST Programs are family-centered and we encourage you to be a part of your child's experience.

The OST Program has established a number of procedures, guidelines, and notifications concerning program and classroom practices. These guidelines have been developed to comply with state licensing standards through the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). The policies and procedures described in this handbook provide a clear description of what families may expect from the OST Program, as well as what OST expects of families. Our goal is to provide high quality care in a warm, nurturing, and inclusive environment, which promotes your child's growth and development. Please read this handbook and keep a copy for future reference, as long as your child is enrolled in the OST Program.

We hope that your experience at Westport Community Schools OST Program is a positive one, and that you feel secure in the fact that your child is being well-cared for. We look forward to getting to know your family, and hope that your child enjoys our program.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Chaves
Director, Westport Community Schools, Out of School Time Program
jchaves@westportschools.org
774-309-4359 or 508-636-1140 ext. 4732



Enrollment

Enrollment Requirements:

Children are eligible to attend the OST morning and aftercare Programs in grades PreK-4. The following steps must be completed prior to enrollment:

- Physical and immunization forms on file at Westport Community Schools
- All enrollment forms must be submitted prior to start date (updated annually)

Quality standards

Children enrolled in the Westport Community Schools OST Programs represent a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Our Programs are designed to spark each child's natural curiosity and to encourage true learning. Sites are licensed through the EEC, and receive annual monitoring visits to ensure compliance with all health and safety requirements.

EEC's mission is to provide the foundation that supports all children in their development as lifelong learners and community members, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers.

Educators

The OST Program educators and childcare assistants are professionals with varied educational backgrounds that meet the qualification standards of EEC and the Westport Community Schools.

Childcare Assistants, Group Leaders, Lead Teachers

All teachers are expected to meet the EEC qualification requirements, including experience and professional education courses; required to participate in ongoing educational training; and be certified in first aid and CPR.

Program Coordinator

The primary responsibilities of the Program Coordinator is to assist the Director with the daily operations of the center, supervision of educators, and monitor Program and EEC policies and procedures for the protection and safety of children enrolled in the Program.

Director of Out of School Time Program

The Director of the OST Program oversees operations of the child care centers at Westport Community Schools, ensures all EEC standards of care and regulatory requirements are being met, and continuously researches and implements best practices. The Director also collaborates with families and caregivers in the most effective, compassionate, and non-judgmental manner.

The OST Program also works in collaboration with Westport High School students interested in Early Education. These students are under direct supervision of the Director and Program Coordinator.

Abuse & Neglect

All child care workers in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are “**mandated reporters**” of known or suspected instances of child abuse (verbal, physical, emotional) or neglect. As “**mandated reporters**,” child care workers are required by law to report known or suspected instances of abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 508-235-9800 from 9:00AM- 5:00PM or the DCF emergency hotline at 1-800-792-5200 after regular business hours.

If any employee of the OST Program suspects a child in the Program is being abused or neglected, the situation and documentation must be brought to the attention of the Program Director. The Director will determine whether to file a report with DCF and the EEC if, after discussion and observation, there is reasonable cause to believe that:

- a. The child is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon her/him, including sexual abuse.
- b. The child is suffering from neglect

“Reasonable cause” means that, after examining all the facts in a particular situation, most people with similar training and experience would suspect abuse or neglect.

If the Program Director is unsure as to reasonable cause, they will contact DCF’s Screening Department and the licensor at EEC to discuss these concerns.

Abuse and Neglect Reports

A written report filed with DCF must be filed within 48 hours of suspicion. A copy of this report will be kept in the child’s folder and the report must contain:

- The Center Director’s name
- The names and addresses of the child and his/her parents or other person responsible for his/her care, if known.
- The child’s date of birth and sex.
- The nature and extent of the child’s injuries, abuse, maltreatment, or neglect.
- The circumstances under which educators first became aware of the child’s injuries, abuse, maltreatment, or neglect.
- Any action taken to treat, shelter or assist the child.
- Any other pertinent information helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries or the identity of the persons responsible for the injuries.

The Program Director will maintain contact with DCF to determine the results of the investigation and any follow-up services that may have been recommended for the child and his/her family. If the investigation shows that the report is untrue, the Program Director is immune by law from civil or criminal liability for filing the report, as are all mandated reporters (including all child care workers).

If any child care worker is accused or suspected of abuse or neglect of a child enrolled at the OST Program, that employee will be immediately relieved of all childcare duties and will be placed on leave. Immediately, the EEC will be contacted and an investigation will take place. The procedures to be followed are listed below:

1. The Director of the OST Program will contact the parent(s) or guardians of the child and arrange a meeting to discuss the incident.
2. The Director of the OST Program will file a report with both the EEC and DCF.

3. The OST Program Director, along with Westport Community Schools Human Resources Director and the Superintendent, will conduct its own internal investigation.
4. If accusations are found to be unsubstantiated by the DCF, that employee will return to her/his position, with the approval of both the Superintendent and HR Director.

Westport Community Schools, Out of School Time Programs

Morning Care Program

OST Morning Care Program - Westport Elementary School- Grades K-4

The OST Program provides morning care at the Westport Elementary School. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, from **7:00 AM–8:30 AM**. Breakfast is provided. The cost of the morning is 15\$ per morning, with a 25% sibling discount.

Arrival

Parents should enter the building through the front entrance (cafeteria door). Parents must escort their children into the cafeteria each morning.

The OST Program is not responsible for a child until the parent/guardian makes contact with the childcare teacher.

Departure

Students in Kindergarten will be placed on a bus by a childcare assistant at approximately 8:15am, when busses begin arriving at the Westport Elementary School. These students are then dropped off at the Macomber School to begin their school day.

Aftercare Programs

OST Aftercare Program- Preschool-Kindergarten

The OST Program for preschool-kindergarten provides afternoon care at the Alice A. Macomber School. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, from **2:45 PM–5:30 PM**. Snack is provided, and the cost of the program is 30\$ per afternoon with a 25% sibling discount. Children are dismissed from their classroom to the program.

OST Aftercare Program- Grades 1-4

The OST Program for grades 1-4 provides afternoon care at the former Westport High School. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, from **3:00 PM–5:30 PM**. Snack is provided, and the cost of the program is 30\$ per afternoon with a 25% sibling discount.

Arrival

Students that attend aftercare in grades 1-4 are transported from the Westport Elementary School, directly after school dismissal, to the former Westport High School. Upon arrival, a member of the OST team will greet them and immediately take attendance, ensuring all children are accounted for. Children arrive at approximately 3:10 PM.

Departure-

Parents and guardians of children in all grades, must pick up their child/children by 5:30PM. If you anticipate that you may be late, please call the Director of Program Coordinator at 774-309-4359. If we

cannot reach a parent/guardian by 5:40PM, we reserve the right to call an authorized person on the pick-up list to get a child at the program.

OST Summer Program

The OST Program provides a summer full of fun, exciting activities, and more! The Summer Program is held at the Former Westport High School, and operates **Monday through Friday, from 8am - 4:30pm**. We are closed on July 4th each year. Start and end dates to the program depend on the last day of school and when the upcoming school year begins. Rates are based on full day attendance, with a half-day option available. Breakfast and a snack are provided, however, lunch and additional snacks are the responsibility of families. Current rates are \$55/full day and \$30/half day rate, with a 25% sibling discount.

Authorization of Release

Children will be released only to an authorized person. An authorized person is designated by the parent/guardian on the Identification and Emergency Form at the time of enrollment. It is the parent's responsibility to keep these authorizations up-to-date and accurate. Parents must submit a written authorization for any changes concerning who may pick up their child. Parents must provide all court-ordered and custody arrangements. Authorized persons must present a photo ID or your child will not be released to any person. The OST Program has the right to not release any child to an adult appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

*****It is critical that we have the most up-to-date emergency contact information. This includes work, home, and cell phone numbers.**

Late Pick-up fee

Parents/guardians are responsible for picking up their child at the established time noted on enrollment forms. A late fee of \$1.00 will be charged for every minute after 5:30 PM (unless the Director is notified of the potential for late pick-up). The fee will be assessed by the attending educators and lobby clock in the pick-up area. Up to 5 business days for payment can be negotiated. Excessive late pick-up may result in suspension and/or termination from the program.

Absence

Please notify your child's school, their teacher, and the Director, if they will not be attending the OST Program. You can email jchaves@westportschools.org or dsambun@westportschools.org. You can also text 774-309-4359.

Holiday Closures

The Westport Community Schools Out of School Time Program does not operate on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
- President's Day
- Good Friday
- Patriot's Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous People's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- The day following Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve

- Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve

Early Release Days

The OST Program will follow the Westport Community School district calendar for early release. Each school year, families will receive a list of early release days when we are open, and those when we close. At least three of the early release days may be used for staff professional development, which means there will be no care provided. Families will know these dates well in advance.

****Hours of operation on early release days are subject to change.**

Snow Days

The OST Program will also be closed when Westport Community School closes due to snow.

- If the OST Program closes for a snow day, parents are not expected to pay their daily fee.
- Please note: In cases of inclement weather, the OST Program reserves the right to refuse care due to reduced coverage.

Building Emergencies

- The OST Program is licensed through the Department of Early Education and Care. Their regulations specify that childcare cannot be open in the event of power outage, heating issues, or any other event or condition that the fire/building inspection department deems unsafe.
- If the OST Program closes due to a building emergency, parents are not expected to pay their daily fee.

Child Records

Confidentiality and distribution of information contained in a child's record shall be privileged and confidential. The OST Program will not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child, without written consent of the child's parent or guardian.

The enrolling parent or guardian shall, upon request, have access to his/her child's file at reasonable times. In no event shall such access be delayed more than two (2) business days after the initial request. Upon such request for access, the child's entire record shall be made available. No records will be distributed without the enrolled parent or guardian authorization.

A parent or guardian has the right to add information, comments, data or any other relevant materials to the child's record, as well as to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record, unless the information is required as part of enrollment.

Consent Forms

At the time of enrollment, parents and guardians will be asked to consent to several items including the use of photos, application of sunscreen and insect repellent, transportation, and other items. ****Please read all forms carefully.**

Discrimination

The OST Program conforms in all respects to the rules and regulations of the EEC. It is the policy of the OST Program to ensure that there is no discrimination on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political belief, marital status, national origin, disability or sexual orientation.

Fire drills

Fire drills are practiced monthly at all sites. Attendance records are kept with childcare care assistants and group leaders at all times to ensure all children are accounted for. Should you have any questions regarding these emergency drills, please reach out to the Director.

Food and Nutrition

Children will receive an afternoon snack provided by the Program. A snack schedule is posted in each classroom. Please ask the Director if you would like a copy.

Lunches (early release days, school vacation weeks, and summer program)

If you plan to provide a hot lunch for your child, please heat it at home and place the hot food in a thermos. The thermos will keep the hot food at an appropriate temperature, as staff are unable to heat food for children.

Guidance & Discipline

The OST Program strives to build each child's self-esteem, independence and ability to socialize in a group. This is done, primarily, through developing a child's self-control. All guidance techniques are based upon knowledge of child development and familiarity with the child. In our Program we use non-punitive forms of guidance and discipline.

Positive Environment

Our Program provides choices for activities, has supportive child care assistants and group leaders working with your child, and offers an appropriately stimulating curriculum. All staff at the OST Program act as role models, treating children and adults with respect and reinforcing positive behavior.

Natural and Logical Consequences

Children are not punished. Rather, there are consequences that naturally or logically follow. For example, if a child is throwing Legos she/he is showing that she/he is not able to play with them appropriately. The teacher will remind her/ him that Legos are for building. If the action continues, then the child will no longer be able to use the Legos for a period of time.

Redirection

Childcare assistants and group leaders help/allow children to choose alternative activities. This helps to diffuse a situation when a child may not have the ability to deal with their current situation or environment.

Separation from a group

When a child is extremely upset or exhibits strong emotions, he/she may need time and assistance in calming him/herself. This is done by sitting or standing in a calm down area within the classroom. Children can stay in this area until they are able to calm themselves down on their own or with assistance, and will have the option of using sensory items, such as fidgets, to help in self-regulation. When the child is ready to leave the area, the childcare assistant or group leader might review with the child why he/she went to the calm down area, ask what they could do to rectify the situation, and then plan the next activity with the child. In some instances, and when a child may be experiencing difficulty with their emotions, a parent/guardian may need to be called. This will always be a last resort.

Illness & Injury

If your child should become ill (i.e. temperature 100°F or higher, diarrhea, vomiting) after school or during the school day, we will make every effort to contact you directly. If we are unable to reach you, we will contact the persons listed on the emergency form completed at the time of the enrollment.

Your child must be picked up within one hour of our phone call (or sooner depending on the severity of illness). Any child sent home from the Program because of a serious illness may not return the following day. If your child has been out due to a communicable illness or is out three consecutive days, a doctor's note must be presented upon her/his return to school.

Please keep your child home if he or she has:

- a fever of 100°F or higher, or has had one during the previous 24 hours
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- flu-like symptoms
- a communicable illness (i.e. chicken pox, scarlet fever, impetigo, head lice, strep throat)
- conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- a noticeable rash

Serious Injury

In case of serious injury, every effort will be made to contact you directly. If we are unable to reach you, we will contact the person listed on the emergency form completed at the time of the enrollment. The paramedics or an ambulance will be called if an injury requires immediate attention or is life-threatening, and we will arrange for medical transport to an emergency hospital.

Until the arrival of a parent or an ambulance or paramedic, the OST Director or Program Coordinator will assume authority. If necessary, we will arrange for medical transport to an emergency hospital.

Medications

Medications may be administered to your child in the Program provided a parental authorization has been completed and prescription is current by the child's prescribing physician. Medication must be in the original prescription packaging, with a pharmacy label attached, and cannot be expired. These forms will be given to you by the Director or Program Coordinator. Children on prescription medicine for a contagious illness may not return to the center until they have been on the medication for a minimum of 24 hours.

Children with chronic conditions such as allergies, asthma, etc. must also have an Individual Health Care Plan filled out by the child's parent or guardian. This document will be provided to you by the Director.

Non-prescription medicine must be accompanied by a current written order from your child's physician (valid for 1 year) and a written parental authorization. Dosage, duration, and route of the medication must be provided.

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Parents and guardians can expect:

- Information sharing between Director, Program Coordinator, Child Care Assistants/Group Leaders, building Administrators, Educators, Special Education Coordinators, Adjustment Counselors, and the school Nurse.
- The OST Program to share information via email to parents, through newsletters, and on Westport Community Schools' social media pages.
- Surveys to determine parent/guardian satisfaction

Our families are very important to us, and we encourage parents and guardians to become involved in order to strengthen our partnership.

When a child comes from a blended family, we encourage caregivers to be equally involved in their child's care. Each guardian can request information be shared separately at orientation or meeting with the Director.

Communication

Every effort is made to ensure communication with parents is accessible and understandable. The OST Program ensures that all verbal and written communication is accessible to families regardless of their native language or other communication impairments. If a language is not spoken internally, we will arrange for verbal and/or written translation services.

Input and feedback

We want your child to experience the very best care and activities, and your input helps us to achieve this goal. Please speak with the Director, Program Coordinator, or your child's teacher if you have any suggestions, concerns, or questions.

Parent/Guardian Visits

The OST Program operates under an open door policy, meaning parents and guardians can and are encouraged to visit the Program at any point during their stay. Your child's teacher will keep you informed on activities and events ideal for your participation, should you want to attend.

Personal Items & Clothing

Clothing

We will go outside in the winter if the temperature is 32 degrees or higher, so please send your child with hats, gloves, warm clothing and a coat for these instances when we go outside during the cold weather.

Shoes

Children should wear closed-toe shoes in order to avoid injury. The gymnasium is a large part of OST programming, and we want to ensure that children have the opportunity to run, play organized games, and take part in other activities, without the risk of getting hurt.

Toys/Electronics

When toys are brought to the Program they may break or be taken home by another child. Tracking each child's belongings can be a difficult task, therefore, toys and electronics from home are not allowed.

**The Director of Program Coordinator may allow toys and electronics on certain days and special events, however, you will be notified ahead of time when this occurs.

Tuition

Tuition payments are due by the 1st week of each month, unless otherwise specified. Payments can be made by cash, check, money order, or the MySchoolBucks app. Checks and money orders should be made payable to the **Town of Westport**. Please be sure to save all receipts, especially for cash and money order payments.

Returned Payment

A \$25 fee will be assessed for all returned checks. If a payment is returned to the town of Westport due to insufficient funds, you will be required to rectify your account in cash upon notification. If you have a payment returned for insufficient funds more than twice, you will be required to make all future tuition payments by cash or money order.

Dismissal or Separation from the OST Program

A child may be dismissed or from the Program under the following circumstances:

- The health and safety of the child or other children at the Program cannot be assured.
- The child's developmental or emotional needs are not being met at the Program.
- Parents and guardians are not following Westport Community Schools and the Department of Early Education and Care policies and procedures.

If a concern regarding the preceding criteria develops, a meeting will be scheduled with the parent or guardian. A written plan to avoid dismissal/separation with guidelines will be established. If progress is not made, a letter of dismissal/ separation will be issued stating conditions of return. A copy of this letter will be kept on file in the child's record at the OST Program.

Access & Inclusion

Westport Community Schools provides an equal opportunity for all students to participate in the Out of School Time Program. All children who participate in the program will have the opportunity to participate in independent and group activities such as art, music, physical activity, dramatic play, science, yoga, free play, and other developmentally appropriate activities.

Reasonable accommodations and modifications can be made, provided that said accommodations and modifications do not fundamentally alter the nature of the program. All requests for accommodations and modifications will be considered and evaluated case-by-case.

To withdraw from the Program

A two-week written notice is required if a parent/guardian decides to withdraw their child from the Program. Payment is required for two weeks after the date on which written notice is received.

To switch enrolled days

To make a switch to enrolled days, please contact the Director or Program Coordinator as soon as possible. This privilege is available upon approval from the Director and is based on staffing, ratio, and availability.

Zero-Tolerance

Employees of the Westport Community School Out of School Time Program, have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Acts of violence will not be tolerated. For purposes of this handbook, violence is defined as any extreme behavior that could result in the abuse or injury of a person at the Program, and/or damage or destruction of property. Violence is not restricted only to physical conduct, but also includes verbal and/or written threats.

Westport Community Schools Out of School Time Parental Agreement

Please read carefully and sign this agreement.

I have read and agree to comply with the policies and procedures that the Westport Community Schools Out of School Time Program has stated in this parent handbook. This includes, but is not limited to registration, payment schedule and procedures, late payment fees, two-week written withdrawal notice, and late pick-up fees.

Child's Name _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

Received by: _____ Date: _____

