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Last Friday, Massachusetts Acting Commissioner of Education Russell Johnston shared the following information with all of the school districts in the Commonwealth:

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Educational Vision remains unchanged. In its simplest form, it is to create a public education system where every student is seen, heard, and valued and where all students have the opportunity to thrive.

This work remains firmly grounded in Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, Section 5, which prohibits discrimination in public schools based on race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. Massachusetts schools remain responsible for providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students, and this responsibility under state law is not impacted by recent executive orders at the federal level. Our guidance on nondiscrimination on the basis of gender identity in public schools is unchanged.

It is essential that schools should continue their support for marginalized students — including LGBTQ students — to reinforce that they belong in their school communities. Research consistently demonstrates that when schools take proactive steps to foster inclusivity — through strong policies, affirming practices, and supportive educators — students experience improved mental health, academic success, and overall well-being.

Recently, I was appointed to serve as the Superintendent Representative on the MA Commission for LGBTQ Youth. As a member of the commission, I am extremely proud to be able to represent and share the strong commitment and goal that our educators and staff have here in Westford Public Schools in establishing learning environments and workspaces in which ALL students and staff can develop a strong sense of belonging. We strive everyday to ensure that everyone feels seen, heard, valued and knows that they do indeed belong within our community.

Our vision and mission for WPS also remain unchanged:

We value the development of curious lifelong learners who are responsible, empathetic members of the community, demonstrating innovation through a wide variety of opportunities within inclusive, joyful learning environments that embrace variability and honor diversity.

We believe in preparing our students for active, positive participation as both local and global citizens by developing and fostering creativity, communication, collaboration and critical thinking.

I hope your February vacation next week is safe and provides you with an opportunity for rejuvenation!

Sincerely,

Chris
Christopher Chew, Ed. D
Superintendent of Schools

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