



Published on *Westford Public Schools* (<https://www.westfordk12.us>)

[Home](#) > Still grateful...update! WPS 12-1-21

Still grateful...update! WPS 12-1-21

Hopefully, you were able to enjoy some rest and relaxation over the Thanksgiving Holiday weekend. Schedules can tend to get hectic both in and out of school as we progress through November and December. The anticipation of the upcoming winter vacation can feel tangible as what initially felt like a long way away is seemingly just around the corner. While many people look forward to the vacations and the time away from school, it can also be a source of concern for some of our students and families. Let's encourage everyone to continue to be mindful of those around us and how our feelings might not be the same as others; exhibiting additional patience and grace goes a long way towards supporting each other.

Wednesdays continue to be my favorite day of the week as I get to spend the majority of my day in the schools visiting classes, talking with students and staff and getting to know all of the buildings well. Over the past month, my visits have allowed me to help fourth grade students catapult beanie babies across the gymnasium, witness a great deal of tremendous art being created k-12, observe the sheer joy of younger elementary students sounding out words and discovering the power of reading, listen to older elementary students explain their mathematical thinking while estimating, watch WA students debate the complexity of the characters in *Romeo and Juliet*, and enjoy the confidence and courage of middle school students performing in front of their peers. The environments are engaging and the work being done by both our students and staff is meaningful and often fun...not always...but often :-)

Understanding that everyone has a different story even though we might not know what that story might be is fundamental in establishing supportive environments for everyone within our schools. The more reflective we are as a district and the more listening we can do helps us best meet the needs of our students and staff. Previously, we have worked towards developing trauma-invested classrooms which is an ongoing process as the needs of our individual students vary. Fortunately, much of that work has been helpful in our full return as the pandemic creates additional barriers for students that might have otherwise not been a factor. Increasing our focus on social emotional learning this year, we have centered conversations district wide about the sense of belonging that exists for our students and staff. Our professional development priority this year is building our capacity as Culturally Responsive Educators which is part of our work to best know all of our students as individuals and ensuring a stronger sense of belonging within each classroom and school. We have been working with Dr. Kalise Wornum both in full district sessions as well as having her work with our entire district leadership team. The professional development plans for tomorrow's early release (Dec 2) is a continuation at the building level of this work. As I have shared before, relationships are the foundation of great education and without positive relationships real learning is a struggle.

Finally, Courtney Moran, our Director of Pupil Services, asked me to include the following information in this month's update:

During the week of January 9, 2022, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Public School Monitoring (PSM) will conduct a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review of Westford Public Schools. The Office of Public School Monitoring visits each district and charter school every three years to monitor compliance with federal and state special education and civil rights regulations. Areas of review related to special education include student assessments, determination of eligibility, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team process, and IEP development and implementation. Areas of review related to civil rights include bullying, student discipline, physical restraint, and equal access to school programs for all students.

In addition to the onsite visit, parent outreach is an important part of the review process. The review chairperson from the Office of Public School Monitoring will send all parents of students with disabilities an online survey that focuses on key areas of their child's special education program. Survey results will contribute to the development of a report. During the onsite review, the Office of Public School Monitoring will interview the chairperson(s) of the district's Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). Other onsite activities may include interviews of district staff and administrators, reviews of student records, and onsite observations.

Parents and other individuals may call Alaena Podmore, Public School Monitoring Chairperson, at (781) 338- 6706 to request a telephone interview. If an individual requires an accommodation, such as translation, to participate in an interview, the Department will make the necessary arrangements.

Within approximately 60 business days after the onsite visit, the review chairperson will provide the (district or charter school) with a report with information about areas in which the (district or charter school) meets or exceeds regulatory requirements and areas in which the (district or charter school) requires assistance to correct or improve practices. The public will be able to access the report at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/reports/>.

Sincerely,
Chris

Dr. Christopher Chew
Superintendent of Schools
Westford, MA

Source URL: <https://www.westfordk12.us/district/superintendent-schools/news/still-gratefulupdate-wps-12-1-21>