

# Paxton Center School

## School Handbook

updated 8-6-2024



**\*\*\*We are the Panthers and our school colors are red and black\*\*\***

### PCS Community Pledge The 3 Pantherrr's

- Respectful
- Responsible
- Reliable

# 2023 – 2024

Updated 8/8/2023

**\*Wachusett Regional School District Policies are referenced in each of the applicable sections of this Handbook and located in the Addendum**

**Greetings to all PCS students and families!**

This Paxton Center School Handbook contains important information for you and your parents. Please review this handbook carefully. Any community will have a set of rules and practices that help the community to run more smoothly. This handbook contains the procedures that will govern the school this year. It is everyone's responsibility to review and understand the procedures. Some sections are currently being modified/ changed and will change this year. These sections are labeled as “Under construction and highlighted in yellow”. We want to promote mutual respect in a safe, yet challenging learning environment. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Best wishes for a successful school year,  
Kathryn Miville, Interim PCS Principal

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<b>Grades 7&amp;8</b> Ms. Anne Melanson (English Language Arts) Ms. Megan Kirby (Spanish) Mrs. Heather Larson (Math) Ms. Julie Bellerose (Science/Tech) Mr. Heath Verrill (Social Studies) Mr. Scott Wahlstrom (Science)	<b>Cafeteria/ Recess Aides</b> Rebecca Kniskern and Christne Hanson  <table border="1" data-bbox="824 199 1461 535"> <tr> <th colspan="2">Instructional Aides</th></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="834 226 1177 485"> Mrs. Jen Fenner  Mrs. Amanda Champagne  Miss. Sarah Paradis  Ms. Angelique Thompson  Mrs. Cara Benoit  Mrs. Rebecca Paonessa  Mrs. Jessica Thorp  Ms. Lisa Denoncourt-Krauss </td><td data-bbox="1183 226 1463 506"> Mrs. Jacqui Steffon  Mrs. Dawn Ertel  Ms. Katie Zereski  Mrs. Carolyn Berglund  Mrs. Kim Hannigan  Mrs. Stephanie Payson  Mrs. Jaime McKeon  Mrs. Christine Hunt  Ms. Nicole Kohberger  Mrs. Lynnsy Pauline </td></tr> </table>	Instructional Aides		Mrs. Jen Fenner Mrs. Amanda Champagne Miss. Sarah Paradis Ms. Angelique Thompson Mrs. Cara Benoit Mrs. Rebecca Paonessa Mrs. Jessica Thorp Ms. Lisa Denoncourt-Krauss	Mrs. Jacqui Steffon Mrs. Dawn Ertel Ms. Katie Zereski Mrs. Carolyn Berglund Mrs. Kim Hannigan Mrs. Stephanie Payson Mrs. Jaime McKeon Mrs. Christine Hunt Ms. Nicole Kohberger Mrs. Lynnsy Pauline
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## **PAXTON CENTER SCHOOL MISSION**

The **mission** of the Paxton Center School is to provide students in Kindergarten through Eighth grade the opportunity to achieve to their highest potential - academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.

## **PAXTON CENTER SCHOOL VISION**

Our Vision is for every PCS student to graduate eighth grade with the skills and knowledge needed to attend high school without remediation and to have the opportunity to pursue a path of his/her choice.

To achieve this, the school will make certain that:

- All students receive standards-based instruction in all subject areas by highly qualified teachers
- All teachers focus their instruction on high-quality student work that meets standards and provides differentiated opportunities
- Each student, regardless of their academic level when they entered the school, will leave eighth grade:
  - Having met or exceeded state standards in all subject areas;
  - A proficient reader and writer;
  - Completing a community service commitment of at least 10 hours
- All students are provided with a just, fair, and caring learning environment that fosters confidence and a sense of belonging
- Every student will study a challenging curriculum that applies his/her learning to everyday situations, thereby enhancing students' social, emotional, and ethical development and deepening their commitment to values and good citizenship

## **PAXTON CENTER SCHOOL CORE VALUES**

The members of the Paxton Center School community will:

...Work in partnership in a supportive environment to develop a high level of proficiency in the core curriculum areas of our school. Teachers, students, support staff, and administrators are accountable for their actions and will be responsive to the needs of others. All must measure their success according to established criteria.

...Work in partnership to provide individualized opportunities for all in an academically challenging environment to support lifelong learning. All students deserve the opportunity to reach their potential.

...Work in partnership to respect, accept, and value diversity in ourselves and others, support the efforts of all and recognize the resulting accomplishments. To learn, students need to feel valued, safe, and secure. Respect, tolerance, and equal opportunity shall be promoted for all students and staff. Inappropriate and dangerous activities will not be tolerated.

**We believe** that each student and each teacher has the right:

1. To work in a pleasant, safe environment.
2. To create an atmosphere that encourages learning.
3. To expect freedom from harassment from others.

**We expect** that the staff at PCS will teach you how to learn. Your teachers will encourage you to think for yourself, learn the art of asking useful questions, seek answers on your own, and study effectively. We will also emphasize the following skills:

1. organizing materials, time, and information
2. knowing how and when to ask for help
3. listening carefully and following directions
4. beginning and completing an assignment or task
5. working independently and in groups, on projects
6. using technology as a learning tool

## **ACADEMICS**

### **STUDY HABITS (Gr. 3-8)**

You are expected to give your best effort every day in school. Being a successful learner involves self-discipline and organization. Here are some hints that will help you to do well:

- Take your agenda book to all classes. Write down all assignments, projects, and tests/quizzes.
- Be sure you understand the assignment. If you don't understand it, ask questions.
- Before leaving school, ask yourself what you need for homework, and take it home.
- Establish a special homework place in your home.
- An evening without homework should have some time spent reviewing for an upcoming test/quiz

### **HOMEWORK (Gr. 1-8)**

Homework assignments are an extension of the classroom and a way to develop self-discipline and organizational skills.

1. Homework assignments may include
  - Drill and additional practice to reinforce and/or strengthen skills introduced in class
  - Reading assigned literature or text material
  - Research
  - Studying for quizzes and tests
  - Writing assignments
  - Long-term reports or projects
2. Since people study in different ways, the time spent on an assignment may differ from student to student. The key is to organize your time well. As a general rule, the amount of homework assigned daily will require approximately 10 minutes per year of grades, such as 10 minutes in grade 1 and 50 minutes in grade 5.
3. You, the student, are responsible for assignments. Work is expected to be completed and passed in on time. You are responsible for getting make-up work for assignments missed due to a one or two-day absence.
4. For absences of 3 or more days, parents may call and request homework to be collected.
5. You are responsible for bringing your homework to school on time. Do not expect your parents to bring your work to school.

### **MAKE-UP WORK (Gr. 3-8)**

Students who have been absent or who are doing poorly in a subject must assume the responsibility for making up work and/or asking for extra help. If a student is absent for a prolonged period of time, he/she will be given an adequate amount of time to make up the work missed. If your child is absent for one or two days, please have him/her call a classmate to find out the missing assignments.

### **EXTRA HELP (Gr. 5-8)**

Initiative for obtaining extra help rests with the student but should be encouraged by parents or guardians. Teachers are available for extra help.

**ENRICHMENT:** (policy 36II.4) See pages A-2.

## **ACCIDENT INSURANCE COVERAGE**

The Wachusett School Department sponsors a student-participation insurance plan. Brochures describing the plans available will be distributed during the first week of school.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Consistent attendance is a prerequisite for maximum student achievement. Parents/guardians have the responsibility for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, Sec 1). When a child is going to be absent, the school district requires the parent/guardian to call the school between 7:15 & 8:15 AM to inform them of their child's absence (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, Sec 1A). To call your child out absent, please contact the Main Office: (508) 798-8576. Please note: that a parent phone call does not excuse your child's absence. If a student is absent and the school is not notified, the school will call the student's parent/guardian (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, Sec 1B). An automated call will go out around 9 AM. Therefore, it is important that parents/guardians provide their current contact information to ensure proper notification can be made. Appointments with doctors should be made after school hours or during vacations. Early dismissal should not be requested, except in cases of emergency. Note that students who are absent during the school day are not permitted on the school campus for any after-school activities of any type on that day. Exceptions may only be granted at the discretion of an administrator. The following procedure will be followed:

**Step One:** When a student has a total of five (5) days of non-attendance, the parent/guardian will be contacted to notify them of the unexcused absence and inform them of their student's current attendance record and possibly to develop an action plan moving forward. (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, Section 1B).

**Step Two:** When a student has a total of eight (8) days of non-attendance and none of those days have been covered by a healthcare professional's note or another administratively approved excuse, then a letter will be sent to the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) requesting them to contact the school to arrange a meeting with the School Counselor and Principal. The meeting will focus on the concerns associated with the student's attendance and develop an action plan to support improved attendance (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, Section 2).

**Step Three:** If a student continues to be absent from school and **the number of non-attendance days reaches twelve (12)**, parents will be called back in for a meeting to review the action plan.

See Page A-5 for School Committee Policy

## **TRUANCY**

Any student who is absent from school for all or part of the school day without excuse shall be considered truant. Truant students will be subject to disciplinary action by the school or court system and will be required to make up all class time missed.

## **DISMISSAL**

Students being dismissed early must have a written parental note stating the specific dismissal time desired, the reason for early dismissal, and who will be coming for the student. This note must be presented to the homeroom teacher. Parents are to report to the office to sign the child out before pick up. **STUDENTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO RIDE A BUS OTHER THAN THEIR ASSIGNED BUS**, except in the case of specific child care needs. **STUDENTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO GO HOME WITH ANOTHER CHILD OR ADULT WITHOUT WRITTEN CONSENT FROM THEIR PARENTS.**

## **TARDINESS**

Homeroom begins at 8:20 a.m. and students prepare for the start of the day. Any student who arrives at school after 8:20 a.m. is required to report to the office for a late pass. You are allowed three excused tardies per term which must be verified by a note or phone call from a parent/guardian on that day. Each tardy beyond the three allowed per term will result in disciplinary action.

## **HOMEWORK REQUESTS FOR PLANNED EXTENDED ABSENCES**

Extended absences from school for vacations usually have a negative effect on student performance and are not condoned as a reasonable excuse for being absent from school. If a family chooses to vacation during a regular school week, teachers are not required to provide work. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with each teacher to make up all assignments.

## **BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE**

PCS shall help students learn behavior patterns, which will enable them to be responsible, contributing members of society. Students will be expected to conduct themselves in keeping with their level of maturity and act with due regard for their fellow students and supervisory authority. Students shall have a right to reasonable treatment from the school and its employees, and in turn, the school and its employees shall have a right to expect reasonable behavior from students. The principal will be responsible for administering behavior and discipline procedures at the school in accordance with District policy and school procedures. In order to assure that all students and staff are made aware of their specific rights and responsibilities, a student handbook shall be developed by each school, which defines the rights and responsibilities of students and others whose actions affect student behavior. References to all School Committee policies relating to student discipline will be included in the student handbook.

### **BEHAVIOR CODE VIOLATIONS**

**DRUGS AND ALCOHOL:** Student(s) found in possession of drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcohol, or alcohol-related products will be suspended and may be subject to expulsion. See Page A-7 for School Committee Policy

**TOBACCO PRODUCTS, LIGHTERS, MATCHES:** This offense will result in suspension from school. Paxton Center is a SMOKE-FREE environment in compliance with Massachusetts General Laws.

**THREATENING:** Any student found guilty of threatening harm to other students, staff, and/or the school facilities may face a suspension, the length of time will depend on the severity of actions as determined by the building principal.

**FIGHTING:** Offenses will result in parent notification and possible suspension from school. Subsequent offenses - increased suspension from school and could result in expulsion. If a student is hit, pushed, or provoked he/she should tell a staff member immediately. A student who hits another student, even if that student hits him/her first will be disciplined. We have no tolerance for violence policy that includes everyone.

**Class Cut/ Skipping Class:** Offences will result in a possible written warning, parent notification, and/ or referral to administration.

**DAMAGE TO PROPERTY:** Students found damaging or defacing school property will be made to clean or replace damaged property. Parents will be contacted and, when necessary, billed for the damage. A possible suspension from school will result. **LIABILITY FOR DAMAGE:** The Wachusett Regional School District shall seek compensation for District property willfully damaged by a minor or student age 18 years or older. A civil action may be brought against the minor or his/her parents, or the individual if 18 years of age or older. All incidents shall be investigated, liabilities fixed, and all costs assessed in a non-discriminatory and non-arbitrary manner. Schools shall be monitored to ensure that findings of liability are in accordance with District procedures in affording due process guarantees.

**HARASSMENT:** for School Committee Policy, See Page A-7 for Sexual Harassment, A-11 for Harassment, Discrimination, Hate Crimes

**DISTRIBUTION AND USE OF INDECENT LITERATURE [PAPER OR DIGITAL]:** First offense - parent notification, possible suspension of technology privileges, possible suspension from school. Subsequent offenses - increased suspension from school.

**INAPPROPRIATE/VULGAR LANGUAGE:** Detention or in-school suspension. Subsequent offenses-suspension from school.

**GROSS DISRESPECT AND INSUBORDINATION:** First offense-parent notification, possible suspension from school. Subsequent offenses - increased suspension from school.



**STEALING:** First offense - parent notification, physical or monetary replacement of property, possible suspension from school. Subsequent offenses - increased suspension from school.

**CHEATING:** Cheating includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Copying from someone else
- Letting someone else copy from you
- Talking, gesturing, or using cheat notes of any kind during a quiz
- Passing test information from one class to members of another class
- Plagiarizing-submitting someone else's work as your own
- Using electronic devices as a means use someone's work or to obtain information/ answers

Cheating is unfair to the other students, the teachers, the school community, and especially yourself. Cheating is a serious offense that will result in a zero on the assignment, possible detention, in-school suspension, or suspension depending on the nature of the offense at the discretion of the administration.

**FORGERY:** PCS strives to communicate student progress to parents. When a student copies a parent's or teacher's signature, this is a forgery that is dishonest and interferes with the need to communicate. Any student who forges any signature will receive an in-school suspension. Subsequent offenses will result in increased suspensions and consequences.

**WEAPONS:** See A-II for School Committee Policy

## **DISCIPLINE**

To provide an appropriate academic and social environment certain basic codes of conduct are necessary. All students are expected to show respect and concern for the rights and property of others. The school has the authority to discipline students for inappropriate behavior off-campus, at school-related functions, or any other type of activity reasonably related to school activities. Students who break the basic codes of conduct are subject to one or more of the following disciplinary actions to be taken by the school at either the teacher or the administrative level.

**CONSEQUENCES FOR BEHAVIOR VIOLATIONS** – When school rules are violated, any of the following may be implemented: Corrective actions for misbehavior outlined in the handbook shall be commensurate with the severity of the misbehavior. Consideration shall be given to them: 1. Age of the student; 2. Mitigating circumstances; 3. The previous behavior of the student; and 4. The attitude of the student.

- Informal talk: a staff member will talk to the student to reach an agreement regarding future behavior.
- Conference: a formal conference with a school official, the student, and possibly a parent in which the student agrees to correct the questionable behavior.
- Detention: the student reports after school from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Detention may be assigned by the office or by a teacher. The student will be given notice of the detention and the parent must sign the detention form.
- Loss of Privilege: the student may be denied participation in extra-curricular activities; may be removed from the cafeteria for an extended period of time; may be denied or restricted during recess, or may be denied the opportunity to participate in special events.
- School Service: the student may be assigned to perform school service in place of other penalties. Such service may include projects that assist in the operation of the school community.
- In-School Suspension: the student is excluded from one or more classes, but remains at school and is expected to complete the day's assignments. If a student receives an in-school suspension, he/she is required to report to school. Parents will be notified. No extra-curricular activities are allowed for days of suspension.
- Out-of-School Suspension: a student must remain off school property during the period of suspension. The student will be allowed to make up any work missed during the period of suspension. Written notification of the charges will be given to the student and the parents. The student and/or the parent may have the opportunity for a hearing within three days. No extra-curricular activities are allowed for days of suspension.
- Juvenile Courts: the administration will use the court system to work with students who are habitual school offenders or with students who have excessive absences from school.



- **Behavioral Contracts:** in order to address inappropriate behaviors on the part of individual students, some students and their parents will be required to sign contracts outlining specific behaviors expected of students and the consequences that will follow if these behavioral expectations are not met.
- **Exclusion/Expulsion:** This will be used as a disciplinary measure in extreme and chronic behavioral situations. This may include situations such as possession/use of weapons; assaults; possession, sale, or use of an illegal substance; or other serious offenses.

**SEARCHES:** Wachusett Regional School District authorities may exercise their rights to conduct an inspection of student lockers and/or desks. A student shall not misuse lockers and desks assigned by school authorities. Lockers and desks remain, at all times, the property of the District. A warrant-less search (non-emergency) of a student's school locker or articles carried upon the student's person, maybe conducted if there is a reasonable suspicion that the search is necessary to protect the health and/or safety of students and staff, or to detect a violation of school rules. Such a search may be conducted if school authorities suspect that a student possesses such items as, but not limited to, weapons, dangerous instruments, stolen goods, narcotics, hallucinogens, amphetamines, barbiturates, marijuana, unregistered drugs, controlled substances, alcoholic beverages, or evidence of cheating or other academic misconduct.

**SUSPENSIONS:** The Wachusett Regional School District shall ensure that each pupil has an atmosphere and an environment, which is conducive to teaching and learning. To that end, schools shall maintain programs, which maximize opportunities for learning and minimize disruptions to the educational process. The District's first concern shall be to help maintain pupils in school so that their learning process is not interrupted. Students who create discipline problems, which cannot be resolved through less severe means, shall be suspended. As a last resort, the district shall, at the discretion of the school principal, and following required due process, deny a pupil the right to attend school for a period not to exceed ten (10) days. The principal's decision is final. Students will have the right and the responsibility to complete all assignments and make up all tests missed during the suspension. It will be the student's responsibility to confer with teachers and to complete make-up work within a reasonable time but in no instance exceeding three weeks after the suspension expires. The suspension shall be governed by Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 71, sections 37h, 37h 1/2, 37h3/4, and Ch. 76 section 17.

**EXPULSIONS:** Expulsion shall be considered an action of last resort when the behavior of the student warrants such action at the discretion of the school principal. The expulsion shall be governed by Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 71, sections 37h, 37h 1/2, 37h3/4, and Ch. 76 section 17.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION DISCIPLINE:** All students are expected to meet the standards of behavior as set by the Wachusett community. Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws and I.D.E.A. 1997 require that additional provisions be made for students who have been found by an evaluation team to have special needs and whose program is described in an Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.) The following additional requirements apply to the discipline of special needs students:1. The I.E.P. for every special needs student will indicate if they can meet student management policies or if modifications are needed.2. The principal (or designees) will notify the Special Education Office of any special needs students who have been suspended. The Director of Special Education will keep these suspensions on record.3. When it becomes known that a special needs student will be suspended for more than ten days in a school year: **a.** services will be provided in order to ensure that the student receives FAPE, and, **a** functional behavioral assessment will be conducted and a behavioral intervention plan will be implemented, and **c.** the team will conduct a manifestation determination in order to decide whether the infraction is related to the student's disability, and if the team finds that the behavior is a manifestation of the disability, the District may not suspend the student.

**CORPORAL PUNISHMENT:** Corporal punishment is prohibited.

### **BUS DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES AND CONSEQUENCES**

**BUS DISCIPLINE REGULATIONS/ SAFETY & SECURITY:** The Wachusett Regional School District and its staff share with students and parents the responsibility for student safety during transportation to and from school. The authority for enforcing District requirements of student conduct on buses will rest with the principal. To ensure the safety of all students who ride in buses, it may occasionally be necessary to revoke the privilege of transportation from a student who abuses this privilege. Parents of children whose behavior and misconduct on school buses endanger the health, safety, and welfare of other riders or damage properties will be notified that their children face the loss of transportation privileges. Notification of this policy shall be contained in the Student Handbook.1. Children will be instructed as to the proper procedure for boarding and exiting from a school bus and in proper and safe conduct while aboard.2. Emergency evacuation drills will be conducted at least twice a year to

acquaint student riders with procedures in emergency situations. 3. All vehicles used to transport children will be inspected periodically for conformance with state and federal safety requirements. 4. Classroom instruction on school bus safety will be provided.

The code below classifies unacceptable behavior into three levels. The examples are not exhaustive but illustrative. Additionally, all consequences are dependent upon the severity and frequency of the misbehavior. The administration reserves the right to consider extenuating circumstances in determining disciplinary action.

#### **LEVEL 1**

<p><b><u>Misbehaviors</u></b> Misbehaviors that interfere with the orderly transportation of students. Some examples are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Talking too loudly</li> <li>● Failure to stay seated</li> <li>● Littering on the bus</li> <li>● Tampering with the possessions of other passengers</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Consequences</u></b> The bus driver may address the misbehavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal warning issued to the student</li> <li>● Assign seat</li> </ul>
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#### **LEVEL 2**

<p><b><u>Misbehaviors</u></b> More severe misbehaviors that interfere with the orderly transportation of students. Some examples are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Repeated occurrences of Level 1 behavior</li> <li>● Annoying and/or bullying other passengers</li> <li>● Use of profanity</li> <li>● Damage to the bus</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Consequences</u></b> The bus driver reports misbehavior on the bus. The principal or designee administers consequences. This action may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conference with principal or designee</li> <li>● Contact with parents</li> <li>● Assigned seats</li> <li>● Loss of bus privileges for up to five days</li> <li>● Suspension from school for up to five days</li> </ul>
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#### **LEVEL 3**

<p><b><u>Misbehaviors</u></b> Behavior that endangers the safety of the driver or students and which impairs the driver's ability to drive safely. Some examples include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Repeated occurrences of Level 1 or 2 behaviors</li> <li>● Refusal to remain in seats</li> <li>● Throwing objects, spitting, or spitballs</li> <li>● Distracting the driver</li> <li>● Refusal to obey the driver</li> <li>● Fighting, including pushing and/or wrestling</li> <li>● Lighting matches/lighters</li> <li>● Possession of knives or other dangerous objects</li> <li>● Possession or use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or controlled substances</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Consequences</u></b> The bus driver reports misbehavior on the bus. The principal or designee administers consequences. At more severe levels, the superintendent or designee may be involved. This action may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Loss of bus privileges for six to ten days</li> <li>● Suspension for 6 or more days or exclusion from school</li> <li>● Repeated incidents of Level 2 behavior or egregious acts may result in a child being permanently suspended from bus privileges</li> <li>● Illegal activity will be referred to the Police Department</li> </ul>
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#### **Procedures for reporting passenger misconduct**

1. The bus driver will report misconduct occurring on the school bus to the school administration. If a student shares information pertaining to student misconduct on the bus with a teacher or other staff member, the administration will be notified and speak with the bus driver.
2. A School Bus Conduct Report will be completed and submitted to the school administration and the bus company.
3. The principal or designee and the bus company will retain copies of the signed report.

**STUDENT RIGHTS IN THE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES - DUE PROCESS** – Paxton Center School management policies are based upon a firm belief that all students have a right to quality education and this right should not be infringed upon in any way. Administrators are here to help you out if a problem arises. Under school rules, all students at PCS are guaranteed due process.

Due process in the case of suspension requires the following:

For disciplinary action up to and including 10 days of suspension

- Oral notice of the charge (telephone notification to parents);
- An explanation of the evidence
- The opportunity for the student to present his/her side of the story to an administrator. For disciplinary action of more than 10 days/expulsion
- Written notice of opportunity for a hearing;
- Written notice of the charges (telephone notification to parents with a written copy of the charges mailed to student's parents or guardian);
- The right to be represented by a lawyer or an advocate;
- Adequate time to prepare for a hearing;
- Access to documented evidence and opportunity to present witnesses and evidence in his/her behalf;
- The right to question witnesses; and
- A written decision including the specific grounds for the decision;
- Any student expelled from school by the principal shall have the right to appeal the decision to the superintendent of schools.

Appeals – You are also provided with an avenue of appeal in cases where you feel student management policies were not justly applied. A student charged by a teacher with an offense may appeal the decision to their administrator. The final level of appeal is the principal except as specified above.

### **CAFETERIA**

The school cafeteria is maintained as a vital part of the health program of the school. To encourage good nutrition, breakfast (free) and a balanced lunch (free) are offered daily. Milk is \$.60 per carton. Menus will be posted to the school website monthly and also published in The Landmark. For nutritional reasons, it is expected that every child has something to eat at lunchtime. Students who forget their lunch money will be allowed to receive an IOU from the kitchen. The student must then repay the kitchen. Student accounts must be kept in good standing at all times.

**FREE & REDUCED PRICE MEALS:** Applications for free milk and free or reduced-price meals will be sent home with each student at the beginning of the school year. These applications are available at all times in the school office.

**CAFETERIA RULES:** The following cafeteria rules are enforced to keep a clean and safe lunchroom:

1. Do not take food from another student's tray.
2. Dispose of trash and recyclables appropriately.
3. Pick up any paper or food around your seat.
4. Speak in conversational tones.
5. Minimize out-of-the-seat to trash or bathroom needs.
6. All food and beverages are to be consumed in the cafeteria.

**MY SCHOOL BUCKS:** Pre-pay for your children's lunch through My School Bucks. You can set up an account and view the transactions and balances of your child even if you are not interested in the online prepay. The system will also alert low balances via email. Access to this program is on our school website.

### **CHILD FIND**

The Wachusett Regional School District wishes to identify all children, ages three years to twenty-one years, who reside within the District, have not yet graduated from high school, and who are in need of special education and related services. Any child suspected of having a disability and believed to be in need of special education and related services may be referred to the Administrator of Special Education for services. At the Wachusett Regional School District, Jefferson School, 1745 Main Street, Jefferson, MA 01522 (508-829-1670 X237).

## **COMMUNICATION / SCHOOL & HOME**

Communication between the school and parents is very important. The school has several ways to communicate school activities and information directly to parents. The school has a website at [www.wrsd.net](http://www.wrsd.net). All staff has e-mail addresses that are posted on our website. The **School Messenger system** will be used to send emails or phone messages to inform you of upcoming events and news. Messages will be sent out via School Messenger at **5:00 PM** unless there is an emergency. Parents are encouraged to communicate with staff and administration about any concerns that they may have.

Also, Follow us on FB at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/6047723688588957>

- Password: panthers2022

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Wachusett Regional School District shall encourage communication between and among school personnel, students, and parents. The Committee recognizes that circumstances may arise when a student with a personal or medical problem may seek help from a member of the faculty or administration. In such instances, the Committee will respect the confidentiality of communications between students and teachers, counselors, nurses, or administrators. However, it is not the intention of this statement of policy to encourage interference with parental or legal authority. (*WRSDC Policy 6650*) See page A-23 for School Committee Policy

## **DISCRIMINATION**

The Wachusett Regional School District does not tolerate discrimination or harassment of students, parents, employees, or the general public on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy status, disability, homelessness, religion, age, or immigration status. Consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, the District also does not discriminate against students on the basis of homelessness.

**TOLERANCE:** The Wachusett Regional School Committee shall provide a learning environment that promotes and encourages an appreciation of diversity. Individual differences of students are to be appreciated and respected within district policies and regulations. All students can expect to grow and learn without encountering harassment about individual differences. Intolerable activities include but are not limited to harassment about race, gender, sexual orientation, handicap, religion, ethnic group, appearance, dress, learning style, interests, or behaviors. Bullying will not be tolerated. Bullying behaviors include but are not limited to teasing, verbal harassment, unwanted touches, physical attacks, and/or ostracism. Reports of such conduct will be investigated and action will be taken under the guidelines of an individual school's disciplinary code.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR TITLE VI, TITLE IX, AND SECTION 504 (FEDERAL LAWS) AND CHAPTER 622 (STATE LAW):**

### **Statement of Definition**

A grievance is any alleged violation of the Wachusett District School Committee Policy on Non-Discrimination (#P6631) on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation or disability, in the operation of the educational programs, activities, or employment policies.

### **Grievance Procedure**

#### **Step #1**

An alleged grievance must be filed with the building coordinator (principal or designee) in writing within thirty (30) days of the alleged grievance. The building coordinator shall meet with and respond to the aggrieved party (in writing) within fifteen (15) days.

**Step #2** If a satisfactory solution is not achieved at step #1, the aggrieved party may, within fifteen (15) days of receiving the decision rendered at step #1, file the alleged grievance with the Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services (for disability) or the Director of Administration Services (for all others), who shall respond in writing and meet with the aggrieved party in an attempt to resolve the alleged grievance within fifteen (15) days.

**Step #3** If a satisfactory solution is not achieved at step #2 within the fifteen (15) day period, the alleged grievance may be filed at the next step with the school committee. The school committee shall provide an opportunity for the alleged grievance to be heard at its next regularly scheduled meeting and a decision shall be rendered in writing to the aggrieved party within fifteen (15) days. **Statement 1**. An aggrieved party, if not satisfied with the decision of the school committee, may refer the case to the Massachusetts State Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Department of Education, John W. McCormack Post Office and Court House, Room 701, Boston, MA 02109 (617-223-9662). It is the intention of this grievance procedure to render due process regarding complaints or violations of this policy at each step of this grievance procedure.

## **DRESS CODE AND APPEARANCE**

### **DRESS/PERSONAL ATTIRE**

Neatness, cleanliness, and appropriateness are the keystones of school dress and appearance in the Wachusett Regional School District. Personal dress and appearance may not violate reasonable standards of health, safety, cleanliness, and may not result in disruption or disorder within the school.

**The WRSD Dress Code for school and school functions hopes to achieve three goals:**

- 1. Promote a respectful learning environment.***
- 2. Promote a safe learning environment where dress does not interfere with the successful and safe completion of learning activities.***
- 3. Promote an equitable and inclusive learning environment in which the dress code does not negatively impact any group based on race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, socio-economic status, and/or body type/size.***

The responsibility of proper dress and grooming rests primarily with the student and his/her/their parents or guardians. We ask that students and parents/guardians work to ensure that the goals outlined above are being met with the student's school dress attire.

Hoods, except those worn in relation to required religious practice or with prior administrative approval due to a disabling condition, may not be worn within the school building as such headwear interferes with the identification of students and presents safety concerns. **Sunglasses are not to be worn inside the building except with medical authorization.**

Offensive clothing can sometimes be subjective to the individual; however, students should be aware that if symbols, words, or pictures on clothing cause, or are reasonably forecast to cause, a **substantial disruption of the school environment**, they will be asked to remove and replace the offensive clothing. **Offenders may be subject to other disciplinary action as well.** To this end, we ask that students and parents be considerate of how dress choices affect the safety and comfort of others. Clothing may not depict, advertise, or advocate the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or other controlled substances.

In addition, a student's personal dress and appearance must comply with any and all applicable state and federal health and safety regulations, especially while attending a lab or shop.

## **EVACUATION DRILLS**

Drills are held regularly to ensure the safety of all persons in the event of fire or disaster. Students are instructed on exits used, the procedure for leaving the building, areas in which to assemble, and the procedure for returning to the building. Periodic checks by the Paxton Fire Department are conducted.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR**

### **INTERSCHOLASTIC/INTRAMURAL SPORTS**

PCS Middle School students are invited to try out for WRSD seasonal sports. In order to participate in any extra-curricular activities, students must meet the following requirements:

- 1. Academic Requirements:** Students may not have more than (1) a failing grade to participate
- 2. Behavioral Requirements:** Students must demonstrate appropriate behavior according to school standards. At the sole discretion of the Principal, a student may be declared ineligible for participation due to chronic misbehavior or an incident of serious or major misconduct according to school standards.
- 3. Students scheduled to attend an after-school disciplinary session on the day of a practice or game must attend the disciplinary session before being able to participate in the athletic activity.** Students who are serving a suspension (internal or external) on the day of a practice or game are not allowed to participate in the athletic program activity on that day.
- 4. Physical Fitness:** A note from the student's physician that the student has had a physical in the past thirteen months or 395 days and is not restricted in any way from participating in the program is required. Students wishing to try out for a school-sponsored athletic activity must either complete a school physical or one provided by their own private physician. School-sponsored physicals will be done for Paxton Center students in early September. Students are not allowed to try out unless this requirement is fulfilled.

## **STUDENT COUNCIL**

The Student Council is the student-elected governing body through which the students may express their opinions, assist in the administration of the school, and participate in the management of school enterprises. Students in grades 5 through 8 are eligible to run for Student Council.

## **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:**

Additionally, there are after-school activities from time to time offered for students in grades 6-8. In order to participate in any extra-curricular activities, students must meet the following requirements:

Students may not have more than (1) failing grade to participate as reported on the most recent formal communication with parents (interims/report cards) in order to participate in after school, school-sponsored activities.

Students participating in extra-curricular activities must demonstrate appropriate behavior according to school standards. Only PCS students are allowed to attend dances. Guests are always welcome at concerts and school plays that are open to the public.

Students must be picked up from these after-school activities within fifteen minutes of the conclusion of the activity (unless special arrangements have been made in advance.) Students who are not picked up within the 15-minute time frame may be excluded from the next-like event at the school.

## **ATTENDANCE DURING THE DAY REQUIRED TO ATTEND AFTER-SCHOOL EVENTS:**

A student must attend school the day he/she plans to attend any after-school or evening event.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

### **DAYTIME FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips are scheduled throughout the school year. These are designed to supplement the curriculum and to introduce students to the resources of the region. Parents will receive notices of field trips well in advance of the scheduled trip date and will be asked to sign field trip permission forms. Parents may request financial assistance for any field trip by contacting the building principal for available funds. Students who have demonstrated repeated inappropriate behavior may not be allowed to participate. Schoolwork will be provided for students who are not participating in a field trip. Parents/guardians may be asked to attend as chaperones, but only if a current CORI is available in the office for each chaperone.

### **FIELD TRIPS INVOLVING LATE NIGHT OR OVERNIGHT TRAVEL:**

The Wachusett Regional School District encourages field trips, which enhance the student's educational experience.

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 37N, if field trips involve late-night or overnight travel, the following must be met:

#### **A. Trip Approval Process:**

1. Advance approval by the Superintendent and/or designee will be required for any student trip involving late-night or overnight travel (in concurrence with P3321 Policy Relating to Education Field Trips).
2. The approval process will be completed prior to engaging students in fundraising activities or other preparations for the trip.
3. Overnight trips must offer significant educational benefits to students that clearly justify the time and expense of the trip. Such trips must be appropriate for the grade level and must meet the Time on Learning requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Education.
4. Teachers and other school staff will be prohibited from soliciting privately run trips through the school system. The trip approval process applies only to school-sanctioned trips; trips will not be approved that are privately organized and run without school sanctioning.
5. Policies and procedures for trip approval will take into account all logistical details involving security arrangements, emergency management, communications protocols, transportation, accommodations, itinerary, fundraising required of students, the educational value of the trip in relation to its costs, and recommendations of the principal.

#### **B. Transportation:**

1. The use of vans or private automobiles for trips planned to include late-night or overnight student travel should generally be avoided. Should the use of vans be necessary for overnight travel, prior written authorization from the Superintendent, and subsequent approval by the School Committee. Such trips should generally use commercial motor coaches. No student drivers will be allowed at any time.
2. Trips planned to include late-night or overnight student travel will involve pre-trip checks for companies, drivers, and vehicles. Companies must have liability insurance for drivers.

3. School officials will ensure that the selected carrier is licensed for passenger transportation by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). The District should not contract with any carrier that has an FMCSA safety rating of “conditional” or “unsatisfactory”.
  4. The contract with the carrier must prohibit the use of a subcontractor unless sufficient notice is given to the District to allow for verification of the subcontractor’s qualifications.
- C. Trip Scheduling
1. Overnight accommodations will be made in advance with student safety and security in mind. Hiring independent security is recommended when appropriate.
  2. Field trips during school time must meet the Massachusetts Department of Education Time on Learning requirements.
  3. Trip itineraries must leave enough time for drivers to rest in conformity with federal hour-of-service requirements and common sense. Student vehicular (bus and auto) travel between the hours of midnight and 6:00 AM is prohibited.
  4. If substantially all members of a class are participating in a field trip, the school will provide appropriate substitute activities for any students not participating.
- D. Fundraising
1. The amount of time to be devoted to fundraising should be reasonable and commensurate with students’ obligations for homework, after-school activities, and jobs.
  2. Group fundraising activities are preferred.
- E. Student Supervision
1. Students shall be accompanied by a sufficient number of chaperones, taking into account the trip scheduling and logistics. All chaperones, including parents and volunteers, must have a CORI/criminal record check. The faculty and staff of the school will serve as chaperones whenever possible.
  2. A chaperone must always be present whenever students are on the bus.
  3. All participating students must submit a signed parent/guardian permission form. Such forms shall include eligibility requirements and appropriate authorization for emergency medical care and administration of medication.
  4. When away from school, all school rules will apply to the trip.
  5. The infringement of rules may result in a student’s immediate expulsion from the trip. In such cases, parents will be financially responsible for transportation home.
- (WRSDC Policy 3321.1)

## **SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973**

The Wachusett Regional School District will identify, evaluate, and provide an appropriate public education to students who are handicapped within the meaning of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

## **GRADES AND REPORT CARDS**

Report cards will be distributed four (4) times a year at approximately 10-week intervals for students in grades 3-8.

Students in grades K-2 will have a parent conference instead of a report card for the first term. **These will only be issued electronically and will require sign-off from a parent on PowerSchool within three days of completion.** Parents will be notified via School Messenger that report cards are ready.

Elementary students (K-5) will be graded on a Standards-based report card with a 1-4 rating for demonstration of skill in each standard area. [Rating Description Explanation:

4 = Advanced Consistently exceeds proficiency expectations based on grade-level benchmarks.

3 = Proficient Consistently meets proficiency expectations based on grade-level benchmarks.

2 = Progressing Toward Does not yet consistently meet proficiency expectations based on grade-level proficiency benchmarks.

1 = Needs Improvement Needs substantial teacher support to apply skills/strategies that meet proficiency expectations based on grade-level benchmarks.

N/A Not Assessed Not addressed this term.

Middle School students (6-8) will be graded in a numerical and letter grade format as below:

A+	97-100	C	73-76
A	93-96	C-	70-72



A-	90-92	D+	67-69
B+	87-89	D	63-66
B	83-86	D-	60-62
B-	80-82	F	Below 60
C+	77-79	Inc	Incomplete

**Interim** reports are issued halfway through each marking period for students that are struggling in grades 6-8. The purpose of the report is to notify the student and parents of academic progress. However, parents and students are highly encouraged to check Power School weekly to monitor for missing work or low grades.

PCS Honor Roll is published each quarter for students in grades 7-8. Grade 6 students will have honor roll noted during quarters 2-4 to help them adjust to the new grading system pressures in middle school. High Honor Roll is all "A's" and Honor Roll is all "A's" and "B's" in all subjects. Academic achievement is recognized throughout the school year in a variety of ways.

**INCOMPLETE GRADES:** A student who receives an incomplete grade on his/her report card, will have two (2) weeks to make up the work.

**CONFERENCES:** Individual teacher conferences may be requested directly by phone or email with the teacher.

**POWERSCHOOL PARENT ACCESS TO STUDENT GRADES** (for grades 6-8) The Wachusett Regional School District utilizes PowerSchool, a student information management system. PowerSchool also has a parent component that allows parents access to their child's (ren) grades via a secure internet site. Parent access and login information will be mailed home with the welcome back letter. If needed, PCS will provide training for parents in mid-September. It is important to note that reporting grades is the final step in assessing a student. Teachers are only required to report grades two times per marking period (progress report time and report card time). The Administration reserves the right to revoke parent access to PowerSchool if it is misused.

**RETENTION:** Students in grades 6-8 may be retained if they fail more than one academic class for the year. They may not be eligible to move to the next grade unless the student attends summer school to make up the course. If a student attends summer school, it will be at the parent's cost and is not offered in the WRSD. Students will be required to achieve a passing grade during summer school. Each case will be looked at individually by the principal.

## **GRADUATION**

### **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

1. An eighth-grade student who receives two or more failing final averages in any subject area may be ineligible for a diploma and will not be allowed to participate in graduation activities.
2. Each student must complete at least 10 hours of Community Service in order to take part in any graduation activities.
3. Students must have a 0\$ balance in the cafeteria and no missing library books in order to take part in any graduation activity.

## **HANDBOOK**

The student handbook shall annually be reviewed. The student handbook shall be printed and distributed to all enrolled students and all staff members at the start of each school year. The student handbook shall include, but not be limited to, sections dealing with 1. Student Rights and responsibilities; 2. Student behavior and discipline; and 3. Glossary of terms. Each building principal shall be responsible for providing orientation to the handbook to all enrolled students and all staff members at the start of the school year. The provisions of the student handbook shall be applied to students in a standardized, non-discriminatory, and non-arbitrary manner.

## **HARASSMENT AND BULLYING**

**PROMOTING CIVIL RIGHTS AND PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION, AND HATE CRIMES** See page A11 for School Committee Policy

**ANTI-BULLYING POLICY** See A-15 and A-25 for School Committee Policies

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** See A-7 for School Committee Policies

## **LIBRARY**

The school library is an integral part of the school program. It supplies materials to support and augment the course of study and encourage recreational reading. The Library also has a media center where computers are available for research. The usual loan period for books and magazines is two (2) weeks. Students are responsible for replacing lost books or materials.

## **MEDICAL INFORMATION**

See A-21

**INSURANCE:** The Wachusett Regional School District shall require each student participating in intramural programs and/or athletic teams to provide evidence of an active Accident Insurance Policy covering the student. (*WRSDC Policy 6616*)

**HEALTH SERVICES:** Students who become ill or injured will be directed to the school nurse for assessment, evaluation, treatment, and/or referral. If the nurse is not available, students are to report to the office. Students are not to leave the building without authorization. **Students are not allowed to call parents to complain of illness without speaking to school staff.** Parents will be notified when a child must be sent home. If the parent cannot be contacted, the person indicated on the Emergency Card will be called. It is imperative that the Emergency Card be completed annually and updated as necessary.

**PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS:** Massachusetts requires that a physical examination by a health care provider be on file with the nurse for kindergarten entry and every four years thereafter (grades 4 & 8.) Students entering the District without records or recent physical must have a physical examination within the first year. A physical exam is also required prior to tryouts for competitive athletics or cheerleading.

**MANDATED SCREENING:** Students in grades K, 1, 4, 6-8, and 9 are weighed and measured and students in grades K (at the time of Kindergarten registration)-5, 7, and 10 are tested for vision and hearing. Students in grades 5-8 and 9 receive annual postural screening for scoliosis. The screening is done by the school nurse with assistance from the Physical Education Staff. Parents will be notified if screening procedures identify possible problems.

**CONTAGIOUS CONDITIONS:** Parents are requested to report any incidence of contagious disease or condition to the school nurse. This includes head lice and scabies. When these conditions are identified, the student will be sent home. Return to school is permitted following treatment and verification by the school nurse that the student is free of disease, lice, nits, or mites.

**IMMUNIZATIONS:** All students must be compliant with immunizations required by Massachusetts regulations (102 CMR 7.09 and 105 CMR 220.00) and established by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The only exemptions are for documented religious or medical reasons.

**MEDICATIONS:** Medication, prescription, and non-prescription must be by written order of the provider with written permission from the parent/guardian before medication may be administered by the nurse. Medication must be brought to the school by the parent/guardian or other designated responsible adult in the original container with the label intact. Students are not to transport medication to and from school. However, in the case of self-medicating students, students may transport and self-administer upon completion of a written agreement between the parent and the nurse.

## **PARENT/SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **PTO**

The P.T.O. is comprised of parents who have children attending Paxton Center School, members of the teaching staff, and the building administration. Representatives of the P.T.O. meet monthly to initiate and organize activities. Parent orientation programs, teacher grants, coffee hours, open houses, and a number of student-centered events are sponsored each year. P.T.O. also gives parents the opportunity to become directly involved in matters that affect their children. The PTO sponsors fundraisers each year to help fund field trips and educational programs.

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION COUNCIL (S.I.M.C.O.)** is set up to establish a process of interaction between the community, teachers, and administration which will enable Paxton Center School to become an environment cognizant of change and the need for continuous improvement. S.I.M.C.O. meets regularly.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (S.E.P.A.C.)** is a District-wide council that meets throughout the year to “work towards the understanding of, respect for, support and appropriate education for all children with special needs in the WRSD communities.” We encourage all interested parents to join the S.E.P.A.C. For more information, see go to [www.wrsd.net](http://www.wrsd.net) and click the link for parent information.

### **PICTURES**

School pictures will be taken early in October or November and should be available prior to the Holiday recess/vacation. Payment must be made at the time the pictures are taken. Refunds or retakes will be available upon request. Additional photo opportunities may be provided in the Spring.

### **PHYSICAL RESTRAINT**

See A-2 for School Committee Policies

### **RECESS**

We consider recess to be an integral part of the school day. All students have the opportunity to participate during outdoor recess unless they have a note from their physician recommending they remain indoors. Recess will be held indoors in the event of inclement weather or unsafe outside conditions. A wind chill of 18 degrees and above allows students to go outdoors. Be sure your child dresses appropriately for outdoor recess all through the year. Behavioral expectations are reinforced during recess. The supervising staff has the right to modify activities to ensure the safety of all students.

### **RECORDING MEETINGS**

**AUDIO, VIDEO, AND/OR STENOGRAPHIC RECORDING OF MEETINGS:** The Wachusett Regional School Committee prohibits the audio, video, and/or stenographic recording of parent/teacher conferences and/or Team meetings conducted in Wachusett Regional School District facilities. Exceptions to this policy will be made only where a parent/guardian or student is able to demonstrate that either the audio, video and/or stenographic recording of the meeting or conference is necessary to ensure the parent's/guardian's or student's full understanding of the proceedings or to otherwise accommodate a parent's/guardian's or student's documented disability.

Requests by a parent/guardian or student for authorization to audio, video, and/or stenographic record a meeting or conference shall be Requests by a parent/guardian or submitted in writing to the Superintendent of the Wachusett Regional School District no less than three (3) business days prior to said meeting/conference. The Superintendent's decision on any such request shall be final. (*WRSDC Policy 3813*)

### **SCHOOL CANCELLATION**

Un-scheduled School cancellation, delay, or dismissal announcements will be aired starting at approximately 6:00 a.m. on the following radio stations when school will be delayed or canceled for the entire day, due to inclement weather. **WTAG-580 AM, WSRs-96.1 FM, WXLO-104.5 FM, and TV stations 4, 5 & 7.** Students or their parents should continue to listen to these stations for further announcements indicating a change from delay to no school should weather conditions change. Delays could be up to two (2) hours. Delayed openings do not affect

dismissal times. In an emergency such as severe weather or a boiler breakdown, the school may be dismissed earlier than the regular closing time. Parents need to inform their children as to what they should do in case of an early dismissal. An emergency dismissal form must be completed and returned to school.

### **SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLICATIONS**

The Wachusett Regional School District shall, in accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws and Department of Education regulations, provide all publications as approved by the School Committee and required by the State Department of Education. The School Committee Policy Book shall be made available for review to any person, upon request to the Superintendent's Office. Copies of said publications shall be placed in each of the five (5) Town Libraries and all school libraries. A nominal fee, not to exceed the cost of production, shall be charged to any person requesting a copy of one of the publications.

### **SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Students are responsible for the proper care of all books, materials, and furniture supplied by the school. Students who damage school property, equipment, or books will be required to pay for the damage done or replace the item and be subject to disciplinary action.

**LOCKERS:** A locker is the property of the Wachusett Regional School District which is issued to each middle school student. Lockers may be searched at any time for reasonable cause. Students may not take anything from another person's locker. This will result in disciplinary action. A student may attach a lock to his/her locker after completing a Lock Registration Form.

**TEXTBOOKS:** All textbooks issued to students must be covered. If a student does not return his/her textbook or if he/she returns it in an unacceptable condition, he/she will be required to make restitution.

### **STUDENT PUBLICATIONS**

See A-18 for School Committee Policies

### **TECHNOLOGY**

#### **CELL PHONES, IPODS & OTHER ELECTRONICS**

See A-20 for School Committee Policies

Students are strongly encouraged not to bring iPods, CD players, stereos, video games, cell phones, or similar items to school because they disrupt the educational process. **[The exception to this rule would be in the event that a teacher allows students to use personal electronic devices to access the internet for academic purposes.]** Light Pens or Laser Lights are not allowed in school for safety reasons. Personal items such as these if brought to school are the sole responsibility of the student. Any cell phones or iPods brought to school by students are to be kept OFF and in students' book bags or lockers during the school day. Students may NOT use cell phones during the school day to send or receive calls, send or receive text messages, or take photographs or videos (including the bus ride). Cell phones may only be used before and after school hours. Any cell phone or iPod found to be visible or in use during the school day, except for academic reasons as directed by a teacher, will be confiscated and brought to the office for safekeeping. A warning will be given to first-time offenders and the phone returned at the end of the day. A second offense will result in confiscation and the device will only be released to a parent or guardian. A third offense will result in suspension and the device will only be released to a parent or guardian. If these items are lost, damaged, or stolen, the sole responsibility for addressing these circumstances belongs to the student and parent.

**INTERNET ACCESS:** While the Wachusett Regional School Committee encourages the use of electronic communication to promote excellence in education, the School Committee also recognizes its responsibility to reasonably ensure the anonymity of students using the District's Internet to ensure this goal. • District prohibits non-educational use of its network facilities, the Internet, and Internet access. • Access and use of the District's Internet is a privilege, not a right, and access to it may be denied to students violating this policy. • District prohibits student use of "chat" lines without permission and supervision of authorized professional staff members. • The district shall limit student use of e-mail to District supervised programs.

1. Student work may be displayed on the school site web pages or the District web page with the student's first name only when prior written permission is received from the parent/guardian annually.
2. Photographs of students may be displayed on the school site web pages or District web page only identified by

classroom teacher or grade when prior permission is received from the parent/guardian annually.

**ACCEPTABLE COMPUTER USE:** The purpose of the WRSD network and the Internet is to enhance the educational process. The use of this media is limited to educational purposes determined by the District. Access to the Internet enables students to explore thousands of libraries, databases, and bulletin boards while exchanging messages the Internet may contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, and or potentially offensive to some people. While the District's intent is to make Internet access available to further educational goals and objectives, students may find ways to access other materials as well. It is the District's position that the benefits to students in the form of information resources and opportunities for collaboration exceed the potential disadvantages.

**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT USE OF TECHNOLOGY:**

1. Students may not install any software on any computers or attempt to make copies of software that is on the hard drive.
2. Students should respect others' rights to privacy and not access or use the information on a computer without permission from the owner of the information.
3. Students should respect others' property. Students should not vandalize computers, computer systems, and computer software. Vandalism, including malicious viruses, will result in the loss of privileges and possible legal action. Students are prohibited from making changes to or deleting computer programs, files, or information that belongs to others.
4. Use computers, software, and related technologies for purposes that are within the law; that are beneficial to others, and that is not harmful (physically, financially, or otherwise) to others or others' property.

**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT USE OF THE INTERNET:**

1. As to any interaction with strangers, use common sense, and exercise caution. Do not reveal your own personal information such as addresses, telephone numbers, user names, passwords, etc., or that of other students.
2. Accept personal responsibility for the appropriate use of the system. Abuses, i.e. pornography, illegal solicitation, racism, sexism, and inappropriate language, are prohibited and must be reported to your teacher.
3. Use is limited to activities that support education and research. Copyrighted materials plagiarizing works, threatening or obscene materials, or trade secrets may not be transmitted. Violation of this provision could result in prosecution.
4. All student use of E-mail shall only be allowed under the direct supervision of a teacher.
5. Students are not allowed to create or maintain personal or other unauthorized web pages.
6. Access to the network is a privilege, not a right, and as such may be denied to any student who is found violating school regulations
7. Online etiquette proceeds from everyday acceptable conduct and includes: being polite, using appropriate language, maintaining all users' privacy, appropriate use of Email (no support of illegal or illicit activities,) being considerate, and not disrupting the network by game playing or large-scale downloading.
8. Network files are not private and remain open to administrators to maintain system integrity, ensure the appropriate use, and to maintain hard drive storage. Additional storage beyond what is pre-assigned may be requested through the building media specialist.
9. Users of the system do so at their own risk. Damages, including loss of data or information inaccuracies, are not the responsibility of the Wachusett Regional School District.
10. Security remains a high priority. Teachers and other staff members will make every attempt to monitor and guide students toward the appropriate use of the system. All users are responsible for system security and must report problems to their teachers.

*See WRSD Policy 6531 Relating to STUDENT INTERNET ACCESS*

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

See A-19 for School Committee Policies

**TELEPHONE**

Messages and deliveries from home should be left in the school office. Students will be called out of a class only in an emergency to minimize class disruptions. Students are allowed to use the office phone with permission from teachers and office staff during non-class times.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

See A-21 for Alternative Student Transportation and A-22 for Transportation Safety and Security Procedures for School Committee Policies

It is expected that students will go to and from school on the same means on a daily basis. A parent may choose an alternate mode of transportation over which the school system has no authority. Therefore, a choice to use an alternative mode of transportation other than the school bus shall be at the risk of the parent and the student. It is the intent of the WRSD school committee to comply with state law and bus students who live two (2) or more miles from the school they attend. Students may be required to walk up to one (1) mile to a bus stop and up to but not including two (2) miles to school. Exceptions to the above rule for such reasons as safety, special needs, and physical handicaps may be made by the vote of the committee. Students are not allowed to ride buses other than their own. Students who walk to school are not permitted on school buses.

**DROP-OFF AND PICKUP:** Parents may drop students off between 8:10 and 8:25. Please follow the traffic pattern and pull up as far as possible to drop off your child safely and quickly. Please remember that you are to **NEVER** pass buses when they are lined up and they have their lights on and stop signs out. Violators will be reported.

**BICYCLE RIDERS:** Bicycle riders are to walk their bicycles across the main thoroughfares where school crossing guards are located. Students should ride bikes on the sidewalk only. All students are to wear bicycle helmets when riding their bikes. The privilege of riding bicycles to school may be taken away at any time if the student does not follow safety procedures or is endangering other students.

**WALKERS:** Students walking to and from school should cross with crossing guards and use sidewalks only. In some cases, crossing guards may not be available.

**SKATEBOARDS/ROLLER BLADES:** Skateboards, roller blades, sneakers with wheels, scooters, and any similar items may not be brought to school or used on school property. Any of these items will be confiscated.

## **USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES**

The WRSD Committee has agreed to make Paxton Center available for educational, recreational, and civic purposes to recognized, responsible organizations within the town. The practical requirements for the use of school facilities are: Programs cannot interfere with regular school activities, and activities cannot damage or cause excessive depreciation of school property. Please contact the office to make plans for school use. WRSD School Use Application/Agreement must be completed and approved by the building principal.

## **VISITORS**

All visitors must enter through the main entrance, check-in at the office, sign in and wear a visitor's badge.

**If you need this booklet translated, please contact the main office of your child's school.**

**Portuguese/Português**

Se você necessitar este livreto traduzido, contate por favor o escritório principal da escola da sua criança.

**Spanish/ Español**

Si usted necesita este librete traducido, entre en contacto con por favor la oficina Principal de la escuela de su niño.

**French/ Français**

Si vous avez besoin de ce livret traduit, entrez en contact avec svp le bureau Principal de l'école de votre enfant.

**German/ Deutsch**

Wenn Sie diese übersetzte Broschüre benötigen, treten Sie bitte mit dem upbüro der Schule Ihres Kindes in Verbindung.

**Russian/Русско**

**Если вы этот переведенный буклет, то пожалуйста контактируйте главный офис школы вашего ребенка.**

**Hindi/ihndl**

Agar Aapkao yah puistka kI Anauvaaidt AavaSyakta hO tba kRpyaa Apnao baccao ko ivaValaya ka mau#ya kayaa-laya sampk- kiryao .

**Polish/Polski**

Jeśli potrzebujesz tej broszury przetłumaczone, skontaktuj się z głównego urzędu Twoje dziecko w szkole.

**Greek**

Αν χρειάζεστε το φυλλάδιο αυτό μεταφράστηκε, παρακαλούμε επικοινωνήστε με την κύρια έδρα του σχολείου του παιδιού σας.

**Italian/Italia**

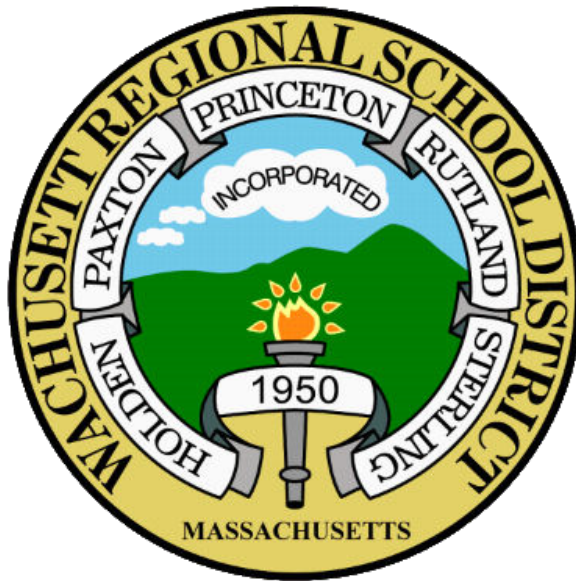
Se hai bisogno di questo opuscolo tradotto, si prega di contattare l'ufficio principale del vostro bambino scuola.

**Arabic** المكتب رئيسية من طفلك مدرسة. اتصل ب إن أنت تحتاج هذا كراس يترجم, رجا ء



# **WRSD Student Handbook Addendum**

## **Policies and Procedures**



**2024-2025**

The Wachusett Regional School District does not tolerate discrimination or harassment of students, parents, employees, or the general public on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy status, disability, homelessness, religion, age, or immigration status. Consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, the District also does not discriminate against students on the basis of homelessness.

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## **Nondiscrimination Statement**

The Wachusett Regional School District does not tolerate discrimination or harassment of students, parents, employees, or the general public on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy status, disability, homelessness, religion, age, or immigration status. Consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, the District also does not discriminate against students on the basis of homelessness.

## **Use of Cameras / Surveillance**

Parents, guardians, and students should be aware that security cameras and video recording systems are in use at all WRSD schools, for the purposes of monitoring the interior and exterior of school buildings, to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of students, staff, and visitors, and to protect school facilities.

While riding on buses or vans, students are under the jurisdiction of the school administration. For purposes of monitoring and student safety, school transportation vehicles may be equipped with video and audio recording systems. All students may be subject to video and audio surveillance for this purpose while riding a school bus or van.

## **Physical Restraint Information**

The Wachusett Regional School District complies with the requirements of Massachusetts statutes and regulations governing the use and reporting of physical restraint in schools. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37G; 603 CMR 46.00. Physical restraint is defined as direct physical contact that prevents or significantly restricts a student's freedom of movement. Physical restraint does not include: brief physical contact to promote student safety, providing physical guidance or prompting when teaching a skill, redirecting attention, providing comfort, or a physical escort.

Physical restraint is considered an emergency procedure of last resort and may be used only when: (a) the student's behavior poses a threat of assault, or imminent, serious, physical harm to self and/or others; and (b) less intrusive interventions are ineffective or deemed to be inappropriate under the circumstances. Physical restraint in a public education program shall be limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary to protect a student or another member of the school community from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm. Physical restraint is prohibited in the following circumstances: (a) as a means of punishment; or (b) as a response to property destruction, disruption of school order, a student's refusal to comply with a school rule or staff directive, or verbal threats that do not constitute a threat of imminent, serious, physical harm.

In the event that a physical restraint is administered, the parents/guardians will be notified orally within twenty-four (24) hours of the restraint and shall be provided with a written Restraint Report within three (3) school days of the restraint. 603 CMR 46.06.

## **Disciplinary Due Process**

### **STUDENT SUSPENSIONS AND/OR EXPULSIONS:**

#### **NOTICE OF SUSPENSION HEARING:**

Except in the case of an emergency removal or disciplinary offense defined under M.G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H1/2 or an in-school suspension as defined by 603 CMR 53.02(6), the school shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written and oral notice of the proposed out-of-school suspension, an opportunity to be heard at hearing, and the opportunity to participate at the hearing.

The Notice shall set forth in plain language:

- A. the disciplinary offense;
- B. the basis for the charge;
- C. the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension;
- D. the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal or principal's designee concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent/guardian to attend the hearing;
- E. the date, time, and location of the hearing;
- F. the right of the student and student's parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

The principal, or principal's designee, shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. In order to conduct a hearing without the parent/guardian present, the principal, or principal's designee, must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/guardian. Reasonable effort is presumed if the principal or principal's designee sent written notice and documented at least two (2) attempts to contact the parent/guardian in the manner specified by the parent/guardian for emergency situations.

All written communications regarding notice of proposed suspension shall be either by hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal/principal's designee and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

#### **SHORT-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND DETERMINATION**

A short-term suspension is the removal of the student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive school days or less. Out-of-school short-term suspensions which do not cumulatively over the course of the school year exceed ten (10) school days of suspension shall be conducted in accordance with this section.

**Principal's Hearing.** The purpose of the hearing with the principal or the principal's designee for such purposes, is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts. A parent/guardian present at the hearing shall have the opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances. Under applicable regulations, students do not have a right to be represented by an attorney at a short-term suspension hearing.

Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the principal or principal's designee will make a determination whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequence. The principal or principal's designee will provide notification in writing of his/her determination and provide reasons for the determination. If the student is suspended, the principal/principal's designee

shall inform the parent/guardian of the type and duration of the suspension, and shall provide an opportunity for the student to make up assignments and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal. If the student is in grades pre-k through 3, the principal/principal's designee shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect. All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

Students do not have the right to appeal a short-term suspension imposed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H3/4 and 603 CMR 53.00.

## LONG-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND DETERMINATION

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. The purpose of the hearing with the principal or principal's designee is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, to provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, to determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal or principal's designee will consider in determining whether alternatives to suspension such as loss of privileges, detention, an apology, a student contract, restitution, and/or probation are appropriate.

Additionally, the student shall have the following additional rights:

- i. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal or principal's designee may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
- ii. the right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's and/or parent's/guardian's expense;
- iii. the right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so; and the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school;
- iv. the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal or principal's designee. All participants shall be informed that the hearing is being recorded by audio. A copy of the audio recording will be provided to the student or parent/guardian upon request.

Based on the evidence submitted at the hearing the principal/principal's designee shall make a determination as to whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension (the use of evidence-based strategies and programs, such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports) what remedy or consequence will be imposed. If the principal/principal's designee decides to impose a long-term suspension, the written determination shall:

- i. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
- ii. Set out key facts and conclusions reached by the principal/principal's designee;
- iii. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
- iv. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive a specific list of education services to make academic progress while suspended, and the contact information of a school member who can provide more detailed information.
- v. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's/designee's decision to impose a long-term suspension to the superintendent or his/her designee for said purpose within five (5) calendar days, which may be extended by parent/guardian request in writing an additional seven (7) calendar days.

The long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent/superintendent's designee decides to reverse the principal's/principal's designee's determination on appeal. If the student is in grades pre-k through grade 3, the principal/principal's designee shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, whether short-term or long-term, before the suspension takes effect. All written communications regarding the hearing and principal's/designee's determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal/principal's designee and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or by other means of communication where appropriate.

#### APPEAL OF LONG-TERM SUSPENSION

A student who is placed on a long-term suspension shall have the right to appeal the principal's/ principal's designee's decision to the superintendent if properly and timely filed. A good faith effort shall be made to include the parent/guardian at the hearing. The appeal shall be held within three (3) school days of the appeal, unless the student or parent/guardian requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, which the superintendent shall grant.

The student and parent/guardian shall have the same rights afforded at the long-term suspension principal hearing. Within five (5) calendar days of the hearing the superintendent or superintendent's designee shall issue his/her written decision which meets the criteria required of the principal's determination. If the superintendent or superintendent's designee determines the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent/designee may impose the same or a lesser consequence than that of the principal. The decision of the superintendent/superintendent's designee on the student's appeal shall constitute the final decision of the school district with regard to the student's long-term suspension.

#### EMERGENCY REMOVAL

A student may be temporarily removed prior to notice and hearing when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense within the scope of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H3/4 and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school and, in the principal's/principal's designee's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days, following the day of the emergency removal. During the emergency removal the principal/designee shall make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and student's parent/guardian of the emergency removal and the reason for the emergency removal. The principal/designee may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation. The principal/designee shall also provide the due process requirements of written notice for suspensions and provide for a hearing which meets the due process requirements of 603 CMR 53.08 within the two (2) school day time period, unless an extension of time for the hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal/principal's designee, student, and parent/guardian.

A decision shall be rendered orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day.

#### IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION UNDER 603 CMR 53:02(6) & 603 CMR 53.10:

In-school suspension is defined as the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not the school premises, for not more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions over the course of the school year. An in-school suspension may be used as an alternative to short-term suspension.

A principal or principal's designee may impose an in-school suspension as defined above according to the following procedures:

The principal/principal's designee shall orally inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal/principal's designee determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal/principal's designee shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or

consecutively, in a school year. On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal/principal's designee shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal/principal's designee shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the principal/principal's designee is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least two (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent of the in-school suspension.

The principal/principal's designee shall send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal/principal's designee for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal/principal's designee shall deliver such notice on the day of the in-school suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the principal/principal's designee and the parent.

**SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION FOR DISCIPLINARY OFFENSES UNDER M.G.L. 71 §37H and/or 37H1/2:** The due process notification and hearing requirements in the preceding sections do not apply to the following disciplinary offenses:

- I. Possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or assault of school staff. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H. A student may be subject to long-term suspension or expulsion if found in possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or the student assaults a member of educational staff.
- II. Issuance of felony or felony delinquency charges against a student/ Finding or admission of guilt to a felony charge/felony delinquency. A student who has been charged with a felony/felony delinquency may be subject to long-term suspension if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. A student who has been convicted of, or who has admitted guilt in a court of law to, a felony or felony delinquency charge may be expelled from school if the principal determines at the student's staff, and the principal determines the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

\* All hearings to consider a student's suspension in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H and/or M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2 shall be conducted by the building principal and not by a principal's designee. Appeals of suspensions or expulsions imposed accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H and/or M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2 shall be conducted by the superintendent of schools and not by the superintendent's designee.

**Due Process Procedures M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H:**

The principal shall notify the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing of the opportunity for a hearing, and the right to have representation (at private expense) at the hearing, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses on the student's behalf. After said hearing, the a principal may, in his/her discretion, decide to impose a long-term suspension rather than expulsion. A student who is suspended from school on a long-term basis or expelled for such an infraction shall have the right to appeal the decision to the superintendent. The student shall have ten (10) calendar days from the date of the long-term suspension/expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his/her appeal. The student has the right to counsel (at private expense) at the hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student was guilty of the alleged offense. The superintendent's decision on the student's appeal shall constitute the final decision of the school district with regard to the student's long-term suspension or expulsion.

Except where circumstances warrant the student's immediate short-term, interim removal from the school premises due to immediate safety concerns or substantial disruption of the school environment, a student



shall not be suspended or expelled from school in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H until a hearing in which the student and parents have the opportunity to participate is conducted by the principal. Prior to the imposition of any such short-term interim removal, the principal shall, at a minimum conduct a preliminary informal hearing with the student to inform the student of the violation(s) of which the student is accused and provide the student with the opportunity to respond thereto.

**Due Process Procedures M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2:**

Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony, or the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal may suspend a student for a period of time determined appropriate by the principal if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. Except where circumstances warrant the student's immediate short-term, interim removal from the school premises due to immediate safety concerns or substantial disruption of the school environment, a student shall not be suspended or expelled from school in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2 until a hearing in which the student and parents have the opportunity to participate and to be represented by an attorney (at private expense) is conducted by the principal.

Prior to the hearing to consider the student's long-term suspension or expulsion in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2, the principal shall notify the student and parents in writing of the charges and of the date and time of a hearing to consider the Student's possible long-term suspension or expulsion at which the student has the right to be represented by an attorney (at private expense) and to present evidence and witnesses in the student's defense. Upon the conclusion of said hearing, and prior to the effective date of any long-term suspension or expulsion imposed, the principal shall issue a written decision notifying the student and parents of the principal's findings and determinations, the effective date and length of any long-term suspension or expulsion imposed, and of the student's right to appeal to the superintendent any long-term suspension or expulsion imposed by the principal within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the principal's decision.

**Superintendent Appeals M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2:**

The hearing on the student's appeal of any long-term suspension or expulsion imposed by the principal shall be conducted within three (3) calendar days of the submission of the student's appeal request. Pending the superintendent's decision on the student's appeal, the long-term suspension or expulsion imposed by the principal shall remain in effect. At the appeal hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and the right to counsel (at private expense). The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal. The superintendent shall render a written decision on the student's appeal within five (5) calendar days of the appeal hearing.

**SCHOOL-WIDE EDUCATION SERVICES PLAN FOR STUDENTS SUSPENDED OR EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL (M.G.L. c. 76, § 21, 603 CMR 53.13:**

(1) Any student who is serving an in-school suspension, short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or expulsion shall have the opportunity to earn credits, as applicable, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of his or her removal from the classroom or school. The principal shall inform the student and parent of this opportunity in writing when such suspension or expulsion is imposed.

(2) Any student who is expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services and to make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through the school-wide Education Service Plan.

(3) Each school has a process for developing a school-wide Education Service Plan for education services that the school district will make available to students who are expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive school days. Students and their parents will be notified of the alternative educational services available to through the school or school district and of the process for arranging such services at the time of suspension/expulsion. Education services shall be based on, and be provided in a manner consistent with, the academic standards and curriculum frameworks established for all students under M.G.L. c 69, §§ 1D and 1F.(4)

Notice of Education Services for Students in Long-Term Suspension and Expulsion; Enrollment Reporting.  
(a) The principal shall notify the parent and student of the opportunity to receive education services at the time the student is expelled or suspended in excess of ten (10) consecutive school days. Notice shall be provided in English and in the primary language spoken in the student's home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. The notice shall include a list of the specific education services that are available to the student and contact information for a school district staff member who can provide more detailed information.

(b) For each student expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, whether in school or out of school, the school district shall document the student's enrollment in education services. For data reporting purposes, the school shall track and report attendance, academic progress, and such other data as directed by the Department.

## DISCIPLINE AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. In addition to those due process protections afforded to all students, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the regulations issued pursuant to said statutes require that additional provisions be made for:

Students who have been found eligible for special education services under the IDEA.

Students who the school district knows or has reason to know might be eligible for special education services. The school is deemed to have knowledge that a student is a student with a disability if before the behavior that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred: (1) the student's parent/guardian expressed concern in writing to supervisory or administrative personnel, or the student's teacher, that the student is in need of special education and related services; (2) the student's parent/guardian requested an evaluation of the child; or (3) the student's teacher, or other school personnel, expressed specific concerns directly to the director of special education or to other supervisory personnel about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the student.

The school is not deemed to have knowledge of a disability if (1) the parent/guardian has not allowed an evaluation or has refused special education and related services, or (2) the child has been evaluated and determined not to be a child with a disability.

Students who have been found to have a disability that substantially limits a major life activity, as defined under §504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

These students are generally entitled to increased procedural protections prior to imposing discipline that will result in the student's removal for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or where there is a pattern of short term removals that exceed ten (10) school days in a given year.

If a request is made for an evaluation of a student's eligibility for special education services during the time period in which the student is subjected to disciplinary measures, the evaluation shall be conducted in an expedited manner. Until the evaluation is completed, the student shall remain in the educational placement determined by school authorities. If the student is subsequently found eligible, then he/she receives all procedural protections subsequent to the finding of eligibility.

The following additional requirements apply to the discipline of students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities may be excluded from their programs for ten (10) school days or less in the school year to the extent that such sanctions would be applied to all students. Before a student with a disability can be excluded from his/her program for more than ten (10) consecutive days in a given school year or subjected to a pattern of removal constituting a "disciplinary change of placement," building administrators, the parents/guardians, and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team will meet to determine the relationship between the student's disability and behavior (Manifestation Determination).

If building administrators, the parents/guardians, and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team determine that the student's conduct was not a manifestation of the student's disability, the school may discipline the student in accordance with the procedures and penalties applicable to all students but will

continue to provide a free appropriate public education to those students with IEPs. The student's IEP Team will identify the services necessary to be provided in addition to any services to which the student is entitled through the school's Education Services Plan so as to ensure the student's free appropriate public education during the period of exclusion, review any existing behavior intervention plan or, where appropriate, conduct a functional behavioral assessment of the student. Eligible Section 504 students shall be entitled to receive alternative education services in accordance with the school's Education Services Plan during any suspension or expulsion in excess of ten (10) consecutive days.

If building administrators, the parents/guardians, and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team determine that the conduct giving rise to disciplinary action was a manifestation of the student's disability, the student will not be subjected to further removal or exclusion from the student's current education program for the incident of misconduct (except for conduct involving weapons, drugs, or resulting in serious bodily injury to others) until the IEP or 504 Team develops, and the parents/guardians consent to, a new placement, or unless the school obtains an order from a court or from the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA) or a court authorizing a change in the student's placement. The student's Team shall also review, and modify as appropriate, any existing behavior intervention plan or arrange for a functional behavioral assessment.

If a student with a disability possesses or uses illegal drugs, sells or solicits a controlled substance, possesses a dangerous weapon on school grounds or at a school function, or causes serious bodily injury to another on school grounds or at a school function, the school may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to forty-five (45) school days regardless of whether the conduct was a manifestation of the student's disability. A court or BSEA Hearing Officer may also order the placement of a student who presents a substantial likelihood of injury to self or others in an appropriate interim setting for up to forty-five (45) school days.

## **Selected Massachusetts Laws - Student Conduct**

### 1. M.G.L. c.71, § 37H – Policies Relative to Conduct of Teachers or Students: Student Handbooks

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 37H:

(A) Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(B) Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(C) Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (a) or (b) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After said hearing, a principal may, in their discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (a) or (b).

(D) Any student who has been expelled from a school district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.

(E) Any school district that suspends or expels a student under this section shall continue to provide educational services to the student during the period of suspension or expulsion, under section 21 of chapter 76. If the student moves to another district during the period of suspension or expulsion, the new district of residence shall either admit the student to its schools or provide educational services to the student in an education service plan, under section 21 of chapter 76.

### 2. M.G.L. c.71, § 37H ½ - Felony Complaint or Conviction of Student - Suspension: Expulsion: Right to Appeal

(1) Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony or upon the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal or headmaster if said principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and the reasons for such suspension prior to such suspension taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such suspension; provided, however, that such suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent in writing of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the student's request for an appeal. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of

the city, town, or regional school district with regard to the suspension.

(2) Upon a student being convicted of a felony or upon an adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for such expulsion prior to such expulsion taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such expulsion; provided, however, that the expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the expulsion to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent, in writing, of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the expulsion. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the city, town, or regional school district with regard to the expulsion.

Any school district that suspends or expels a student under this section shall continue to provide educational services to the student during the period of suspension or expulsion, under section 21 of chapter 76. If the student moves to another district during the period of suspension or expulsion, the new district of residence shall either admit the student to its schools or provide educational services to the student under an education service plan, under section 21 of chapter 76.

M.G.L. c.71, § 37H <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> - Suspension or Expulsion on Grounds other than Those set forth in Secs. 37H or 37H <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

(a) This section shall govern the suspension and expulsion of students enrolled in a public school in the commonwealth who are not charged with a violation of subsections (a) or (b) of section 37H or with a felony under section 37H<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>.

(b) Any principal, headmaster, superintendent or person acting as a decision-maker at a student meeting or hearing, when deciding the consequences for the student, shall consider ways to re-engage the student in the learning process; and shall not suspend or expel a student until alternative remedies have been employed and their use and results documented, following and in direct response to a specific incident or incidents, unless specific reasons are documented as to why such alternative remedies are unsuitable or counter-productive, and in cases where the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm upon another person while in school. Alternative remedies may include, but shall not be limited to, : (i) mediation; (ii) conflict resolution; (iii) restorative justice; and (iv) collaborative problem solving."

(c) For any suspension or expulsion under this section, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled, or a designee, shall provide, to the student and to the parent or guardian of the student, notice of the charges and the reason for the suspension or expulsion in English and in the primary language spoken in the home of the student. The student shall receive the written notification and shall have the opportunity to meet with the principal or headmaster, or a designee, to discuss the charges and reasons for the suspension or expulsion prior to the suspension or expulsion taking effect. The principal or headmaster, or a designee, shall ensure that the parent or guardian of the student is included in the meeting, provided that such meeting may take place without the parent or guardian only if the principal or headmaster, or a designee, can document reasonable efforts to include the parent or guardian in that meeting. The department shall promulgate rules and regulations that address a principal's duties under this subsection and procedures for including parents in student exclusion meetings, hearings or interviews under this subsection.

(d) If a decision is made to suspend or expel the student after the meeting, the principal or headmaster, or a designee, shall update the notification for the suspension or expulsion to reflect the meeting with the student. If a student has been suspended or expelled for more than 10 school days for a single infraction or for more than 10 school days cumulatively for multiple infractions in any school year, the student and the parent or guardian of the student shall also receive, at the time of the suspension or expulsion decision, written notification of a right to appeal and the process for appealing the suspension or expulsion in English and in the primary language spoken in the home of the student; provided, however, that the suspension or expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing. The principal or headmaster or a designee shall notify the superintendent in writing, including, but not limited to, by electronic means, of any out-of-school suspension imposed on a student enrolled in kindergarten through grade 3 prior to such suspension taking effect. That notification shall describe the student's alleged misconduct and the reasons for suspending the student out-of-school. For the purposes of this section, the term "out-of-school suspension" shall mean a disciplinary action imposed by school officials to remove a student from participation in school activities for 1 day or more.

(e) A student who has been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 school days for a single infraction or for more than 10 school days cumulatively for multiple infractions in any school year shall have the right to appeal the suspension or expulsion to the superintendent. The student or a parent or guardian of the student shall notify the superintendent in writing of a request for an appeal not later than 5 calendar days following the effective date of the suspension or expulsion; provided, that a student and a parent or guardian of the student may request, and if so requested, shall be granted an extension of up to 7 calendar days. The superintendent or a designee shall hold a hearing with the student and the parent or guardian of the student within 3 school days of the student's request for an appeal; provided that a student or a parent or guardian of the student may request and, if so requested, shall be granted an extension of up to 7 calendar days; provided further, that the superintendent, or a designee, may proceed with a hearing without a parent or guardian of the student if the superintendent, or a designee, makes a good faith effort to include the parent or guardian. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, cross-examine witnesses and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal in writing within 5 calendar days of the hearing. That decision shall be the final decision of the school district with regard to the suspension or expulsion.

(f) No student shall be suspended or expelled from a school or school district for a time period that exceeds 90 school days, beginning the first day the student is removed from an assigned school building.

#### 4. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37L – Notification to School Personnel of Reporting Requirements for Child Abuse and Neglect and Fires; Reports of Students Possessing or Using Dangerous Weapons on School Premises, Transferred Students' School Records

The school committee of each city, town or regional school district shall inform teachers, administrators, and other professional staff of reporting requirements for child abuse and neglect under section 51A of chapter 119 and the reporting requirements for fires under section 2A of chapter 148.

In addition, any school department personnel shall report in writing to their immediate supervisor an incident involving a student's possession or use of a dangerous weapon on school premises at any time.

Supervisors who receive such a weapon report shall file it with the superintendent of said school, who shall file copies of said weapon report with the local chief of police, the department of children and families, the office of student services or its equivalent in any school district, and the local school committee. Said superintendent, police chief, and representative from the department of children and families, together with a representative from the office of student services or its equivalent, shall arrange an assessment of the student involved in said weapon report. Said student shall be referred to a counseling program; provided, however, that said counseling shall be in accordance with acceptable standards as set forth by the board of education. Upon completion of a counseling session, a follow-up assessment shall be made of said student by those involved in the initial assessment.

A student transferring into a local system must provide the new school system with a complete school record of the entering student. Said record shall include, but not be limited to, any incidents involving suspension or violation of criminal acts or any incident reports in which such student was charged with any suspended act.

## School Committee Policies

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### POLICY 1000 NON-DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The Wachusett Regional School District does not tolerate discrimination or harassment of students, parents, employees, or the general public on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy status, disability, homelessness, religion, age, or immigration status. Consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, the District also does not discriminate against students on the basis of homelessness.

The Superintendent shall designate at least one administrator to serve as the compliance officer for the District's non-discrimination policies in education-related activities, including but not limited to responding to inquiries related to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Americans with Disabilities Act; the Age Act; M.G.L. c. 76, § 5; M.G.L. c. 151B and 151C; and 603 C.M.R. § 26.00. Inquiries about the application of Title IX to the District may be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator, to the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, or both.

The Wachusett Regional School District's policy of nondiscrimination will extend to students, staff, the general public, and individuals with whom it does business; no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in employment, admission to a public school of the District or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, pregnancy or pregnancy status, age, homelessness, disability or immigration status.

In addition to designating at least one administrator to handle inquiries regarding the District's non-discrimination policies, the Superintendent shall adopt and publish one or more grievance procedures for addressing reports of discrimination, harassment and retaliation under the protected classes identified in this policy. If an individual is interested in filing a complaint that they have been discriminated against because of their race, color, sex, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy status, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, homelessness, disability, or immigration status, their complaint should be filed in accordance with the District's grievance procedures for discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

The student and personnel handbooks and grievance procedures shall identify the name, office address and telephone number for the compliance officer(s) for the above-referenced statutes. This policy and related grievance procedures shall be posted on the District's website.

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### POLICY 1020 NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF DISABILITY

The Wachusett Regional School District believes that individuals with disabilities are integral members of the school community.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that no qualified individual with a disability shall be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, employment opportunities, and activities of the school district or be subject to discrimination in District programs. Similarly, no school district shall exclude or otherwise deny services, programs, or activities to an individual because of the known disability of a person with whom the individual is known to have a relationship or association. The Wachusett Regional School District complies with the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

**Definition:** A "qualified individual with a disability" is an otherwise qualified individual, determined through an individualized process to have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and who, with or without reasonable modification to rules, policies, or practices, the



removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by the District.

**Reasonable Modification:** The District shall make reasonable modification in policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability or, in case of eligible students, to ensure a free appropriate public education as defined under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

**Communications:** The District shall take the appropriate steps to ensure that communications with applicants, participants, students, and members of the public with disabilities are as effective as communications with non-disabled individuals. To this end, the District shall furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy benefits of, a service, program, or activity conducted by the District. In determining what type of auxiliary aid or service is necessary, the District shall give primary consideration to the requests of the individuals with disabilities. Any decision that, in compliance with its responsibility to provide effective communication for individuals with disabilities, would fundamentally alter the service, program, or activity or unduly burden the District shall be made by the District's appointed ADA Coordinator after considering all resources available for use in funding and operating the program, service, or activity. A written statement of the reasons for reaching that conclusion shall accompany the decision.

**Auxiliary Aids and Services:** "Auxiliary aids and services" includes, but are not limited to: (1) qualified interpreters, note-takers, transcription services, written materials, assisted listening systems, and other effective methods for making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments; (2) qualified readers, taped texts, audio recordings, Braille materials, large print materials, or other effective methods for making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments; (3) acquisition or modification of equipment or devices; and (4) other similar services and actions.

**Limits of Required Modifications:** The District is not required to take any action that it can demonstrate would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a service, program, or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens.

**Notice:** The District shall make available to applicants, participants, students, beneficiaries, and other interested persons information regarding the provisions the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the applicability of those statutes to the services, programs, or activities of the District. The information shall be made available in such a manner as the School Committee and Superintendent find necessary to apprise such persons of the protections against discrimination assured them by the ADA and/or Section 504.

**Compliance Coordinator:** The District shall designate at least one employee to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, including any investigation of any complaint communicated to it alleging its noncompliance or alleging any actions that would be prohibited under the ADA and/or Section 504. The District shall make publicly available the name, office address, and telephone number of the employee(s) so designated and shall adopt and publish procedures for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action that would be prohibited under the ADA and/or Section 504.

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## **POLICY 1523 DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLICATIONS**

The Wachusett Regional School District shall, in accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws and Department of Education regulations, provide all publications as approved by the School Committee and required by the State Department of Education.

The School Committee Policy Book shall be made available for review to any person, upon request to the Superintendent's Office. Copies of said publications shall be placed in each of the five (5) Town Libraries and all school libraries. A nominal fee, not to exceed the cost of production, shall be charged to any person requesting a copy of one of the publications.

This policy shall be included in all Student Handbooks.

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#### POLICY 3611.4 ENRICHMENT

The Wachusett Regional School Committee is committed to providing a high quality education for all students with the goal of maximizing the performance and achievement of every individual. Staff is encouraged and expected to use innovative teaching implementing the District curriculum in creative and flexible ways.

It is recognized that students possess a broad range of intellectual skills and creative talents that can be challenged by diverse and stimulating activities.

Wachusett Regional School District shall:

- provide opportunities for enriching activities appropriately accessible to all students;
- encourage and support staff attendance at professional development programs designed to promote the implementation of gifted and talented instructional strategies;
- promote the use of alternative strategies which may include, but are not limited to, cluster grouping, curriculum compacting, interest-based projects, independent studies, and teacher-pupil contracting, supported by appropriate classroom resources; and
- inform parents of the enriching activities available in the area of gifted education and promote parent/community involvement and participation.

This policy shall be referenced in each school's student handbook. In addition, school councils shall annually review the needs of gifted and talented students.

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#### POLICY 3625 TEACHING ABOUT ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUGS

In accordance with state and federal law, the District shall provide age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate, evidence-based alcohol, tobacco, and drug prevention education programs in grades K-12.

The alcohol, tobacco, and drug prevention program shall address the legal, social, and health consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, with emphasis on nonuse by school-age children. The program also shall include information about effective techniques and skill development for delaying and abstaining from using, as well as skills for addressing peer pressure to use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.

Prevention requires education, and healthy decision-making. The objectives of this program are:

- To prevent, delay, and/or reduce alcohol, tobacco, and drug use among children and youth.
- To increase students' understanding of the legal, social, emotional, and health consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.
- To teach students self-management skills, social skills, negotiation skills, and refusal skills that will help them to make healthy decisions and avoid alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.

The curriculum, instructional materials, and outcomes used in this program shall be recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the Wachusett Regional School District Committee.

This policy shall be posted on the District's website and notice shall be provided to all students and parents/guardians in accordance with state law. Additionally, the District shall file a copy of this policy with DESE in accordance with law in a manner requested by DESE.

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## POLICY 6400 BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

The Wachusett Regional School District shall help students learn behavior patterns which will enable them to be responsible, contributing members of society. Students will be expected to conduct themselves in keeping with their level of maturity and act with due regard for their fellow students and supervisory authority. Students shall have a right to reasonable treatment from the school and its employees and, in turn, the school and its employees shall have a right to expect reasonable behavior from students.

The principal will be responsible for administering behavior and discipline procedures at the school in accordance with District policy and school procedures. In order to assure that all students and staff are made aware of their specific rights and responsibilities, a student handbook shall be developed by each school, which defines the rights and responsibilities of students and others whose actions affect student behavior. References to all School Committee policies relating to student discipline will be included in the student handbook.

Corrective actions for misbehaviors outlined in the handbook shall be commensurate with the severity of the misbehavior. Consideration shall be given to the following:

1. age of the student;
2. mitigating circumstances;
3. previous behavior of the student; and
4. attitude of the student.

Student Handbook. The student handbook shall be reviewed annually with input sought from the school council. The student handbook shall be printed and distributed to all enrolled students and all staff members at the start of each school year. The student handbook shall include, but not be limited to, sections dealing with:

1. student rights and responsibilities;
2. student behavior and discipline; and
3. glossary of terms.

Each building principal shall be responsible for providing orientation to the handbook to all enrolled students and all staff members at the start of the school year. The provisions of the student handbook shall be applied to students in a standardized, nondiscriminatory and non-arbitrary manner.

Liability for Damages. The Wachusett Regional School District shall seek compensation for District property willfully damaged by a minor or student age 18 years or older. Civil action may be brought against the minor or his/her parents, or the individual if 18 years of age or older. All incidents shall be investigated, liabilities fixed, and all costs assessed in a nondiscriminatory and non-arbitrary manner. Schools shall be monitored to ensure that findings of liability are in accordance with District procedures in affording due process guarantees.

Corporal Punishment. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Staff shall develop alternative techniques for managing student discipline in accordance with District policy.

Searches. Wachusett Regional School District authorities may exercise their rights to conduct an inspection of student lockers and/or desks. A student shall not misuse lockers and desks assigned by school authorities. Lockers and desks remain, at all times, the property of the District.

A warrant-less search (non-emergency) of a student's school locker or articles carried upon the student's

person, may be conducted if there is a reasonable suspicion that the search is necessary to protect the health and/or safety of students and staff, or to detect a violation of school rules. Such a search may be conducted if school authorities suspect that a student possesses such items as, but not limited to, weapons, dangerous instruments, stolen goods, narcotics, hallucinogenics, amphetamines, barbiturates, marijuana, unregistered drugs, controlled substances, alcoholic beverages, or evidence of cheating or other academic misconduct.

Student Suspensions. The Wachusett Regional School District shall ensure that each pupil has an atmosphere and an environment which is conducive to teaching and learning. To that end, schools shall maintain programs which maximize opportunities for learning and minimize disruptions to the educational process. The District's first concern shall be to help maintain pupils in school so that their learning process is not interrupted.

Students who create discipline problems which cannot be resolved through less severe means shall be suspended. As a last resort, the District shall, at the discretion of the school principal, and following the required due process, deny a pupil the right to attend school for a period not to exceed ten (10) days. The principal's decision is final.

Students will have the right and the responsibility to complete all assignments and make up all tests missed during the suspension. It will be the student's responsibility to confer with teachers and to complete make-up work within a reasonable time but in no instance exceeding three weeks after the suspension expires.

Expulsion. Expulsion shall be considered an action of last resort when the behavior of the student warrants such action at the discretion of the school principal. The expulsion shall be governed by Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 71, sections 37h and 37h1/2, and Ch. 76 section 17

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#### POLICY 6431.1 TOBACCO PRODUCTS ON SCHOOL PREMISES PROHIBITED

Use of any tobacco products, including, but not limited to: cigarettes, cigars, little cigars, chewing tobacco, pipe tobacco and snuff and electronic cigarettes, electronic cigars, electronic pipes or other similar products that rely on vaporization or aerosolization, within school buildings, school facilities, on school grounds or school buses, or at school-sponsored events by any individual, including, but not limited to, school personnel and students, is prohibited at all times.

A staff member determined to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action.

A student determined to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to the student discipline code. This policy shall be promulgated to all staff and students in appropriate handbook(s) and publications.

Signs shall be posted in all school buildings informing the general public of the District policy and requirements of state law.

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#### POLICY 6433.1 ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG USE BY STUDENTS PROHIBITED

A student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use or consume, possess, buy or sell, or give away: any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product, including vapor/E-cigarettes; marijuana; steroids; or any controlled substance except for prescribed medical purposes within any school or on school grounds at any time. The Wachusett Regional School District Committee (WRSDC) also prohibits the use or consumption by students of the aforementioned on school grounds or school buses, or at any school-sponsored event.

Additionally, any student who is under the influence of drugs or alcoholic beverages prior to, or during, attendance at or participation in a school-sponsored activity, will be barred from that activity and may be

subject to disciplinary action.

### Verbal Screening

- The school district shall utilize, in accordance with law, a verbal screening tool approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to screen students for substance abuse disorders. The tool shall be administered by trained staff on an annual basis at grades 7 and 10.
- Parents/guardians shall be notified of the screening prior to the opening of school each year. Parents/guardians shall have the right to opt out of the screening by written notice prior to or during the screening.
- All statements made by a student during a screening are confidential and shall not be disclosed except in the event of immediate medical emergency or in accordance with law. De-identified results shall be reported to the Department of Public Health within 90 days of the completion of the screening process.

This policy shall be posted on the District's website and notice shall be provided to all students and parents/guardians of this policy in accordance with state law. Additionally, the District shall file a copy of this policy with DESE in accordance with law in a manner requested by DESE.

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### POLICY 6515 STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

The Wachusett Regional School Committee recognizes and supports student publications and other literary activities that give students an experience in journalism.

The School Committee recognizes that the District must maintain a level of objectivity deemed to be in the best interest of the community and, to this end, the following procedures are in effect:

1. No school publication will accept advertising that is political, religious, or discriminatory in nature.
  2. All advertising is subject to review and approval by the principal or a designee relative to content and appropriateness.
  3. Final editorial control and approval of all materials intended for publication are the responsibility of, and may be subject to the approval of, the school administration.
  4. This policy shall be referenced in the "Student Handbook".
  5. A statement indicating the editorial control by the school administration regarding all advertising will be included on order forms or other similar correspondence.
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### POLICY 6613.2 ATHLETIC HEAD INJURY AND CONCUSSION POLICY

The safety of students is a high priority for the Wachusett Regional School District. Students who sustain head injuries while in extracurricular athletic activities and those involved in their treatment must follow the protocol based on 105 C.M.R 201.000

(<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/injury/105-cmr-201.pdf>) found online on the high school and middle schools' websites as well as in the student handbooks.

Students who have sustained a head injury must be appropriately evaluated according to the protocol. In order to resume athletic activity, a medical clearance and authorization form must be submitted indicating that the student has recovered. Return to academics will be consistent with the protocol.

District administration, athletic staff, and nursing staff will review the protocol annually to ensure that it is current and reflects best practice. The School Committee will review and revise this policy as needed, but at least bi-annually.

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## POLICY 6621 TRANSPORTATION SAFETY AND SECURITY PROCEDURES

The Wachusett Regional School District and its staff share with students and parents the responsibility for student safety during transportation to and from school. The authority for enforcing District requirements of student conduct on buses will rest with the principal.

To ensure the safety of all students who ride in buses, it may occasionally be necessary to revoke the privilege of transportation from a student who abuses this privilege. Parents of children whose behavior and misconduct on school buses endangers the health, safety, and welfare of other riders or damages properties will be notified that their children face the loss of transportation privileges. Notification of this policy shall be contained in the Student Handbook.

1. Children will be instructed as to the proper procedure for boarding and exiting from a school bus and in proper and safe conduct while aboard.
  2. Emergency evacuation drills will be conducted at least twice a year to acquaint student riders with procedures in emergency situations.
  3. All vehicles used to transport children will be inspected periodically for conformance with state and federal safety requirements.
  4. Classroom instruction on school bus safety will be provided.
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