

# PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK

## 2025 - 2026



**[www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org)**

### Mission Statement

*To prepare all students to reach their full potential as life-long learners and socially responsible contributors to our global community.*

*We achieve this by fostering critical and creative thinking and collaborative problem solving through a robust curriculum delivered by engaging and dedicated educators.*

*We are committed to maintaining an environment that supports inquiry and academic excellence, emotional and physical well-being, appreciation of the arts and diverse cultures, integrity and ethical behavior.*

### Guiding Principles

*Westport Public School students, educators, and the WPS team aspire to be...*

- *emotionally and socially aware,*
- *kind with sincerity,*
- *principled in thought and action, and*
- *learning always.*

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

### Election of Members

The Board of Education is an elected body of seven members; no more than a bare majority may represent the same political party. Members are elected for four-year staggered terms, with three members' terms expiring at one election and the other four at the subsequent election. Board elections are held in odd-numbered years during municipal elections. Political parties may nominate candidates or candidates may run as independent petitioning candidates. For further information, see the Westport Town Charter or contact the Town Clerk's office.

### Board Meetings

Meetings are held on alternate Thursdays in the Staples High School Cafeteria. Most public sessions start at 7:00 p.m. Agendas of regular meetings are listed in a legal notice in a local newspaper. Complete agendas, including backup materials, are posted on the district website: [www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org). The meetings are also viewable live on Cablevision Channel 78, live-streamed by link through the Westport Public School's website, and will remain archived on the District's website.

### Public Participation at Board Meetings

At every Board meeting, 15 minutes are set aside for public comments and questions about topics not on the agenda. The Board does not engage in dialogue about non-agenda topics, but if the answer to a question can be given at a meeting it will be; otherwise the answer will be deferred. Major decisions are usually on the agenda for at least two meetings. The first meeting is devoted to discussion by the Board and the public. The public may comment on agenda topics after Board members have asked their questions and made their comments. Public comment is usually not invited at the meeting at which the board is scheduled to vote, after having heard public comment at the earlier meeting(s).

### Contacting Board Members

Parents wishing to express an opinion on an issue before the Board, but unable to attend a meeting, may write to the chairperson in care of the Board of Education, 110 Myrtle Avenue. Communications are distributed to all Board Members. All Board members may also be reached by email.

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

Lee Goldstein, Chair	31 Greenlea Lane	203-561-6795	lgoldstein@westportps.org
Dorie Hordon, Vice Chair	26 Ellery Lane	917-406-5660	dhordon@westportps.org
Neil Phillips, Secretary	73 Wright Street	203-722-3234	nphillips@westportps.org
Kevin Christie	7 Bruce Lane	646-245-9058	kchristie@westportps.org
Robert Harrington	7 Woody Lane	203-916-2654	rharrington@westportps.org
Jill Dillon	9 Rices Lane	917-670-1578	jdillon@westportps.org
Abby Tolan	1 Harbor Road	917-887-6205	atolan@westportps.org

It is the policy of the Westport Public Schools that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise discriminated against under any program, including employment, because of race, color, religious creed, age, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, ancestry, present or past history of mental disability, intellectual disability, learning disability or physical disability, including, but not limited to, blindness, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut or federal law. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

<b>FACILITIES</b>	Elio Longo, Jr., Chief Financial Officer	203-341-1001
<b>PROGRAMS</b>	Michael Rizzo, Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services	203-341-1253
<b>EMPLOYMENT AND TITLE IX</b>	John Bayers, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources	203-341-1004

<b>MOVING? NOTIFY US!</b>	<b>SCHOOL CLOSINGS OR CANCELLATIONS?</b>
<p><b>If you move, you must notify your child's school immediately, provide your new telephone number and address, and present proof of your continued residence in Westport.</b></p> <p><b>See inside for more information.</b></p>	<p>Call <b>203-341-1766</b>, or visit the <b>CLOSINGS &amp; DELAYS</b> section on the homepage of our website.</p>

**Westport Public Schools website:**

**[www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org)**

The School District website contains extensive information about every aspect of the school system and detailed descriptions of the curriculum. The site also provides links to information about our schools released throughout the school year by the State of Connecticut and the Federal Government. This data may be viewed on the Demographics, Surveys & Reports page of our website.

**Westport Public Schools app available on [Google Play](#) and [Apple App Store](#)**

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## ACADEMICS

### ENGLISH LEARNERS

Students qualifying as English Language Learners (ELLs) are provided services to improve their ability to comprehend, speak, read and write in English. Classes meet in small “pullout” groups regularly, with additional time, as needed, for individual help or in-class support. A referral form for eligibility as an ELL student is completed at the time of registration by the parent or by a staff member during the school year. The eligibility of children for the program will be based on an assessment of the student and will be made by the classroom teacher, building administrator, ELL teacher, and other staff members as appropriate.



### FIELD TRIPS

**Non-School Sites:** Formal permission slips signed by parents are required for all field trips to locations within or outside of Westport, except for trips to other Westport schools.

**Visits to Other Schools:** During the year, students may be transported to other Westport public schools. These trips may include fifth graders’ visits to middle schools for orientation, student’s trips to Staples for musical and/or cultural programs, or other activities offered as part of the regular school program. On these occasions, Coleytown Elementary students may walk to Coleytown Middle School and Bedford students may walk to Staples. Other students are transported by regular school buses. All students ride their regular school buses home at dismissal. Parents will be notified at least ten days in advance as these programs are scheduled throughout the school year. All children will go on these trips except those whose parents return a written statement indicating that they do not wish their children to participate.

### GIFTED STUDENTS

Programs at grades 3-8 are designed to provide gifted students with specialized, in-depth instruction, an opportunity for independent study and positive group experiences.

**Identification at Second Grade:** The comprehensive, multidimensional identification process starts in second grade and includes the following components: teacher observations, group reasoning test and language arts & math performance-based tasks; preliminary referral by teacher or parent; and development of a screening file for referred students. This file contains parent and teacher assessment questionnaires, samples of a student’s exemplary classroom performance; results of language arts & math performance tasks, results of the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test and results of an individual intelligence test (if needed). The referral is then considered by the Gifted Planning and Placement Team whose membership includes a building administrator, classroom teachers, the school psychologist and/or school counselor, and the teacher of the gifted. Using the information gathered through the referral process, the Planning and Placement Team determines whether the students should be identified as gifted and notifies parents of the decision.

**Identification at Other Grades:** Students may be considered for gifted identification in grades K-8. The process is essentially the same except that school personnel, a parent, or the students themselves may make the original referral. The teacher of the gifted may observe/interview the student. When recommended, a performance-based assessment test may be administered to the student.

*For a fuller explanation of the identification process, and for descriptions of the programs at various grade levels, visit our Website.*



## HOMEWORK

**Regular Homework:** When planning after-school activities, parents should be sure there is sufficient time left for study and homework. Parents can help by: providing a proper place to study; arranging a schedule for study and homework where there are no conflicting demands on a child's time and attention; and, by assisting with organization, planning and time management. (This should be a transitional role; parents should become less involved as the child grows older and increasingly independent.) Parents may also help by discussing ideas and talking to youngsters about their work and skills.

*Parents should never do the work for their child or allow anyone else to do so.*

**Makeup Homework for Absences:** Students absent for less than two consecutive days will usually not be given special homework. When the absence extends beyond two days due to illness or extenuating family circumstances, homework will be provided if requested or necessary. In case of extended absences due to illness or injury, the school will provide instruction at home in accordance with Board Policy.

**Makeup Homework for Extended Absences Due to Family Vacations, etc:** Teachers are not required to provide special work for students who will be absent for reasons such as a family vacation. The interactive and collaborative approach to instruction can not be replicated when students are not in school.

## PRIVATE SECTOR PROVIDERS

The Westport Public Schools recognizes the value of its faculty members as they work with students in Westport's classrooms. Their primary responsibility is to teach the students of Westport who attend our schools. Teacher time and energy is diverted when private service providers attempt to speak with Westport teachers to seek student information and/or request a visit to the classrooms of Westport students when school is in session.

In recognition of the valuable resources Westport teachers bring to their work with Westport students in our classrooms, Westport teachers are not required or expected to communicate with or provide information to private service providers. Similarly, visits to Westport classrooms by private service providers and/or agencies will not be permitted unless as part of the process necessary to determine or develop programming for a student with special needs.

STANDARDS-BASED GRADING	
Score	Description
P	Meets the grade-level standard by demonstrating proficiency of the content and processes for the Assessment Topic.
I	In progress toward meeting the grade-level standard.
N	Not yet making progress or making minimal progress toward meeting the grade-level standard.
W	Missing data—no grade recorded.
NEP	Not Enough Proficiency may be used for EOC Level 1 and 2 instead of the standard-based grade level.

**PROFICIENT**—A score of P means your child is successful in using the content and processes at the grade level.  
**NOT YET PROFICIENT**—A score of I or N means your child is still working on the content and processes instructed at the grade level.

## PROGRESS REPORTS & CONFERENCES

**Grades K-5:** Three progress reports viewed electronically on the PowerSchool parent portal and two regularly scheduled conferences each year.

Elementary School Parent-Teacher conferences are regularly scheduled twice yearly, in November/December and March, immediately following the distribution of the progress reports. A parent of a student at any grade level may request a conference with school staff members at any time.

**Grades 6-12:** Four report cards viewed electronically on the PowerSchool parent portal.

## PROMOTION TO NINTH GRADE

In order to be promoted to high school, eighth grade students are expected to achieve a passing grade in each of these core academic subjects: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. If, at the end of the third marking period, a student is failing one or more of these subjects for the year, the student's parents will be notified, and a meeting will be held with the student, his or her parents, grade level counselor and a school administrator to determine the following:

- If any of the student's course recommendations for high school should be changed
- If a RTI meeting needs to be called to discuss the student's difficulties and possible supports
- If the student should independently pursue opportunities to bolster his/her skills through a summer course





**GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:** Staples High School students must earn 26 credits. All students must satisfy state and district requirements with respect to the Connecticut SAT School Day and Next Generation Science Standards assessments given during the spring of junior year in a special schoolwide session. Subject area distribution requirements and other information can be found in the Staples High School Student Handbook and Program of Studies.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

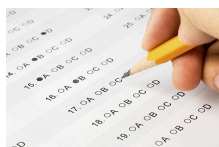
**Programs:** Our broad continuum of services includes: special education instruction within regular classrooms; special education instruction within a small group setting; regular education classes co-taught with a special education teacher or other related service provider and a regular education teacher; pull-out services for skill development, and intensive, districtwide programs that serve students outside of their homeschool ; and related services in the areas of speech and language, occupational and physical therapy, and school-based counseling.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Eligibility for special education is determined by a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) consisting of professional staff members and the child's parent(s). Parents and teachers who believe a child has a learning problem caused by a disability should notify the principal or the special education administrator in the child's school, who will begin the process. In order to qualify for services, a child must have a disability recognized by state and federal law.

**IEP:** For an eligible student, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed that outlines the services the PPT believes are necessary for the student to receive a free and appropriate education.

**Section 504:** For eligible students, a section 504 Accommodation Plan will be developed to provide the student access to the general education curriculum and the school environment.

Preschoolers whose IEP specifies that their disabilities require a preschool program are served at no charge in an inclusive setting at Stepping Stones Preschool, located in the same building as Coleytown Elementary School. Stepping Stones Preschool is open to the Westport general population of non-disabled youngsters on a fee basis.



## STANDARDIZED TESTING

The Following standardized test are mandated by the State of Connecticut and the federal government (Every Student Succeeds Act)

Mandated Test	Subjects	Grades Administered	Time Frame
Smarter Balanced Test (SBA)	Mathematics, English Language Arts	3-8	spring
Connecticut SAT School Day	Mathematics, Evidence-Based Reading & Writing	11	spring
Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Assessment	Science	5, 8 and 11	spring
Connecticut Physical Fitness	Physical Fitness	4, 6, 8, 10	annually
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)	Subjects may include: Arts, Civics, Economics, Geography, Math, Reading, Science, U.S. History, Writing	Grades administered may include: 4, 8,10 and 12	early winter

Additional universal screeners are administered to measure student growth and achievement.

In addition, as noted in the section on gifted programs, the district gives the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT).

- Areas: verbal and nonverbal reasoning ability
- Grade administered: 2
- Time frame: given in February, results in May

**Optional Tests:** PSAT, SAT (other than CT School Day), ACT and Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations

## **BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students are expected to exhibit integrity in carrying out their academic responsibilities. This means always doing their own work; never turning in the work of another person as their own; writing their own reports; never using the words of another without attribution; not plagiarizing work that they find in books or on the internet; and, not cheating on exams. Use of AI without express permission of the teacher is another form of academic dishonesty. Students who violate these ethical standards will face serious consequences ranging from receiving a lower grade on a test or project, to receiving a lower grade for a marking period, to failing the course.

### **SCHOOL CLIMATE (BULLYING/CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR)**

The Westport Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining an educational environment that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe and thus free from bullying, teen dating violence, harassment and discrimination. In accordance with state law and the Board's Safe School Climate Plan, the Board expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior on school grounds; at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds; at a school bus stop; on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board of Education.

The Board also prohibits any form of bullying behavior outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is likewise prohibited.

Students who engage in bullying behavior or teen dating violence shall be subject to school discipline, up to and including expulsion, in accordance with the Board's policies on student discipline, suspension and expulsion, and consistent with state and federal law.

"Bullying" means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades K-12 that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

Bullying shall include, but need not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

"Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

"Teen Dating Violence" means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

"Challenging behavior" means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

The school climate committee for each school shall administer a biannual school climate survey to students, school employees and families of students, provided the parent or guardian of each student shall receive prior written notice of the content and administration of such school climate survey and shall have a reasonable opportunity to opt such student out of such school climate survey.



Consistent with the requirements under state law, the Westport Board of Education authorizes the school climate specialist for each school, in collaboration with the school climate coordinator, to develop, and update as necessary, a school climate improvement plan. Such plan shall be based on the results of the school climate survey, any recommendations from the school climate committee, including the protocols, supports, and any other data the school climate specialist and school climate coordinator deem relevant. Such plan shall be submitted to the school climate coordinator for review and approval on or before December thirty-first of each school year. Upon approval of such plan, a written or electronic copy of such plan shall be made available to members of the school community and such plan shall be used in the prevention of, identification of and response to all challenging behavior.

The Board policy setting forth this prohibition and related procedures is available in detail to students and their parents/guardians upon request or on the District website at <https://www.westportps.org/board-of-education/policies>.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the policy of the Westport Board of Education (the “Board”) to create a school environment that promotes respect of self, others, and property within the Westport Public Schools (the “District”). As part of its educational mission, the District engages in a variety of strategies to teach students about conduct that is acceptable, and unacceptable, and dedicates significant energy to both prevention and response. In establishing a [Code of Conduct](#), the District has set clear expectations for maintaining discipline and reducing interference with the educational process that can result from misconduct. The District promotes the use of consistent discipline practices, within and across schools, while also promoting consideration of individual circumstances related to each disciplinary matter.

The District's approach to discipline is grounded in Board Policy 5114, [Student Discipline](#) and that policy should be referenced for a full review of the Board’s disciplinary obligations and procedures, many of which are grounded in statute, including but not limited to the standards for addressing on-campus vs. off-campus behavior and implementing removal, in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), and discretionary and mandatory expulsion. While Policy 5114 should be consulted for a full explanation of these terms and procedures, a brief summary of key concepts is included for ease of reference and understanding:

	Standard	Procedure	Notice to Parents/Guardians
Removal	A student may be removed from class by a teacher or administrator if the student deliberately causes a serious disruption of the educational process.	When a student is removed by a teacher, the teacher must send the student to a designated area and notify the responsible administrator or the administrator’s designee at once.	The parent or guardian of a minor student are notified of removal within twenty-four (24) hours of the removal.
Suspension (up to 10 school days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For conduct <i>on school grounds, on school transportation, or at any school-sponsored activity</i>, a student can be suspended if their conduct (1) violates a publicized policy of the Board, or (2) is seriously disruptive of the educational process, or (3) endangers persons or property.</li> <li>For conduct <i>off school grounds</i>, a student can be suspended if such conduct violates a publicized policy of the Board and is seriously disruptive of the educational process.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>		
In-school Suspension (ISS)	A suspension shall be an in-school suspension unless specific conditions are met.	Prior to suspension, unless an emergency exists, a student shall be informed of the alleged misconduct and given an opportunity to respond.	In all cases, the parent or guardian of a minor student is notified of suspension within twenty-four (24) hours of the suspension. However, the district shall make reasonable attempts to provide such notification immediately upon suspension.
Out-of-school Suspension (OSS)	A suspension may be out-of-school if the administration determines that the student poses (1) such a danger to persons or property or (2) such a disruption of the educational process that the student should be excluded from school. The administration may also determine OSS is appropriate based on (1) the student’s previous		

<sup>1</sup>.

	disciplinary suspensions or expulsions, and (2) previous efforts to address the student's disciplinary problems through means other than OSS or expulsion.		
Expulsion	For the standards, procedures, and notifications required for expulsion, including discretionary and mandatory expulsions, please see Board Policy 5114.		

Students, staff members, and families are entitled to have clear notice of the District's expectations for behavior. These expectations are explained in our discipline policy and student handbooks. The District fundamentally believes all students can learn, all students make mistakes, and that by providing clear boundaries and expectations, we are positioning students for success.

The potential range of consequences for various behaviors are provided in the respective Codes of Conduct for high school, middle school, and elementary school. When student behavior does not meet the District's standards, we follow a process that includes accountability and learning to address the behavior. This process is adapted from material from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and is summarized as: Leading with Safety, Investigate, Address, Restore.

In general, students are held accountable for behavior in 5 categories:

1. Behavior that demonstrates a lack of respect for the teaching and learning environment
2. Behavior that demonstrates a lack of honesty, respect, and courtesy for individuals in the school community
3. Behavior that demonstrates a lack of respect or damages personal or public property
4. Behavior that jeopardizes the health, safety, and welfare of individuals in the school community
5. Behavior that violates school regulations, board policies, and/or state/federal laws

Additionally, any student in violation of rules which results in suspension or expulsion from school will be ineligible to participate in practices, games or attend athletic events or extracurricular or co-curricular activities during the time of suspension or expulsion. A student given in-school suspension will not be eligible to practice or play in a contest or participate in extracurricular or co-curricular events during the suspension. In addition, students will be subject to the Athletic Code of Conduct and other applicable agreements regarding behavioral expectations that are part of their participation in extracurricular activities, including the potential for additional removal or exclusion from these activities.

Students who need to report any behavior that violates this code of conduct should report to a trusted adult within the school community. This may include, but is not limited to, a classroom teacher, a school counselor or psychologist, a coach, or school administrator.

### **Conduct Warranting Discipline**

**A student may be subject to discipline, including exclusion, suspension or expulsion for behavior which includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:**

- Engaging in bullying behavior;
- Any act of hate-based conduct or protected class harassment
- Possession, sale, distribution, use, or consumption of tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems (e.g., e-cigarettes), electronic cannabis delivery system, or vapor products, or the unlawful possession, sale, distribution, use or consumption of drugs, narcotics or alcoholic beverages (or any facsimile of tobacco, drugs, narcotics or alcoholic beverages, or any item represented to be tobacco, drugs or alcoholic beverages), including being under the influence of any such substances or aiding in the procurement of any such substances
- The destruction of real, personal or school property, such as, cutting, defacing, vandalizing or otherwise damaging property in any way;
- Theft;
- Striking or assaulting a student, members of the school staff, or other persons; fighting;
- Possession, sale, distribution, use, or consumption of tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems (e.g., e-cigarettes), electronic cannabis delivery system, or vapor products, or the unlawful possession, sale, distribution, use or consumption of drugs, narcotics or alcoholic beverages (or any facsimile of tobacco, drugs, narcotics or alcoholic beverages, or any item represented to be tobacco, drugs or alcoholic beverages), including being under the influence of any such substances or aiding in the procurement of any such substances
- Possession of any weapon, weapon facsimile, deadly weapon, martial arts weapon, electronic defense weapon, pistol, knife, blackjack, bludgeon, box cutter, metal knuckles, pellet gun, air pistol, explosive device, firearm, whether loaded or unloaded,

- whether functional or not, or any other dangerous object or instrument
- Defiance of school rules and the valid authority of teachers, supervisors, administrators, other employees and/or law enforcement authorities
- Use of obscene or profane language or gestures
- Incidents or accumulation of incidents such as school and class tardiness, class or study hall cutting, or failure to attend detention or monitored study, unauthorized leaving of a classroom, and/or unauthorized absences from school
- Any other violation of school rules or regulations or a series of violations which makes the presence of the student in school seriously disruptive of the educational process and/or a danger to persons or property.
- Any action prohibited by any Federal or State law

State law *requires* that the school system begin expulsion proceedings when there is reason to believe that a pupil:

- *on school grounds, on school transportation, or at school-sponsored activity* possessed or used a firearm, deadly weapon, dangerous instrument or martial arts weapon;
- *off school grounds* possessed a firearm or used or possessed a firearm, dangerous instrument or martial arts weapon in the commission of a crime;
- *on or off school grounds or school transportation* offered for sale or distribution of a controlled substance

### **Discipline of Students with Disabilities**

The District's addresses discipline for students with disabilities under the IDEA or Section 504, as applicable, and consistent with [Board Policy 5114](#). Upon the administration's decision to recommend expulsion or impose a suspension that would constitute a change in educational placement under the IDEA, the administration shall promptly notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and provide them a copy of the special education procedural safeguards. The District will immediately convene the student's planning and placement team ("PPT"), but in no case later than ten (10) school days after the recommendation for expulsion or the suspension that constitutes a change in placement was made. The student's PPT shall consider the relationship between the student's disability and the behavior that led to the recommendation for expulsion or the suspension which constitutes a change in placement, in order to determine whether the student's behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability. If families have specific questions regarding discipline for their child with a disability, the family should contact the student's Assistant Principal or Principal.

If the Administration recommends for expulsion a student identified as eligible for educational accommodations under Section 504 who has violated any rule or code of conduct, the administration shall notify the parents of the recommendation for expulsion. The Section 504 team shall convene and for the purpose of reviewing the relationship between the student's disability and the behavior that led to the recommendation for expulsion and the team will determine whether the student's behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability. For students eligible under Section 504, when a student with a disability is recommended for expulsion based solely on the illegal use or possession of drugs or alcohol, the 504 team shall not be required to meet to review the relationship between the student's disability and the behavior that led to the recommendation for expulsion.

The complete [Code of Conduct](#), [student discipline policy](#) and [administrative regulations](#) are available online and should be reviewed by all families.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment of students is strictly forbidden. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or other conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's ability to learn or of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. Sexual harassment can include conduct that is verbal, such as suggestive comments, insults, jokes, etc.; nonverbal, including pictures, gestures, whistling etc.; or physical, including pinching, kissing, touching, assault or coerced sexual intercourse. Complaint procedures for students may involve personal contact or verbal or written complaints.

**Personal Contact:** If the offender is another student, the complainant tries telling the offender that the behavior is unwelcome and asking that it stop. If a student feels uncomfortable talking to the offender, or if the personal contact is ineffective, the student should follow up with an informal or formal complaint. The student should always make a complaint if the offender is an adult.

**Informal (verbal) Complaint:** The student should discuss the behavior with any staff member with whom he or she feels comfortable. If the offender is an adult, the staff member should refer the complaint to the principal; if the offender is a student, the staff member should report it to his/her supervisor.

**Formal (written) Complaint:** A formal written complaint may be used as an initial procedure or as a follow-up to informal procedures. The student should submit a written complaint to a staff member who will refer it to the principal. A copy of every formal complaint, as well as the follow-up report, is submitted to the Superintendent.

Such a formal complaint should state:

- Name of the complainant
- Date of the complaint
- Date(s) of the alleged harassment
- Name(s) of the harasser(s)
- Location where such harassment occurred
- Names of any witness(es) to the harassment, and
- Detailed statement of the circumstances constituting the alleged harassment.

**Investigation/Remedial Action:** All complaints will be investigated promptly. The investigator will file a written report with the Principal, with copies to the complainant and the alleged offender and their parents, and the Superintendent. If it is established that harassment has occurred, the administrator shall take steps to assure that the behavior will not continue. Disciplinary measures may be imposed up to and including suspension (students) and discharge (employees).

**Due Process/Right of Appeal:** Either side may appeal the decision to the District's Title IX Coordinator. Such appeal must be filed within ten business days of receiving the report with the Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services.

## COMMUNITY

### ACCESS TO PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

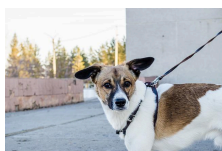
**Public Records:** In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), most Board of Education (BOE) records are available for inspection during normal business hours at the Board of Education offices in Westport Town Hall. If you wish to see a large volume of material, an appointment is required to give the staff time to assemble the records and provide a viewing space for you. A BOE employee must be present during your review of records.

**Copies:** Upon written request, copies of written public records are available for a charge of 50 cents per page plus the cost of postage over one ounce. Exception: no fee for documents of 10 pages or less, *if copies are already available*; first copy of material distributed for BOE agenda; one copy of a BOE policy; single-sided documents up to 20 pages may be faxed at no fee, except for long distance telephone charges if applicable. Documents available on computer may be emailed at no charge.

**Instructional Materials:** In the event when electronic access to textbooks is not available, please contact your child's teacher.

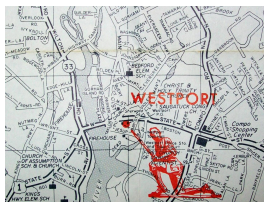
**Instructional Videos & Audio Tapes:** These items may not be borrowed but may be reviewed in school, at a time and place determined by the administrator in charge, with machine(s) to be operated by a staff member who is to be present during review.

**Exceptions to these guidelines require the Superintendent's approval.**



### ANIMALS ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

No dogs or other pets are permitted in school buildings or on school grounds. Exceptions: service animals (e.g. seeing-eye dogs), animals used for Westport public school-sponsored programs or adult education animal training programs. Anyone bringing an animal onto school property for a permitted purpose must have the animal on a leash at all times and must clean up after the animal.



### ASSIGNMENT TO A SCHOOL DISTRICT

Students are assigned to the next grade level after the grade just completed. Students are assigned to schools based upon their addresses and, to ensure equitability among schools with respect to class size, staffing and allocation of resources, they are expected to attend the appropriate district school. Other than for the situations listed below for students who move, waivers for attendance in another district are extremely rare, and will not be granted unless unusual extenuating circumstances exist. Parents who apply

for a waiver must use a form available in the Superintendent's Office at Westport Town Hall. Principals do not make the decision and will not be involved in the initial steps.



## MOVING WITHIN WESTPORT

**Notification:** When you move, you must notify the school of your new address and phone number immediately, and present proof of your continued residence in Westport. Parents are required to submit all documentation that was required when the student was first enrolled in Westport Public Schools. Students who move within Westport must transfer to the new school except under the following circumstances:

- **Early Start in New District:** Children moving to another Westport attendance area may attend the new school by presenting proof of anticipated move-in date within three months.
- **Terminal Grade:** Children moving to another Westport attendance area, who have *completed* grade 4 or 7, may, if they wish, remain in their current school for grade 5 or 8.
- **Move during School Year:** It is strongly suggested that children moving prior to Jan. 30 move to the new school district immediately. However, children will be permitted to complete the year at their current school, but will attend the new school district for the following year unless they move while in grade 4 or 7, in which case they may remain for grade 5 or 8.
- **Temporary:** A student moving to another Westport district on a temporary basis (e.g., for home renovation, or temporary illness of a parent, etc.) may remain at the current school for the balance of the year. However, if they continue to reside at the temporary address by the following school year, they must attend school in the district in which that temporary address is located unless they are entering grade 5 or 8, in such case they may remain in their current Westport school.
- **Siblings:** When a child remains in a school for the terminal grade, siblings must attend the school in the new attendance area. In order to stay together siblings must both/all attend the new school.
- **Middle School Assignment:** Children granted a waiver at any grade in elementary school, *regardless of the reason or grade, including grade 5, when the exception is granted*, will still be required to attend the appropriate middle school for their street address.

**Transportation:** For any of the situations above transportation is the responsibility of the parents. Special bus routes or stops will not be created for out-of-district students.

## MOVING OUT OF WESTPORT

Students moving out of the Town of Westport must notify the school immediately and must transfer to a school in their new town, except under the following circumstances:

- **Students in Grades K-10:** Students moving after April 1 may complete the year at no charge. Students moving between January 30 and April 1 may complete the year upon payment of a tuition charge, equal to 25% of the full tuition cost plus additional fees for any special education services they may be receiving. However, these students may not return to a Westport school the following year.
- **Students in Grade 11:** Students who move *before* April 1 of their junior year may complete the 11th grade upon payment of 25% of the full tuition, plus additional fees for any special education services they may be receiving. Those who move after April 1 may finish the 11th grade year at no charge. As non-residents, these students are not legally entitled to remain at Staples for the senior year. However, they may petition the superintendent of schools for permission to do so, upon payment of the full tuition plus any relevant fees for special education services.
- **Students in Grade 12:** Students *completing* their 11th grade year at Staples while they are Westport residents, who move after they have officially become seniors, may be permitted to remain at Staples for Grade 12 at no charge for regular tuition. However, they must pay applicable fees for any special education services they may be receiving. This privilege is for one year only. If further schooling is necessary for graduation, full tuition fees will apply.

### For All Students in the Above Circumstances:

1. The privilege of completing the year under the auspices of the Westport Board of Education applies only to students who are attending a Westport school and not to students who are attending any other educational institution.
2. Permission may be granted to students who are in good standing with respect to academics, attendance and behavior.

3. This privilege will be denied if in the opinion of the superintendent, the student's continued attendance is not in the best interests of the Westport Public Schools.
4. Transportation to and from school must be furnished by the parents, as Westport does not pay for transportation for non-resident students.

In all of the above situations, the decision of the superintendent is final.

**Except as described above, we do not permit students not residing in Westport to attend Westport schools on a tuition basis. Families who move out of Westport are not permitted to "use" the address or mailbox of a friend or relative in order to keep their children in a Westport School. A Westport post office box does not constitute Westport residence for school purposes.**

Homeless students, as defined by federal and state legislation, will have all programs, services, and transportation that other students enjoy and may continue to attend their school of origin. The local liaison for homeless children is the Director of Pupil Services.

Information for parents/guardians regarding the education of homeless students can be found at

[http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/parent\\_booklet.php](http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/parent_booklet.php).

A full range of services is available to migrant students, including applicable Title I programs, special education, gifted education, vocational education, language programs, counseling programs and elective classes. Parents/guardians of migrant students will be involved in and regularly consulted about the development, implementation, operation and evaluation of the migrant program.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS TO STUDENTS OR PARENTS**

Materials that are not part of the approved curriculum may not be distributed by anyone to students in school, on school grounds or on school buses that are owned or leased by the Board of Education.

Flyers are not distributed for non-school organizations. Some Westport Town government bodies and Westport civic organizations with bona fide connection to the schools or the government may receive special approval to distribute flyers. Local or area non-profit groups offering appropriate activities for students or parents may have brief notices included in the various PTA'S newsletters, emails, and/or the PTA's electronic Community Bulletin Board.

Under no circumstances shall public funds be used to advocate for or against any political vote. However, flyers indicating time, place and subject matter of an upcoming referendum vote may be allowed. All material must be submitted by email to the office of the Superintendent for review and approval. Please call 203-341-1026 for further information about how to submit material. Submissions are not accepted from individual entrepreneurs, businesses, or profit-making organizations.

## **EQUAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY**

The Westport Public Schools shall comply with all federal and state laws and regulations related to equal educational opportunity and prohibition of discrimination.

In accordance with the requirements of federal and state laws and regulations regarding nondiscrimination, such as:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Title IX of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-15

The Westport Board of Education shall ensure that there is equal educational opportunity within the Westport School district. No student shall be excluded from, denied benefits of, or be discriminated against in any program, activity, or service of the Board of Education, on the basis of:

- Race
- Color or Creed
- Religion
- Economic Status
- Gender and Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity or Expression



- Marital Status
- Ancestry
- National Origin
- Present or past history of Mental Disability
- Intellectual Disability
- Learning Disability
- Physical Disability (within limits of “reasonable accommodations”)

**Title I:** Parents of students enrolled in a Title I program are encouraged to take an active role. Contact the Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services for information. Staff, curriculum materials and instructional supplies are substantially comparable among all Westport Schools, and are provided in a manner to ensure equivalency.

**Title VII and Title IX:** The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources is responsible for coordinating efforts to implement these non-discriminatory policies.

**Title VI and Section 504:** The Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services is responsible for coordinating efforts to implement these policies.

**Public Act 75-372, Intergroup Relations Education Guideline:** The Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services is also designated as coordinator of intergroup relations.

**AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA):** Persons with questions, concerns or complaints regarding possible discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or in need of special assistance related to a disabling condition, should contact, in person or in writing, the following:

- Regarding Facilities - Chief Financial Officer, 203-341-1001
- Regarding Programs - Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services, 203-341-1253
- Regarding Employment and Title IX - Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, 203-341-1004
- Or you may contact the Office of Civil Rights, US Department of Education, Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Bldg, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20202-1100 or [OCR@ed.gov](mailto:OCR@ed.gov)

**PROGRAM ACCESSIBILITY:** All meetings and conferences at all schools are available without discrimination to individuals with disabilities as defined by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and/or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Whenever a disabled individual wishes to attend or participate in a meeting or a conference in an area which is inaccessible, that meeting or conference will be relocated to an accessible area.

Whenever an individual with impaired vision or impaired hearing seeks to obtain public school information, arrangements will be made to provide such information.



## FUNDRAISING

Fundraising activities should not result in pressure on students, parents or teachers to donate money, make purchases, or win recognition for selling the most or raising the most money.

**Student Fundraising:** Activities are subject to BOE policy and guidelines, including approval of the principal.

**Adult Fundraising:** Activities by adults must be approved by the principal and the PTA of the particular school. On Election Day, only PTAs may conduct bake sales or other fundraising activities, as regulated by law, with the permission of the school principal and registrars of voters. Such sales may not take place in the room where voting is occurring.

**Communication:** Information about approved fundraising programs may be accomplished via PTA newsletters or emails, summer mailing packets, flyers distributed in the elementary schools or mailed to the school population and via announcements, or other

means deemed appropriate by the principal. No PTA is obligated to advertise any fundraising events or activities in its weekly email or otherwise.



## RESPECT FOR RELIGION

The public school should be a place where all children feel comfortable, valued and included, regardless of their ethnic or religious identification. The schools must neither advocate nor disparage the practice of religion or the beliefs or any particular religion. The material below summarizes our guidelines regarding study or religion, display of religious holiday symbols, use of religious music, and grant of accommodations for children who miss school for religious observance.

**Religious Holiday Symbols:** Symbols such as Santa Claus, Hanukkah menorahs, dreidels, Easter eggs, Christmas trees, etc., may be used in an educational context only and must reflect cultural and religious diversity. Decorations in public areas should be minimal, and should not use the symbols of one religion exclusively or dominantly, or display them so as to suggest that the school is celebrating a particular religious holiday.

**Art, Literature, and Music:** Some of the world's greatest art, music and literature were developed in connection with religion. They may be studied in a neutral manner with emphasis on its educational significance. Performance material must be chosen based on educational merit and alignment with district guidelines. At the elementary level, sacred music will be limited to ensure age-appropriate content, while middle and high school programs may include sacred music more extensively, always balanced with secular works and representing diverse faiths and cultural traditions. All art, literature, and music chosen for use in schools aim to foster understanding and appreciation of the rich diversity of human cultures and artistic expressions. The inclusion of sacred materials is solely for educational purposes, presented objectively under teacher guidance, and does not endorse or promote any particular religious belief or practice.

## SCHEDULING NEAR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Normal activities may proceed on religious holidays that are not school holidays but students are not required to attend and may not be penalized for missing practices, rehearsals, etc., because of religious observance.

**Special Programs/New Material:** Whenever possible teachers should avoid introducing new material or scheduling special programs or activities at times when some students may be absent for religious observance.

**Homework and Tests:** Students observing religious holidays may make up tests or homework due on the day after a holiday, except for assignments given weeks in advance. Tests should not be given on religious holidays.

## SNOW DAYS-EMERGENCY CLOSINGS



Emergency closings, delayed openings, early dismissals, and cancellation of school for inclement weather, and other unforeseen reasons are:

- broadcast on local radio stations and television;
- announced on the district's special number for closings, delays, and other emergencies: 203-341-1766; and
- announced via text and email using the ParentSquare parent messaging system.

School	Regular Hours	Delayed Opening			Early Dismissal
		1-Hour	2-Hour	3-Hour	
SHS	8:00-2:45	9:00	10:00	11:00	11:00
BMS	8:30-3:15	9:30	10:30	11:30	11:30
CMS	8:30-3:15	9:30	10:30	11:30	11:30



SES	8:30-3:15	9:30	10:30	11:30	11:30
CES	9:00-3:45	10:00	11:00	12:00	12:00
GFS	9:00-3:45	10:00	11:00	12:00	12:00
KHS	9:00-3:45	10:00	11:00	12:00	12:00
LLS	9:00-3:45	10:00	11:00	12:00	12:00
SSP - AM	9:30-12:30	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	12:45
SSP - Full Day	9:30-2:15	10:30	CLOSED	CLOSED	12:45

## USE OF FACILITIES/PARKING LOTS/EQUIPMENT

- **Buildings:** Individuals may not use or rent school buildings for private purposes. Use or rental of school facilities by organizations is governed by a separate policy,
- **Parking Lots:** Residents may make a written request for use of a parking lot for overflow parking during private, non-commercial events such as weddings and other family activities. Such use requires written permission and payment to a custodian if outside lights need to be turned on and off, as well as insurance.

**Application for use of parking lot, or for rental of facilities by permitted groups, should be made to the Facilities Department, 1 Canal Street, (203-341-1272).**

- **Equipment:** Equipment owned by the Board of Education may not be borrowed by individuals or organizations except for use in official business of the school district or the Town of Westport.

Exceptions require written permission from the Superintendent or designee.

**Recreational facilities located on Board of Education grounds campuses are not accessible to those who are not students, staff or invited guests between the hours of 7:30am and 4:15pm on school days.**

## VISITORS TO SCHOOLS

### ADULTS

**Parents of Future Kindergartners:** In the spring, the district has a systematic orientation program for parents, and a “Mini-Kindergarten” experience for preschoolers to visit the kindergarten classrooms for a special program. The schools also arrange special times during the summer for incoming kindergartners to meet their classmates. Because of the large volume of requests and the disruptive effect on the classroom, parents of preschoolers may not visit kindergarten classes.

**Parents of Current Students:** Each school orients parents through many means, including curriculum materials, PTA meetings, special programs, written communications and Back to School Nights. We hold special parent meetings at transition points into elementary, middle school and high school. Visits to Westport classrooms by parents will not be permitted unless as part of the process necessary to determine or develop programming for a student with a disability.

**Residents with Children in Private School:** Parents may make an appointment with the appropriate school to discuss their child’s needs in order to help them decide whether to transfer their children to public school.

**Non-Residents:** The school system does not take time away from service to enrolled students and their parents during the regular school day by meeting with prospective residents, or discussing potential programs for students who are not yet Westport residents.

## STUDENTS

**Friends or Relatives of Current Students:** No student visitors will be allowed in any school while school is in session. Students visiting Westport for short periods of time may not sit in on classes with friends or relatives. Prospective students may not “shadow” current students.

**Former students:** Former students:

- may visit school after the school day has ended.
- may enter the building after the final bell has rung for the day and after buses have left the parking lot.
- visiting individual teachers or other faculty members should contact those staff members prior to their visit.
- shall maintain the decorum as prescribed by the student handbook and be respectful of current students and staff.

VISITORS at middle schools and elementary schools must have an appointment and have contacted the teacher/s in advance. The teacher/s must notify the office of the expected visitors.

**Employees’ Children:** May not accompany their parents to work except under rare or unusual circumstances, and then, only with approval from the principal.

**Resident Children in Private Schools:** We do not provide tours during school hours or permit visits to classes for children who are considering enrolling in the public schools. However, high school-age students may contact the Staples Guidance Department to discuss potential programs to help them decide whether to transfer to Staples.

**Extracurricular Activities:** Parents and other adults who assist with extracurricular activities, whether on a formal or voluntary basis, may not have access to school system email and or student names, addresses or telephone numbers to solicit clients for, or distribute information about, private initiatives such as coaching sessions, drama or music organizations or sales of goods or services of any kind.

## DISTRICT OPERATIONS

### COMMUNICATION

The Westport School District communicates with parents in a variety of ways. ParentSquare is the messaging system we use to communicate with parents through emails, mobile phones and/or home and work telephones concerning school activities, weather related closings, delays or early dismissals and emergencies. The PowerSchool parent portal with a log-in located at the top of the Home Page of the District website, is the place where parents can view their child’s report cards and attendance history. Whenever report cards become available, notifications are sent to parents through ParentSquare.

The PTAs at each school send weekly email updates to parents with information on both school and town events. The middle and high schools send monthly newsletters via email. Community events are also posted on the district website on the “Community Bulletin Board” link under the “Parent” tab menu of the district website, [www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org).

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The Westport Public School system is committed to providing every Westport resident’s child enrolled in our schools with the opportunity to participate fully in all school activities, regardless of their family’s ability to pay.

Therefore, if your personal financial situation changes for reasons related to employment, marital status, health, or other unexpected circumstance, and you are unable to provide your children with the funds necessary for participation in field trips, interscholastic athletic or extracurricular activities, musical instrument rental, or other school-related events and activities, you are urged to contact your child’s teacher, guidance counselor, or any school administrator to advise them of our need for their assistance. All requests will be held in strict confidence and will not be shared, without your permission, with anyone other than school personnel immediately involved in attempting to arrange for assistance. Families may also wish to contact the Town of Westport’s Human Services Department at 203-341-1050 for information on additional financial resources that may be available.



## LUNCH PROGRAM

**Hot Lunch:** Westport Public Schools offer a “Type A” lunch at the secondary level (middle schools and high school) as part of the Westport Public School Lunch Program. The Type A lunch consists of five nutritional components: Meat/Meat Alternate, Vegetable, Fruit, Grains/Breads and Milk. A la carte choices are offered at all schools. Snacks are sold only in the middle schools and high school. Purchases may be made by cash, check or the debit system.

**How the Online Payment works:** mySchool Bucks is a debiting system where students have their own individual school lunch account. Payments into this system may be made by cash or check with no fees. A major debit or credit card can be used to load funds into your child or children’s accounts by following the steps below:

1. Simply go to the district website at [www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org).
2. Click on the Parents link and then the Food Services link.
3. Click on the mySchoolBucks.com link. From this site, you will create a new account or enter your existing account and can add money to your child’s school meal account. All you need is your child’s name, student ID number and school ZIP code. The instructions to set up your account can be found on the Food Services web page and will guide you through the easy online account setup process.
4. If you have more than one child in the District, you can handle all online prepayments from the same online account.

If there is a negative balance in your child’s account he/she will not be allowed to use the debit system for purchasing lunch. Cash, of course, can always be used to purchase lunch until the negative account balance has been paid for and a positive account balance has been created.

All students use their school ID number to access their accounts using a PIN keypad. The Cafeteria System accesses the student’s account so purchases can be completed, and displays the student’s photo on the screen. The photo is used for recognition and ensures that the correct account is being charged. The mySchoolBucks System can also produce a history of what each student has purchased within a specified time frame, which includes payment dates and current balance, should a parent request it.

**Free/Reduced-Price Lunches:** Westport Public Schools offers a program for Free and Reduced Price Lunch. The program provides economically priced and nutritionally balanced lunches each school day. The program utilizes Menu Planning Options to meet nutrient standards as outlined in the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children. Free and Reduced Price Lunch application packets, which determine eligibility for the program, are sent out annually and are available at each school. Only one application is required per household. Application MUST be completed annually.



### MAIL ADDRESSED TO STUDENTS

First Class mail addressed to a Staples student from a clearly noted college or recognizable funding source will be forwarded to the student’s home address. All other mail addressed to Staples students, all mail addressed to elementary or middle school students, and all packages addressed to students at any level, regardless of the source, will be returned to the post office.

*The school accepts no responsibility for the ultimate delivery of any type of mail, however received.*



### TRANSPORTATION

**Bus Routes and Assignments:** For reasons of safety based on the nature of the Town’s roads and lack of sidewalks in most areas, all students in grades K-8 and most high school students are eligible for bus transportation. Bus routes are developed annually by the Transportation Coordinator. Information is available online at [www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org).

In an effort to bring order and tracking to end of day dismissals, the Westport Elementary schools utilize a web-based tool to record and manage end of day dismissals, called “School Dismissal Manager.”

Parents will be able to view and designate drivers or play dates for their child for any day up to two weeks in advance. *Parents will be expected to use this system in lieu of phone calls, notes, emails, faxes or any other communications made in the past.* The “system” generates a listing for the teachers and administrators each day, which organizes and summarizes all changes.

**Riding Other Buses:** Requests for elementary pupils to go home on a vehicle other than their assigned vehicle must be made through “School Dismissal Manager.” These students may ride buses other than their own provided that the additional passenger does not exceed the legal occupancy limit for the vehicle. Should the legal occupancy limit be reached on any bus, guest riders will be removed from the bus and their parents will need to pick them up. Please note that the guest rider provision should be used sparingly and it is not intended for use by multiple students to attend play-dates at the same house. Parents should make separate transportation plans for these types of after school needs.

**Driving Children to/from School:** We strongly advise parents to utilize the school bus service. School buses are statistically safer than private automobiles and having students use buses can reduce congestion on town roads at busy times. However, in situations where parents must drive their children to school and/or pick them up at the end of the day, to ensure the safety of all students we have established the following rules:

- Cars must use designated routes and drop-off/pick-up areas.
- Cars must never pass a stopped bus displaying its stop arm and flashing red lights either on the road or on school property in compliance with state law.
- Parents should not drop children off at school more than 15 minutes before the scheduled opening. Earlier drop-off poses a real supervisory problem.

**Transportation Concerns:** Questions or complaints about school transportation services or safety issues should be directed to the Transportation Coordinator, Westport Town Hall, 203-341-1754. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, a parent may appeal to the Chief Financial Officer: 203-341-1001. Subsequent appeal levels are:

- Superintendent of Schools
- Board of Education
- State Department of Education

#### **Bus Driver Behaviors Concerns**

Should be communicated to the Westport Bus Transportation Coordinator (203-341-1754) and the principal. Upon receipt of the complaint, either the Westport Bus Transportation Coordinator or the principal will communicate by telephone and by email to the First Student Bus Terminal Manager with specific instructions to remove the driver as soon as possible from service until First Student, in the presence of our Bus Transportation Coordinator, has completed its investigation into the concerns.

#### **Transportation of Musical Instruments on School Buses**

For students bringing musical instruments on the school bus the following conditions will apply:

- The student must be physically capable of carrying and maneuvering their instrument on the school bus.
- The instrument must be able to sit on the student’s lap or next to the student in their seat. Instruments must not protrude into the aisle or block an emergency exit.
- The instrument must NOT be placed in the driver compartment.
- School bus drivers and bus monitors are not responsible for the care or handling of any musical instruments and will not be responsible for any damage that may occur during transportation of the musical instrument.



## **HEALTH, SAFETY & SECURITY**

### **ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUGS**

#### **Use Prohibited in Schools**

The Westport Public schools have a strict, no tolerance position with regard to the use of drugs and alcohol in school buildings and on school grounds, at school-sponsored events and on school buses or other school vehicles used to transport students to school or school activities.

**Students** who use or possess alcohol or drugs are subject to penalties including loss of privileges, suspension and/or expulsion. State law requires that the Board of Education begin expulsion proceedings for any student who sells a controlled substance, whether on or off school property.

**All Others:** The rule applies to adults as well as students, and to other organizations using school facilities for any purpose. This prohibition also applies to use or possession of alcohol in religious ceremonies and other programs.



### **SMOKING IS PROHIBITED**

The Board of Education *strictly prohibits smoking* (including the carrying of lighted cigarettes, pipes, electronic nicotine delivery system (e.g. e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, etc.) by anyone, including students or adults, in school buildings, on school property, in school vehicles or at school-sponsored activities. This prohibition is in effect 24 hours per day, 12 months of the year. It also applies, thereof, to Continuing Education and to other organizations using school facilities. Students are also prohibited from possessing cigarettes or other tobacco products in school buildings or on school grounds. This prohibition applies also to so-called “herbal cigarettes,” the use of which is also prohibited in the Drug/Alcohol Policy.

Violators of the no-smoking regulation are subject to corrective action noted in Board of Education policies, and individual school rules, up to and including transfer to other classes or schools, suspension and/or expulsion.

### **PSYCHOTROPIC DRUGS**

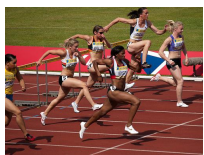
The Board of Education prohibits school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any child. For the purposes of this policy, the term “recommend” shall mean to directly or indirectly suggest that a child should use psychotropic drugs. Notwithstanding the foregoing, school medical staff may recommend that a child be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to prohibit a planning and placement team from discussing with parents and/or guardians of a child the appropriateness of consultation with, evaluation by, medical practitioners; or to prohibit school personnel from consulting with appropriate medical practitioners with the consent of the parents and/or guardians of a child.

### **HEALTH REQUIREMENTS AND SERVICES**

Health assessments are required for:

- all new students
- all students entering preschool
- all students entering kindergarten
- all students during their 6th grade year
- all students during their 9th grade year
- all students participating in interscholastic athletics

The health assessment must be performed by a legally qualified physician, advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), physician assistant (PA) who works with an MD, or qualified registered nurse following the State of Connecticut laws and regulations. In Connecticut, a “legally qualified physician” includes doctors of medicine (MD) and osteopathic (DO). It does not include chiropractors, naturopaths, and homeopaths. Students may not enter school, reenter at 7th and 10th grade, or play interscholastic sports without a completed health assessment, provided on the proper form(s). Athletic health assessments are required on an annual basis.

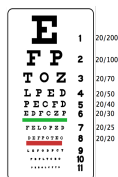


**ATHLETIC PHYSICALS:** Every high school student athlete must have on record a current health history and physical examination before he/she can participate in a sport and throughout the sport season, including postseason championship competitions. “Current” means that the physical examination and history have been completed within the immediate past 13 months. The required health forms for athletic participation can be obtained from the athletic trainer’s office, the health office or on the high school’s website.

**IMMUNIZATIONS REQUIRED FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE:** All students must provide evidence of immunization required by state law. The Board may determine after consultation with a school medical advisor that a health screening for tuberculosis is required before students enter school. The school nurse can provide details regarding these requirements.

**WAIVERS:** Exemption from the state-mandated health assessment and immunization requirements on medical grounds must be requested in writing on the appropriate State of Connecticut medical exemption form.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR REQUIRED HEALTH ASSESSMENTS:** If requested by the family, mandated health assessments and immunizations will be paid for by the Westport Public Schools for students eligible under state and federal income guidelines.



**HEALTH SCREENINGS:** School nurses provide yearly screenings as required by CT General Statutes, Section 10-214:

- **Vision:** Students in kindergarten and grade 1 and 3 to 5.
- **Hearing:** Pure-tone (audiometric) hearing tests for students in kindergarten and grades 1 and 3 to 5. The school audiologist may perform impedance tympanometry testing if indicated.
- **Scoliosis:** Female students in grade 5 and 7 and male students in grade 8 or 9. Students who had this completed as part of the Health Assessment the same year need not be reexamined in school.

The parents/guardians of students who need further evaluation by a healthcare provider will be notified. Parents should return the referral form to the school nurse after it has been completed.

**Please notify the school nurse annually if you do not wish your child to participate in these screenings.**

**STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS:** Westport Public Schools is committed to ensuring that students who have special health care needs due to chronic and acute health conditions receive the supports and services necessary to remain safe and, to the extent possible, maintain their baseline health status during school. “Students with special health care needs” refers to those students who have a medically diagnosed chronic health condition such as asthma, diabetes, life-threatening food allergy, cardiac abnormality, juvenile arthritis, celiac disease, migraine headache, epilepsy, or a significant acute illness or injury requiring treatment and a period of recovery, such as mononucleosis, Lyme disease, or a fractured arm or leg. For students with such conditions, the school team collaborates with the family and student's health care provider to identify school-based needs and develop an appropriate plan of care to meet those needs. The plan is called an “individualized health care plan” (IHCP). For students at a high risk for a health or safety emergency in school, an “individualized emergency care plan” (IECP) is developed as a part of the IHCP. Some students may also require an “individualized transportation plan” (ITP) as part of the IHCP. Parents who have a child with special health care needs are encouraged to speak with the school nurse regarding the appropriateness and process for developing an IHCP. These plans may be incorporated into a student’s individualized special education program (IEP) or section 504 plan if eligible.

**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE AND ILLNESS/INJURY MANAGEMENT:** The school nurse will ask parents/guardians to pick up a student who has symptoms of illness or an injury that, in the professional judgment of the school nurse, needs to be observed at home or assessed by a medical doctor. In an emergency, 911 will be called for immediate transportation to the hospital. To safeguard the health of all students, we ask parents to monitor their children for possible communicable diseases and to follow these guidelines:

**Students must stay home from school if they have:**

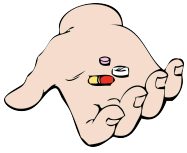
- fever over 100°;
- an undiagnosed rash associated with fever or illness;
- vomiting two or more times or associated with fever in the past 24 hours;
- copious yellow/green mucus discharge from nose;
- a severe earache, with or without fever;
- a severe sore throat with symptoms indicating possible strep throat;
- conjunctivitis (pink eye) with discharge
- a communicable illness;
- an undiagnosed skin wound, sore or lesion that appears infected (is red, swollen or draining fluid).



### Students must remain home:

- For 24 hours after an elevated temperature returns to normal without the use of antipyretic medication.
- After a throat culture - *until the results are available, or cleared to return by the health care provider;*
- For 12 hours after the first dose of antibiotic for the treatment of strep throat;
- For 24 hours after vomiting has ended;
- Until initiation of treatment for bacterial conjunctivitis or conjunctivitis with discharge or cleared by the health care provider;
- Until adequately treated for head lice, scabies, or other infestation, communicable illness or skin infection. A health care provider note may be required for return to school based on nursing judgment.

### Students Medication



**Administration of Medication:** For students who must take medication during school hours, including medication prescribed by a physician for short-term use (e.g. antibiotics, daily medication, medication needed only occasionally, over-the-counter medication, and medication for emergencies, such as epinephrine auto injectors and inhalers), parents/guardians must provide the school nurse with their written permission and the written medical order on an authorized prescriber (physician, dentist, advanced practice registered nurse, physician's assistant or optometrist) authorizing the nurse to administer the medication. The permission and order should be in writing on Westport Public Schools' medication form and must include:

- Name, strength, and dosage of the prescribed medication;
- Reason for the medication (medical diagnosis);
- Directions for administering the medication;
- Time the medication is to be administered;
- Duration of the order;
- Potential side and untoward effects; and
- Authorization for self-administration, if appropriate.

Medication forms are available in the nurse's office. Medication must be delivered to the school nurse by a responsible adult.

**NEVER send medication to school with a student.** The medication must be in its original container, clearly labeled with the student's name, authorized prescriber's name, prescription number, date it was ordered, name of the medication, its strength, and directions for administering the prescription. The nurse cannot keep more than 45 days' supply of medication at the school at any one time. Parents must notify the nurse concerning any changes in the prescribed dosage. A new form must be provided each year.

Students are not permitted to carry medication in school, (including over-the-counter drugs), except that with the authorization of the student's physician, parent/guardian and school nurse. Students with this authorization may carry on their person and/or self-administer an epinephrine auto injector or asthma inhaler. Self administration of medication may occasionally be approved in other circumstances. Such medication should also be available in the nurse's office as a backup in case of a medical emergency.

The parent or a responsible adult must pick up unused medication within one week of its completion or by the last day of school, or it will be disposed of by the school nurse.

### COMMUNICATING WITH THE SCHOOL NURSE CONCERNING YOUR STUDENT'S HEALTH:

Please alert the school nurse if your child has a health condition that may require individualized planning for emergency care, health care services, or evacuation.

The school nurse should be notified of changes in health status and of illness, injury, hospitalization or a change in treatment or medication:

- Parents/guardians should call the school office when their children are absent due to illness or injury.
- A doctor's note is required: (1) following fracture, surgery, hospitalization, casting, stitches, etc., including diagnosis, relevant treatment, and activity restrictions; and (2) to excuse a student from physical education for more than three days.
- Parents/guardians should consult the school nurse if they anticipate that their child may be absent for medical reasons for one or more weeks. The school nurse will obtain the necessary medical information and initiate the process for school/team

decision making and planning, as indicated. Please contact the school nurse in advance of an absence or, in an emergency, quickly thereafter.

Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-212a(g) authorizes the school nurses and “qualified school employees” to administer opioid antagonists for the purpose of emergency first aid to students who experience an opioid related overdose.

**Please notify the school nurse in writing annually if you do not wish your child to receive an opioid antagonist as emergency first aid.**

Public Act 14-176 (An Act Concerning the Storage and Administration of Epinephrine at Public Schools) amended the law to require the administration of epinephrine as emergency first aid to students experiencing allergic reactions, even if the student does not have parental authorization or the order of a qualified medical professional. In the absence of the school nurse, the administration of epinephrine may be done by a qualified personnel who has completed required training.

**Please notify the school nurse in writing annually if you do not wish your child to receive epinephrine as emergency first aid by qualified personnel in the absence of a school nurse.**

*The district's life threatening food allergy plan as well as management plan for students experiencing a concussion is posted on the district's website [www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org)*

## **HIV, AIDS, AIDS EDUCATION, HEALTH EDUCATION**

**Confidentiality:** The HIV status of students and/or staff is treated as a strictly confidential manner; information is released only with the written consent of those over 18 or with the consent of the legal guardians of students under 18.

**AIDS Education:** In accordance with state law, AIDS instruction is included in the K-12 Health Curriculum.

**Health Education Curriculum:** The K-12 Health Education Curriculum, approved by the Board of Education, includes the following topics:

- Safety and Accident Prevention including First Aid
- Nutrition
- Human Growth and Development
- Mental and Emotional Health
- Disease Prevention including AIDS Education\*
- Community and Consumer Health
- Substance Abuse Prevention

**\*The topic of Disease Prevention provides a unit on immunizations, non-communicable diseases, and communicable diseases, including AIDS as appropriate to the age and development of the students.**

In accordance with State Statutes (C.G.S. 10-16e and P.A. 88-112), parents who wish to exempt their children from AIDS or Family Life units may do so by submitting a written request to their building principal. However, it is our strong recommendation that all students receive this information.

**If you want further information, or have questions, please contact your school principal.**

## **INDOOR AIR QUALITY**

The Westport Public School system is committed to providing an environment conducive to the learning, health and safety of students. An essential component of a healthy school environment is indoor air quality (IAQ). To promote the ongoing control and improvement of air quality in our schools, the school district has established and continually updates its policies and procedures related to a wide variety of IAQ-related issues, for example, preventive maintenance, integrated pest management, cleaning and chemicals, and restrictions on food, air deodorizers/fragrances, antimicrobial agents, and stuffed animals.



In accordance with our environmentally sensitive cleaning approach, all areas of all school facilities are cleaned daily with environmentally preferable glass cleaner, waxes, strippers, multi-purpose cleaner and disinfectants. Parent/Guardians may request a written copy of our policy pertaining to the green cleaning program.

No parent, guardian, teacher or staff member may bring into any school facility any consumer product which is intended to clean, deodorize, sanitize or disinfect.

Additionally, the district has implemented a program called *Tools for Schools*, which is an IAQ management program developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, American Federation of Teachers, Association of School Business Officials, National Education Association, National Parent Teachers Association, and American Lung Association.

Each school has a *Tools for Schools* team, including parent representatives, which monitors the air quality in its building on a regular basis and in a variety of ways. Each school team has a *Tools for Schools* program, know members of their schools team and ask questions regarding the school's IAQ procedures.

Open communication about IAQ improvements and concerns is essential. Therefore, parents/guardians, students and staff are encouraged to share their concerns. These concerns are documented, reviewed and, in the event of a finding, addressed and resolved. If a parent/guardian has a concern regarding a possible IAQ issue in the building, he or she should share the concern directly with the school principal or the *Tools for schools* team coordinator. If a parent/guardian has a concern regarding the possible effects of IAQ on their child's health, he or she should share the concern directly with the school nurse.

*For more information on Tools for Schools, please follow the Tools for Schools link on the District website [www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org)*

## PESTICIDE USE

**Parents' Rights to Prior Notification:** To safeguard children's health, our school system has an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan, which uses alternative pest control strategies whenever possible. The school is given prior notice of pesticide use, if it is necessary. No application of pesticide is made on school buildings or grounds during regular school hours/activities except in an emergency. The law permits parents/guardians to register, in writing, for prior notice of pesticide application. More details are included in the final pages of this handbook.

## STUDENT WELFARE ISSUES

The following material constitutes a brief summary of detailed policies and procedures, the full text of which are available in the Office of the Superintendent, Westport Town Hall.

## CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

**State Law:** Staff members are required to report any case of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the local law enforcement agency. School employees are also required to report when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a student is a victim of sexual assault and the perpetrator is a school employee. The employee shall make an oral report as soon as practicable, but not later than twelve hours after having reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused or neglected or placed at imminent risk of serious harm. Not later than forty-eight hours after making an oral report, the employee shall submit a written report to the Commissioner of Children and Families or the Commissioner's designee containing all of the required information. Because child abuse involves a serious threat to a student's health and safety, and is considered an emergency situation, regulations permit the disclosure of information contained in the student's records to the DCF without obtaining the consent of the child's parent or legal guardian.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

**Support:** For students who may be involved in life-threatening behavior or who are in crisis or at risk, the school district provides staff and programs to offer support for the students and to work cooperatively with families and professionals in developing intervention plans which access appropriate school and community resources.

**Notification:** Any school employee who may have knowledge of a suicide threat must report the information to the principal or designee who will notify the student's family and appropriate staff and community resource services.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES



**ATTENDANCE RULES:** Consistent attendance is necessary in order for students to receive the full benefit of their education. The responsibility to send children ages five to 18 to school regularly is a legal obligation of parents. Absences may be excused for the student's personal illness, health-related appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours, death in the family and other emergencies, religious observance, court appearances, and, for Staples students, college visitations, with prior approval required. A signed note, email, or phone call to the school attendance line from the student's parent/guardian, an in-person explanation to a school official, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional as appropriate is required.

Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism. For example, if a student is out sick two consecutive days, that student must submit the appropriate documentation covering both sick days. If a student is out sick two non consecutive days, that student must submit the appropriate documentation following each absence. A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least four hours of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion is always considered absent with excuse. In grades K-8, a parent contact is legally required on each day of a student’s absence. Parents are requested to call the school in the morning. If the parent has not called the school, the school must try to contact the parent. Therefore, the law also requires that the parents provide the school a telephone number where they can be reached.

### **Procedures for Monitoring and Reporting Absences:**

#### **Procedures for Absence**

**Parents’ Responsibilities:** Parents have access to student’s daily attendance through PowerSchool Parent/Student Portal. Parents are expected to monitor their child’s attendance and cooperate with the school policy and rules regarding attendance. Parents are expected to review the procedures and definitions pertaining to student attendance.

*All absences will be reported through PowerSchool Attendance Monitor, available in the PowerSchool Parent Portal. Families can report student absences through either PowerSchool Attendance Monitor or by using the Attendance Line.*

**Absentee Call-In System:** If you know that your child is going to be absent from school, call your school in the morning and leave a message on the attendance line.

The message will prompt you to provide the following information:

- Child’s Full Name & Grade
- Parent’s Full Name
- Reason for the absence
- Date of the absence

**Pre-Planned Absence Form:** Students are required to attend school during the designated school year, and family vacations should be scheduled to coincide with those of the school year. However, the district recognizes that on rare occasions, students need to miss school for family events, such as weddings or other family celebrations, which may require three or more days of absence from school. If you are planning to have your son or daughter miss three or more days of school for a family-related event, please complete the Pre-Planned Absence form. These absences will be excused if they occur within absences 1- 9, and will be unexcused if they occur as the student's 10th or subsequent absence. If parents believe that the absence should be excused due to it being an extraordinary educational opportunity, a request should be submitted in writing to the principal and contain the parent's signature, the dates of the absence, and an outline of the learning opportunity.

**Parent Note for Absence:** Parent notes regarding absences should include the following information:

- Child's Full Name & Grade
- Parent's Full Name and Signature
- Parent's Daytime Contact Information (phone or email)
- Reason for the absence
- Date(s) of the absence

**Procedures for Monitoring Absences:** Schools monitor all absences. Parents are expected to provide the notice to the school described above for absences 1-9. For the 10th absence and each subsequent absence, a more stringent criteria is established and parents must provide specific documentation for the absences to qualify as excused. Acceptable reasons for a student's absence to be considered excused on the 10th day of absence and thereafter include and require the following documentation:

- Student Illness (Note: to be deemed excused, an appropriately licensed medical professional must verify all student illness absence, regardless of the absences length)
- Student's observance of a religious holiday
- Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family
- Mandated court appearance (additional documentation required)
- The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (parental documentation is not required for this reason)
- Extraordinary education opportunities pre-approved by district administrators

**Absences** will be handled by a school administrator in the following ways:

**Two Unexcused Absences in a Month or Five Unexcused Absences in a Year** - Letter sent to parent/student with CT State BOE Definitions for Excused and Unexcused Absences.

In addition, parents will be notified by the school when a student has accumulated 9 excused absences to inform them that more specific documentation will be required for any additional absences.

## **AUDIO/VIDEO TAPING**

**Board of Education Meetings:** Members of the public and the media may make their own audio or video tapes of public Board of Education meetings so long as the recording process does not interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Consultation with the chairperson of the Board of Education is required to determine the placement of videotaping equipment, etc., as apparatus, lights, or other equipment may not interfere with the conduct of the meeting.

**Classes and Other Instructional Activities:** No audio or videotaping of classrooms or other educational activities for non school-related purposes is permitted, except by prior arrangement, with the express consent of the teacher and the permission of the principal.

**School Buses:** Video cameras are on school buses. Videotapes of students may be used to verify complaints about student behavior.



## **CELL PHONES/SMART WATCHES/OTHER DEVICES**

**Students in elementary school may not display or use communication devices such as cell phones and smart watches from the time they arrive at school, until the instructional day is over for all students. Their devices must be turned off during this period and stored in their backpacks. The school bus ride is an extension of the school day and any school rules should be complied with while the students are on board the bus.**

**At the middle school level, the same restrictions apply, with the exception of special circumstances where a school official approves such use.**

**Violation of this rule will result in disciplinary measures as well as confiscation of the communication device.**

*The use of handheld devices such as personal digital assistants (PDAs), iPads and laptop computers may be allowed with the consent of a supervising adult.*

At Staples High School cell phones are not to be turned on and may not be used in classrooms, in the library, in academic learning centers or during all times when a student is meeting with a teacher or attending a meeting, in any hallway or stairwell, with the exceptions as follows:

Staples High School students may use cell phones during their unscheduled times as long as usage does not interfere with instruction and the school's safe and orderly operation. Utilizing cell phones will be limited to the following locations: cafeteria, sidewalk outside of building, main lobby or hallway in front of the auditorium, the pool lobby, field house lobby or gym lobby. Making phone calls is not a legitimate reason for being tardy or late to class.

Staples High School Students may use cell phones to support classroom learning only if approved by the classroom teacher.

*Additionally, audio, video or camera functions on a cell phone pose potential threats to student privacy and therefore are strictly prohibited. Students who violate these guidelines will have their cell phones confiscated. Additional disciplinary consequences may ensue.*

## **COMPULSORY EDUCATION**

Regular and punctual student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. Connecticut state law places responsibility for assuring that students attend school with the parent or other person having control of the child.

**KINDERGARTEN AGE:** Children are eligible to start kindergarten in September if they will turn five on or before September 1 of any school year. State law requires that parents who choose not to send an eligible child to kindergarten must make an in-person visit to the office of the Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services and meet with a school official who will provide information about the kindergarten program. Those still wishing not to send their child to school must sign a waiver. This process may be repeated until the child is seven when education is compulsory.

**TRANSFER TO OTHER SCHOOLING:** When a family moves or withdraws a child to attend a private school, the parent must complete a withdrawal form to be furnished by the school.

**HOME SCHOOLING:** Under Connecticut State Statute 10-184, a parent may remove a child from public school for purposes of homeschooling if "the parent or person having control of such child is able to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in the public schools". Westport Board of Education policy states that to do this, the parent must file with the office of the Superintendent of Schools, a Notice of Intent form which provides basic information about the program to be provided to their child. A notice of intent will be effective for up to one school year. This form may be obtained from the office of the Pupil Services Administration (PSA). Homeschooled students may not enroll in or audit Westport public school classes or participate in school athletic and extracurricular activities.

A student five (5) or six (6) years of age shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student has appeared personally at Pupil Services Office and exercised the option of not sending the child to school at five (5) or six (6) years of age.

**WITHDRAWAL TO DROP OUT:** State law requires students to stay in school until they are 18 years old. However, a parent may withdraw a minor child age 17 by appearing in person, receiving information about schooling opportunities and signing a withdrawal form. If a parent cannot appear in person the form must be notarized.



**TRUANCY:** State law (Ref. CGS Sec. 10-198a) considers a child with four unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten unexcused absences in any school year to be a truant (see attendance rules to define excused and unexcused absences). In that case, the law requires that a school official take the following course of action appropriate to the situation:

- A. Schedule a meeting with the parent and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the student's truancy. This meeting shall be held no later than ten (10) days after the student becomes truant and will be documented with a letter from the school.
- B. Coordinate services with and referrals of students to community agencies providing child and family services, as appropriate.
- C. An appropriate school mental health specialist, as determined by the District, shall conduct an evaluation of the student to determine if additional behavioral health interventions are necessary for the well-being of the child.
- D. In addition to the procedures above, the school Administrator/Designee will refer the student to a planning and placement team ("PPT") meeting to review the student's need and eligibility for special education.
- E. If truancy continues, a referral will be made to a Youth Service Bureau (YSB) with signature of superintendent or parent or guardian.

**RETURNING TO SCHOOL:** If the student wishes to return to school, the parent must contact the principal. The school district reserves the right to deny readmission to the student for at least 90 school days from the date of withdrawal. If the student reaches age 19 and does not have sufficient credits to graduate by age 21 the school district may place the student in an alternative school program or other suitable educational placement.

## **CUSTODIAL/NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTAL RIGHTS**

The school system has a detailed policy elaborating on the rights of custodial/non-custodial parents. The material below is a synopsis. Parents needing more information may contact the Director of Pupil Services.

Parents who are legally separated or divorced must provide the school with a copy of the pertinent provisions of their agreement regarding custody of minor children. If parents make a change in the child's living arrangements, the school must be informed and provided with documentation. The school will not release a student from school to a parent with whom the child is not living without a court order or the written consent of the parent with physical custody.

Joint custodial parents have equal authority regarding decisions about their child's education. In regards to education decision making, school authorities will take the direction from the custodial parent and where a conflict exists, school officials will be guided by the terms of any court order. However, unless there is a court order to the contrary, a non-custodial parent has the right, upon request, to receive written information about the child, to see the child's education records, to attend meeting with the child's teacher, and to attend a Planning and Placement Team meeting as an observer.

## **DRESS CODE**



**Guidelines for Appropriate Attire:** The Westport Schools encourage students to dress in a manner that demonstrates pride in themselves and in their school. The school district requires that attire be safe, appropriate to the activity, and not distracting or disruptive of the educational program. In order to maintain an environment conducive to the educational process, the Westport Board of Education (the "Board") prohibits the following from wear during the academic school day:

- a. Attire or accessories that contain vulgarity or that contain overly offensive or disruptive writing or pictures, which are likely to disrupt the educational environment.
- b. Attire or accessories depicting or suggesting violence so as to disrupt the educational environment or that provokes others to act violently or causes others to be intimidated by fear of violence or that constitute "fighting words," including but not limited to attire or accessories depicting the Confederate flag and/or the Nazi swastika.
- c. Attire or accessories that depict logo or emblems that encourage the use of drugs, tobacco products, or alcoholic beverages.
- d. Shirts and/or blouses that reveal the abdomen, chest, or undergarments.
- e. See-through clothing or camisoles.

Shoes appropriate for school activities must be worn at all times. Footwear standards are maintained for the prevention of accidents and injury. High-heeled shoes or sandal styles that make walking, running or other activities less safe for students are discouraged.

Parents are advised to be sure that students have outerwear appropriate to the weather and to the activities they will engage in, e.g. warm clothes for recess, rain/snow boots when needed and appropriate clothing in inclement weather.

The principal and staff at each school may establish additional dress and grooming regulations, when necessary, for regular school activities and /or for times when students are engaged in extracurricular or other special school activities.

Coaches and teachers may impose more stringent dress requirements to accommodate the special needs of certain sports and/or classes.

*Principals may confiscate inappropriate attire and provide a suitable substitute if available, and/or phone home to inform parents that a change of attire must be provided. Students who fail to comply with Board policy and regulations concerning student dress will be subject to school discipline up to and including expulsion in accordance with the Board's policy on student discipline.*



## **ELECTRONIC RESOURCES/INTERNET**

**Use of Computers; Internet Behavior:** The Board of Education policy on the use of electronic resources holds students responsible for good behavior on school computer networks, and in their use of other electronic resources, in classrooms and other school facilities. Students are prohibited from using the internet or other electronic technology, whether on or off campus, to interfere with the educational process in any way.

### **Prohibited uses include but are not limited to:**

1. Sending or posting any form of harassing, threatening, or intimidating messages or statements (e.g., website postings, instant message), at any time, to any person (such communications may also be a crime);
  - a. That threaten students, staff or administration;
  - b. That are falsely attributed to others;
  - c. That are intended to ridicule, harass, humiliate or intimidate another student;
  - d. That are intended to ridicule, harass, humiliate or intimidate staff members or administrators;
  - e. That are defamatory of students, staff members or administrators.
2. Gaining or seeking to gain unauthorized access to computer systems;
3. Damaging computers, computer files, computer systems or computer networks;
4. Interfering with the school district's computer systems, including but not limited to unauthorized access into or interference with district computer systems;
5. Interfering with communication by teachers or administrators with parents or guardians, including but not limited to blocking or intercepting email or other electronic communications;
6. Downloading or modifying computer software of the district in violation of the district's license agreement(s) and/or without authorization from a teacher or administrator;
7. Using another person's password under any circumstances;
8. Trespassing in or tampering with any other person's folder, work or files;
9. Sending any message that breaches the district's confidentiality requirements, or the confidentiality of students;
10. Transmitting or receiving email communications or using computer systems for any personal purpose or non- educational purposes, or in a manner that interferes with the district's educational programs;
11. Accessing or attempting to access any material that is obscene, contains child pornography, or is harmful to minors;
12. Cyberbullying;
13. Accessing or attempting to access social network sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc.) without legitimate educational purposes.

**Acceptable Use Agreement (AUA):** Students and their parents are required to sign an AUA prior to students' access to the network. This agreement is signed when filling out the annual Returning Students Form in PowerSchool. Students' use may be monitored to assure compliance. If you are new to the Westport school system, or if your child is entering grades three, six or nine, you will receive a grade-appropriate form from your school. Please sign and return it to your child's school immediately.

**Students who violate the policy and/or the AUA may be denied access to computers and to the school system's network.**

**Internet Filtering:** We have installed filtering software at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels that, with a high degree of effectiveness, bars access to inappropriate sites. However, no filtering software is 100% foolproof. Therefore, despite this safeguard, and although students are supervised when using these resources, the possibility still exists that a youngster may gain



access to material that the school officials and you may consider inappropriate or not of educational value. This contingency is noted on the AUA.

*For their protection, students are cautioned never to provide personal information on the internet. Parents are advised to monitor their children's home use of the internet.*

## PRIVACY RIGHTS/FERPA

**DIRECTORY INFORMATION:** Directory Information includes information contained in an education record of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. It includes, but is not limited to, the parent's name, address and/or email address, the student's name, address, telephone number, email address, photographic, computer and/or video images, date and place of birth, major field(s) of study, grade, level enrollment status (full-time; part-time), participation in school-sponsored activities or athletics, weight and height (if the student is a member of an athletic team), dates of attendance, degrees, honors and awards received, and the most recent previous school(s) attended. Directory information does not include a student's social security number, student identification number or other unique personal identifier used by the student for purposes of accessing or communicating in electronic systems unless the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN or password. It is our policy never to release students or parents' address and telephone number without consent. Please note fuller explanations of this subject in this handbook under the heading *Publicity/Media*, and in a separate item in the final pages of this handbook entitled *Privacy Rights*.



## MILITARY RECRUITMENT

The Elementary & Secondary Education Act requires us to give names, addresses and telephone numbers of high school students to military recruiters upon request. However, parents have the right to tell us not to do so. You will receive notification and an "opt-out" form from Staples at the appropriate time. A fuller explanation of this is in the separate letter on Privacy in the final pages of this handbook.

## PUBLICITY/MEDIA



**Media:** We may have contact with the media to feature a school program, to publicize an unusual achievement or activity by a student or group of students or to announce honors or awards. Students may be photographed or televised as part of these school activities. Their names, school and grade may also be used.

**School District Publications:** Students' names and photos also may be used in school system publications such as the annual report, newsletters, school or grade-level videos, etc. Students' photos (without identification) also may be used on school or school-system webpages.

**Staff:** A teacher may videotape class for personal professional development, an education article, or other professional activities.

**Parents/Guardians who do not want their student to participate in such media should fill out the appropriate opt-out selection in the Returning Student Form in PowerSchool. A different form must be filled out for each student..**

**Educational Film-Makers and Others:** The school system occasionally cooperates with educational filmmakers, TV producers, etc., who wish to photograph or televise students or classes for educational features they are producing. Since these are not initiated by the school system or directly related to school activities, it is our practice to notify parents prior to these events so that parents have the opportunity to "opt out" if they wish.

**We do not release students' or parents' addresses or telephone numbers without consent under any circumstances.**

## SURVEYS

If and when the school system wishes to administer a survey that includes sensitive topics such as political beliefs, mental health, sex behavior and attitudes, illegal behavior, religious beliefs and income, etc., we will notify parents and give them the opportunity to inspect the survey prior to its use. If the survey is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the law requires that we obtain written

consent from parents. For all other such surveys, the law requires that we offer an opt-out privilege. The foregoing is a summary only. A fuller discussion of your rights can be found in the separate letter about Privacy Rights in the final page of this handbook.



## RECORDS

Educational records include information recorded in any way, (e.g., handwriting, print, tape, videotape, disk, film, microfilm and microfiche) that is directly related to a student and maintained by the school district except personal records that are kept in the sole possession of the school staff member who made them.

**Permanent Records**, which are kept for 50 years, include identifying information, academic achievement, grade level attained, attendance and immunizations. Permanent records are forwarded to the new school when a student moves out of Westport. For reasons related to: (1) consistency in providing information and (2) ensuring that documents went to receiving private, parochial or other public schools have been seen previously by a parent or guardian, it is the policy of the Westport Public Schools that for students (K-12), only official health records, cumulative report card information, report cards and student records are to be released to receiving schools.

Student records are to be sent to receiving schools only after written permission from a parent or guardian of a student has been received in the school office.

**Non-Permanent Records**, which contain all other data, are kept for six years after the student leaves the district. Transfer of non-permanent records requires parental release.

**Custodian of Records:** The Principal is the official custodian of the records except: the Vice Principal is the custodian of disciplinary records in grades 6-12, the School Nurse is the custodian of health records, and the Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services is the custodian of extra confidential records.

**Access to Records:** Student records are confidential. Aside from a parent or eligible student, staff members, school employees and other school officials may access a student's educational records only if they have been determined by the school system to have a legitimate educational interest in accessing the information contained in such records. Disclosure may be made to a contractor, consultant, volunteer, or other party to whom an agency or institution has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the outside party performs an institutional service or function of which the district would otherwise use employees, and it under the direct control of the district with respect to the use and maintenance of education records, and is subject to the requirements of FERPA with respect to the use and disclosure of personally identifiable information from education records. Disclosure of personally identifiable material to others will not be made without written authorization, except to comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. In an emergency, such information may be disclosed if the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals or as required by state and federal law.

**Legal Rights: Parents, legal guardians and a student over 18 have the following rights with respect to the student's records:**

- **Inspect the Records:** Inspection must be available within 45 days of the day we receive a request in writing from the custodian. It is customary to set up an appointment in advance to review records.
- **Obtain a Copy:** If the record is extensive there is a charge for the reproduction cost.
- **Challenge:** Students and parents have the right to challenge the presence in the record of material which they feel is false, inaccurate or inappropriate. Should such challenge be found valid, such materials shall be removed and destroyed. Should the district refuse to remove or amend challenged material, the challenger has the right to a hearing.
- **File a Complaint:** The above is a summary. The complete policy is available in the Office of the Superintendent, Westport Town Hall.

## RIGHT TO REVIEW OR CHALLENGE MATERIALS

Well-qualified professional staff members take great care in selecting appropriate educational materials. Despite this, occasional objections may be made. To facilitate the handling of complaint, the following procedure has been established:



*The complainant will identify the nature of the complaint and talk to the teacher involved, seeking resolution. Failing satisfactory resolution, the complainant may file a written complaint with the principal on the form entitled, "Request of Reconsideration of Materials" (available from the building principal).*

The principal will seek resolution with the complainant and the teacher. However, if the issue remains unresolved, the principal will submit the complaint to the chairman of the Superintendent's Review Committee (SRC), who will be appointed at that time. The committee will consist of: a member of the superintendent's immediate staff; the WEA president or designee; the IAA president or designee; no fewer than three classroom teachers, representing level and department of specialization germane to the complaint; one library/media specialist; and three citizens, appointed by the superintendent. Following a hearing with the parties to the complaint, the SRC will issue a written recommendation to the superintendent, who will render a written disposition within ten days. Complainant or teacher may appeal the superintendent's decision or the Board of Education within 30 days.

*Challenged materials, once judged appropriate, shall be reviewed if challenged again, only if the superintendent determines that circumstances so warrant.*

## **SEARCHES**

**On School Grounds:** If there is reasonable suspicion that a student is in possession of contraband material (e.g., drugs, alcohol, weapons, flammable, explosives, stolen property), the principal or designee may conduct a search of the student's locker or desk (which are the property of the school) or the student's property (e.g. lunch box, purse, backpack, automobile, etc.), and may have a student empty his or her pockets, or remove shoes, hat, sweater, gloves or other outer garment. Searches of property are to be conducted in the presence of the student, when possible, and at least two other observers.

Administrators are required to make a written record of the search and notify parents, who are to be given a written record of the results. All searches should be reported to the superintendent as soon as possible.

**Off School Grounds:** Any search of a student's property or room where a student may be staying, e.g. during a field trip or other school activity, may not be conducted by parents or other chaperones, but must be done by the staff person supervising the activity or another authorized school official.

- **No Strip Searches:** Searches that involve touching the body or patting down or removal of clothing other than outer or over-garments are not permitted. If by virtue of the magnitude of the suspected criminal activity or nature of the circumstances the administrator believes such a search is warranted, local law enforcement officials shall be contacted and an attempt shall be made to contact the student's parents.
- **No Mass Searches:** Reasonable suspicion must point specifically toward an individual or a particular group or their property.

*Exceptions to the above limitations are permissible in cases of life-threatening emergency or immediate danger to a student or the school community.*

## **TEACHER AND PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Parents have the right to request information pertaining to qualifications of their child's teacher or paraprofessional, in accordance with federal and state statutes. The Office of the Superintendent may be contacted for information.

## **LEGALLY MANDATED NOTICES**

### **WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRIVACY RIGHTS UNDER FERPA & NCLB, INCLUDING:**

#### **DIRECTORY INFORMATION, ACCESS TO STUDENTS BY MEDIA & MILITARY RECRUITERS, ADMINISTRATION OF CERTAIN SURVEYS**

Directory information includes a student's name, address, telephone number, school and grade, and their parent/guardian's name(s), email address, and cell phone numbers. Directory information is not subject to public disclosure under the Freedom of Information

Act. It is our policy not to make directory information available to private individuals, to commercial or college recruiters or to any non-school-related group, except in the circumstances described below, all of which, in accordance with the Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) have an opt-out provision.

**1. PTA Directories**

Each school PTA publishes a school directory, inclusion in which requires permission from parents. For convenience, we furnish the directory information to the PTA. If you give permission, your name, your child's name, address and telephone number, email address and cellphone numbers are listed in this directory, which is made available to PTA members and other parents. While use of the information for other but legitimate school purposes is discouraged, the school system is not able to control access to the information once the directories are distributed.

**2. Publicity and the Media**

School Programs & Activities; Students' Awards: We provide information about programs, activities, awards, etc. in such media as: newspapers, magazines, individual school publications, system wide publications and other school documents, TV programs, videotapes, etc., as well as school system's websites. The publicity may be initiated either by the school system or the media. The content may include written work, projects, school plays, concerts, other extra- curricular activities, etc. When relevant, students may be interviewed by the media or by other students (such as for a school newspaper or student video project). In these situations, students' names, schools, grade levels and/or photos may be used. Photos on the websites are used without identification.

Professional Projects: Teachers and other staff members occasionally wish to use students' work, or to videotape or film classes for their own professional improvement or other activities related to education. We permit these activities when the principal believes them to be of educational value.

If you wish to opt out for this school year, please make sure to choose the appropriate opt-out selection in the Returning Student Form in PowerSchool..

**3. Cooperation with Educational Publishers or Others**

Institutions, companies or individuals producing educational materials in a variety of venues may seek permission to interview, photograph or videotape students in school. It is our practice to cooperate with these ventures when we believe the institution is reputable and the activity worthwhile. We will offer you the opportunity to opt out of these situations on a case by case basis.

Regarding the situations above, under no circumstances will we ever release students' addresses or phone numbers without your permission.

**4. Military Recruiters**

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act*, requires high schools to furnish the names, addresses and telephone numbers of high school students to military recruiters upon request. However, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gives parents the right to request that their children's names, addresses and phone numbers be kept confidential. FERPA requires the request to be in writing. You will receive notification and an "opt-out" form from Staples at the appropriate time.

**5. Surveys**

**The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment** affords parents and students under 18 with certain rights regarding a school district's conduct of surveys, use of information for marketing purposes and certain physical exams.

If and when the school system wishes to administer a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parents.
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or his or her family.
3. Sex behavior or attitudes.
4. Illegal, antisocial, self incriminating or demeaning behavior.
5. Critical appraisal of others with whom respondents have close family relationships.
6. Legally recognized privileged relationships such as with lawyers, doctors or ministers.
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parent.
8. Income, other than as required by law, to determine program eligibility.

We must:

- Upon request, afford you the right to inspect such surveys prior to administration.
- If the survey is funded in part or whole by a program of the U.S. Department of Education, we must obtain your written consent before administering the survey to your child.
- For surveys with any other funding source, we must give you notice of the survey and provide you with the opportunity to opt a student out of participation.

The law specifies that the above notification and opt-out rights also apply:

- If and when a school district wishes to collect any personal information from students for marketing, sales or other distribution purposes.
- If and when a school district intends to schedule the administration of any nonemergency, invasive physical examination or screening not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student or other students.

The above two items are not such that the Westport school district would undertake. However, the law requires that we provide you with this notice of your rights.

## **WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT**

In compliance with State and Federal laws, the Westport school system is continuing its asbestos management plan this summer. The plan requires the inspection of all schools every three years and periodic surveillance every six months. Consistent with that requirement, the periodic inspections are taking place at all schools. All necessary remedial work, if any, will be done so that the condition of any remaining asbestos is acceptable. Upon completion, detailed results of the inspections and a report of any remedial work done will be available at each of our schools.

The regulations and the scope of the required inspections have become steadily more stringent as both State and Federal laws have changed. The Westport school system has been cognizant of the need to inspect for and deal with asbestos in the schools since 1977 – long before the laws required us to do so. We will continue to comply with all State and Federal laws to assure the safety of our children and we will keep parents and staff informed of our efforts.

A complete management plan book is available for inspection in the office of the principal at your child's school.

## **INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT**

To safeguard children's health, our school system has an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan. IPM is defined as the use of all available pest control techniques that have the effect of decreasing the unnecessary use of pesticides. Alternative techniques include, but are not limited to structural maintenance, sanitation practices, appropriate solid waste management and alternative mechanical and biological control. The IPM may include the judicious use of pesticide when necessary. Our IPM follows the guidelines established by the State of Connecticut. All techniques are state certified and those who engage in application of these techniques have received specialized training. In accordance with Connecticut state law, the Town of Westport, which also has an IPM, oversees pest management in the fields adjoining the schools. School and town officials meet annually with representatives of the companies implementing our IPM to review our procedures.

Alternative pest control strategies are used whenever possible. The school is given prior notice of pesticide use, if it is necessary. No application of pesticide is made in any building or on the grounds of any public school during regular school hours or during planned activities, except in an emergency involving an immediate threat to health or safety.

The law permits parents or guardians to register for prior notice (24-hours) of pesticide application. If you wish to do so at your school, please write to the principal of that school advising of your desire to register. If you have children in more than one school, please make a separate written request to the principal of each school. Emergency pesticide application is permitted without notification, provided that it does not involve the use of restricted pesticides. No child is permitted to enter the area where the application occurred until the area is determined to be safe.

The Westport Public Schools will continue to use appropriate procedures, and take all necessary measures, to protect children's health and safety.

## **ZERO TOLERANCE**

While children are in school or engaged in school-sponsored activities on or off school grounds, including athletic events and field trips, or on school buses, we are entrusted with their safety and well being, and we take this responsibility very seriously. Having recently reviewed our school measures relating to the prevention of violence, we want to be certain all students and parents understand our policy of zero tolerance for weapons on school property and at school-sponsored activities.

*No weapons or facsimiles of any kind may be brought upon school property or to school sponsored activities. That includes knives of any kind as well as all firearms, including BB guns and toy guns. This policy is applicable to students of all ages and grade levels.*

Connecticut State law *requires* us to institute expulsion proceedings for all students charged with weapons offenses, whether on or *off school grounds*, regardless of age.

Students who wield otherwise neutral instruments as a weapon also will be subject to disciplinary action, as will students who threaten and/or harm others. We hope that parents will discuss this topic with their children and impress upon them the seriousness of these school rules.

We pledge to do our utmost to ensure that no Westport student ever injures another in our schools.

## **CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

### **Complaint Resolution Procedure**

### **Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

### **34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 299(10)(a)**

#### **I. Filing of Complaint**

##### **A. Violation of Law**

A written complaint may be filed by an organization or individual with the Connecticut Commissioner of Education alleging that the state educational agency (SEA) or an agency or consortium of agencies is violating a federal statute or regulation that applies to the following applicable programs:

1. Part A of Title I (Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies).
2. Part B, Subpart 1 of Title I (Reading First).
3. Part B, Subpart 3 of Title I (Even Start Family Literacy Programs).
4. Part D of Title I (Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk of Dropping Out).
5. Part A of Title II (Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund).
6. Part D of Title II (Enhancing Education Through Technology).
7. Part A of Title III (English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act).
8. Part B, Subpart 4 of Title III (Emergency Immigrant Education Program).
9. Part A of Title IV (Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities).
10. Part A of Title V (Innovative Programs).

**B. Review of an Appeal**

A written complaint may be filed by an individual with the Connecticut Commissioner of Education appealing the decision of an agency or consortium of agencies based on prior written complaint presented by an individual to such agency or consortium of agencies.

**C. Content of Complaint**

The complaint shall be in writing, signed by the complainant and contain the following:

1. A statement that the SEA or an agency or consortium of agencies has violated a requirement of federal statutes or regulation regarding the applicable program, or in the case of an appeal, a statement of aggrievement with the decision rendered by the agency or consortium of agencies based on a prior written complaint.
2. A clear and concise description of the facts on which the statement is based and the specific alleged violation or aggrievement.
3. A description of prior efforts to resolve the complaint, including information demonstrating that the SEA, agency or consortium of agencies has taken action adverse to the complaint or has refused or failed to take action within a reasonable period of time.
4. Complainant's and respondent's name, address and telephone number.
5. Other materials or documents containing information which support or clarify the statement.

**II. Review of Complaint**

**A. Analysis**

Within three business days of the receipt of the complaint, the Commissioner shall assign a review official. Within five business days of the assignment, the review official shall determine whether the complaint has been properly filed in accordance with Section I. If necessary, the review official shall interview the complainant.

## **B. Dismissal of Complaint**

The review official may dismiss the complaint in writing stating an explanation for such action. The grounds for dismissal shall include, but not limited to, the following:

1. Failure to file a proper complaint pursuant to Section I.
2. The allegations fail to state a bona fide violation of federal statute or regulations by the SEA or an agency or consortium of agencies.
3. The allegations fail to state a bona fide aggrievement with the decision rendered by an agency or consortium of agencies based on prior written complaint.
4. The allegations were not caused by the actions or failure to act by the SEA, agency or consortium of agencies.

## **III. Notification of Complaint and Investigation**

If a complaint is not dismissed, the review official shall forward the complaint to the respondent immediately along with a copy of the Complaint Resolution Procedures.

## **IV. Response to Complaint**

Within 10 business days of the receipt of the complaint from the review official, the respondent shall file with the Commissioner a written response to the complaint.

### **A. Content of Response**

The response shall address each and every allegation of the complaint and shall list the respondent's name, address and telephone number.

### **B. Interview**

The review official or the respondent may request an interview to discuss the response and to resolve the dispute informally.

## **V. Complaint Investigation**

Upon completion of Section IV or the failure of the respondent to file a response, the review official shall conduct an investigation. All parties may be duly notified that an investigation has begun. At any time during the investigation, the review official shall attempt to resolve the dispute informally.

Within 60 calendar days of the receipt of the complaint, an investigation of the complaint shall be completed and a written report shall be mailed to both parties. Information shall be gathered in a timely manner, while minimizing any inconvenience or disruption to the complainant or respondent.

Concerning a review of an appeal of the decision of an agency or consortium of agencies, the review official may elect to disregard the procedures contained in this section using in lieu thereof the following abbreviated procedure.

1. Review all of the appropriate records and determine whether the decision of the agency or consortium of agencies shall be affirmed, reversed or modified.
2. Draft a letter of review of an appeal addressing, but not limited to, the issue in dispute, the facts found, the affirmation, reversal or modification of the lower decision and recommendation for improved practices, policies or procedures.

**A. Data Collection**

The complainant and respondent shall provide the review official with copies of all relevant records requested in writing. Telephone interviews of the complainant, respondent and others with knowledge of the allegations may be conducted.

Pursuant to 34 CFR 99-35(a) the review official, acting on behalf of the SEA, is authorized to have access to education records in connection with an evaluation of federal or state-supported education programs or for the enforcement of or compliance with federal legal requirements which relate to those programs.

**B. Independent On-Site Investigation**

The review official may conduct an on-site visit to investigate the complaint if the official deems it necessary.

Any on-site visit shall be coordinated with the respondent.

**C. Complaint Investigation Report**

The Complaint Investigation Report shall be completed by the review official and mailed to the parties within 60 calendar days of the receipt of the complaint by the SEA. The Commissioner may grant an extension for the completion of the report on written request of the review official or respondent if exceptional circumstances exist with respect to the particular complaint. Such extension shall be in writing and shall be mailed to the parties.

The report shall contain the following contents:

1. Summary of all investigation activities including, but not limited to, date of receipt of complaint, allegations, parties interviewed, documents received and dates of on-site visits.
2. Specific allegation of the complaint, the findings of fact, conclusions and final decisions rendered regarding each allegation, including citation to applicable federal statute or regulation.
3. Specific corrective action plan that resolves the complaint or ensures future compliance of the respondent regarding the violation of federal statute or regulation.
4. Recommendations for improved practices, policies or procedures shall be offered when no violation of federal statute or regulation is found.

**D. Corrective Action Plan**

If the Complaint Investigation Report finds that the respondent is violating federal statute or regulations, the respondent shall be requested to submit a corrective action plan within a specified period of time as determined by the review official.

Respondent may request technical assistance from the SEA in order to prepare a plan to achieve compliance.

**VI. Review of Final Decision**

The complainant may file a written request with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education to review the final decision of the SEA.

All local educational agencies shall disseminate information about the complaint procedures to teachers, staff, parents and appropriate private school officials or representatives.

<b>System-Wide Personnel</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone (203-#)</b>	<b>Email</b>
Superintendent.....Thomas Scarice	Town Hall	341-1025	tscarice@westportps.org
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning.....Anna Mahon	Town Hall	341-1020	amahon@westportps.org
Chief Financial Officer.....Elio Longo	Town Hall	341-1001	elongo@westportps.org
Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and General Administration.....John Bayers	Town Hall	341-1004	jbayers@westportps.org
Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services.....Michael Rizzo	Town Hall	341-1253	mrizzo@westportps.org
Coordinator of Psychological Services.....Kimberly Kassay	Staples High School	341-1237	kkassay@westportps.org
Health Services Supervisor.....Suzanne Levasseur	Staples High School	341-1251	slevasseur@westportps.org
Coordinator for Transportation.....Buffy Barry	Town Hall	341-1754	bbarry@westportps.org
Continuing Education Director.....Megan Corrigan	Staples High School	341-1206	mcorrigan@westportps.org
Director of Dining Services.....Bob Nielsen	Staples High School	341-2431	bnielsen@westportps.org
Information.....Office of the Superintendent	Town Hall	341-1026	

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone (203-#)</b>	<b>Email</b>
Coleytown Elementary (CES)	Safiya Key	65 Easton Road	341-1710	skey@westportps.org
Greens Farms Elementary (GFS)	Brian Byrne	17 Morningside Dr. S.	222-3610	bbyrne@westportps.org
Kings Highway Elementary (KHS)	Tracey Carbone	125 Post R. East	341-1810	tcarbone@westportps.org
Long Lots Elementary School (LLS)	Kimberly Ambrosio	13 Hyde Lane	341-1910	kambrosio@westportps.org
Saugatuck Elementary (SES)	Beth Messler	170 Riverside Ave	221-2910	emessler@westportps.org
Bedford Middle (BMS)	Adam Rosen	88 North Ave	341-1510	arosen@westportps.org
Coleytown Middle School (CMS)	Janna Sirowich	255 North Avenue	341-1610	jsirowich@westportps.org
Staples High School (SHS)	Stafford Thomas	70 North Ave	341-1210	stthomas@westportps.org
Stepping Stones Preschool (SSP)	Megan Clarke	65 Easton Road	341-1713	mclarke@westportps.org

#### **SCHOOL CALENDAR 2025-26**

First Day for Students	8/26
Labor Day (No School)	9/1
Professional Development (Early Dismissal)	9/19
Rosh Hashanah (No School)	9/23
Yom Kippur	10/2



Professional Development (Early Dismissal)	10/17
Election Day/Staff Development (No School Students)	11/4
Thanksgiving Recess (Early Dismissal)	11/26
Thanksgiving Recess (No School)	11/26-28
Early Dismissal	12/23
Winter Recess Recess (No School)	12/24-1/4
Martin Luther King Day (No School)	1/19
Early Release/Professional Development	1/23
No School/Professional Development	2/13
Presidents' Day (No School)	2/16
Winter Recess (No School)	2/16-2/20
Professional Development Day (No School Students)	3/20
Good Friday (No School)	4/3
Spring Recess (No School)	4/13-4/17
Memorial Day (No School)	5/25
Last Day (Shortened Day Students) *	6/16
Juneteenth	6/19

There are 5 snow days built into the calendar: June 17, 18, 22, 23 and 24. If there are no snow days, the last day for students and staff will be June 16. In the event that additional make-up days are needed, District schools will use, in the following order: Monday, April 13; Tuesday, April 14; Wednesday, April 15; Thursday, April 16; Friday, April 17.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Each Westport school provides students with the opportunity to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Those who have made the decision not to participate may sit or stand silently, and are not penalized in any way for not participating.

All students are expected to be courteous and respectful of the beliefs and decisions of others.