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## An Autumnal Update! WPS 10-2-23

Well, it was feeling more like autumn last week and now it seems to be inching back towards summer again...ah, New England!

As we embark on our first year of the Strategic District Improvement Plan, I will do my best to include information in each monthly update to help communicate progress within the various priority areas.

Last week, our WPS DEI Team met to begin organizing how we might approach supporting our action item of conducting an equity audit throughout the district this year (WPS SDIP 1.1). A subgroup of our team is going to collaborate in reviewing the various proposals submitted to us from outside organizations and make a recommendation as to which might be the best fit with our needs. Stay tuned for more information as we will be looking for various stakeholder input and feedback as part of the actual audit process itself.

During our last School Committee meeting, a Later School Start Time Subcommittee was established (SDIP 2.3). The goal of this committee is to review all of the prior committee's data and research along with current bus ridership and route information in order to consider any feasible short-term options. They are planning to present any findings and recommendations to the full School Committee by this coming December.

Later this month, we anticipate presenting the final Feasibility Report prepared for us by SMMA. The draft report was shared earlier and provided significant insight as to how we might begin to develop our long range master plan. Now that the final report is completed, the 736 page document will be made public for anyone interested in the light reading. The next step in this process is for us to assess the recommendations included in the report so that we might prioritize what we believe should be included in our 10 year Master Plan for the district (SDIP 2.2).

Finally, our Director of Special Education and Social Emotional Learning, Gerard Coughlin, has asked me to share the following update with all of you:

- Weekly Office Hours with Director of Special Education and Social Emotional Learning Gerard Coughlin are now available. Every Thursday throughout the school year, parents are invited to sign up for an individual twenty-minute session with Gerard to discuss issues related to special education and social emotional learning. If you are interested in taking advantage of this opportunity, you can view available times by clicking on the blue link located on the department's website. Gerard will have a rotating morning and afternoon session each week to accommodate the schedules of members of the community. A big thank you goes out to SEPAC members for bringing this suggestion to Gerard's attention.
- Secondly, The Office of Special Education and Social Emotional Learning invites all members of the community to "Caring for Your Mental Health", a presentation for members of the community to learn about the signs of mental health challenges; where to go for help; and the role of schools and the community in supporting students of all ages with their mental health. This presentation and informational session will be held on Wednesday, October 11th at 7:00pm in the Mezzanine at St. Catherine's Church. Presenters for the evening will be Nicole Laviolette, Coordinator of Community Wellness for Westford; Sue Hanley, member of Westford's Community Behavioral and Mental Health Committee; and Gerard Coughlin, Director of Special Education and Social Emotional Learning for Westford Public Schools. All members of the community are welcome. At the conclusion of the presentation, there will be time for questions and answers. The department would like to give a special thanks to community member Joanne Wall for coordinating the evening and we look forward to seeing everyone at St. Catherine's on October 11 at 7:00.

Cheers!

Chris

Christopher Chew, Ed. D

Superintendent

Westford Public Schools

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**Source URL:** <https://www.westfordk12.us/district/superintendent-schools/news/autumnal-update-wps-10-2-23>