

Employee Handbook

2025- 2026



Westford Public Schools
23 Depot Road Westford, MA 01886



Dear Colleagues:

It is with a great sense of pride and pleasure that I welcome you to another exciting year in the Westford Public Schools. Our reputation as an excellent school system is a direct result of the outstanding contributions of our staff. If you recently have joined our educational community, I welcome you into a highly professional, strongly supportive learning environment in which the needs of children come first in our thoughts and actions.

This employee handbook has been developed to provide information on many personnel and operational issues. The contents characterize the caring, respectful culture for which we are known. With your help, this atmosphere will continue through collaborative, respectful conversations with colleagues and students. The handbook reflects federal and state statutes as well as the policies and regulations of the Westford Public Schools. Updates that correspond to policies or operating procedures will occur from time to time. This handbook is not intended to take the place of any collective bargaining agreement, and is consistent with current state, federal and school committee policies.

I want to sincerely thank you for taking the time to read and understand the contents of this document. Our objective is to bring organizational consistency to the school district. With this strong foundation, we can devote the majority of our time to our true mission and passion: developing the minds and lives of our students.

Finally, I wish to thank those that contributed to the Employee Handbook. The endless hours devoted to this handbook have produced a document that reflects great pride in our school system and a deep respect for our core values. Thank you for a job well done.

Sincerely,

Christopher Chew, Ed. D,
Superintendent of Schools

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I – SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATION.....	6
ABOUT THIS EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK.....	6
SCHOOL COMMITTEE.....	6
CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATION.....	6
PRINCIPALS - SCHOOLS - ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS.....	7
SYSTEM WIDE DIRECTORS, COORDINATORS, LEADERS, and SUPERVISORS.....	7
WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS HOME PAGE.....	8
SCHOOL CALENDAR.....	8
SCHOOL CANCELLATION AND DELAYS.....	8
WESTFORD MISSION & VISION.....	9
CORE VALUES.....	9
STANDARDS OF CONDUCT.....	9
ETHICAL BEHAVIOR.....	9
BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION.....	9
SECTION II – GENERAL PERSONNEL INFORMATION.....	10
STAFF HIRING.....	10
EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION.....	10
STUDENT TEACHERS.....	11
PERSONNEL FILES.....	12
CHANGE OF NAME OR ADDRESS.....	12
REQUIRED FORMS.....	12
CRIMINAL OFFENDER RECORD INFORMATION (CORI).....	13
W-4.....	13
M-4.....	13
I-9.....	13
DIRECT DEPOSIT.....	13
PAYROLL CALENDAR.....	13
BENEFITS.....	13
TAX SHELTERED ANNUITY (403B).....	14
DEFERRED COMPENSATION.....	14
INSURANCE.....	14
LEAVE OF ABSENCE/RETIREMENT (BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY).....	14
TERMINATION OF INSURANCE.....	15
COBRA.....	15
OBRA.....	15
FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS.....	15
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.....	16
EMPLOYEE ARREST.....	16
DISMISSAL OR DEMOTION OF STAFF.....	16
EVALUATION OF STAFF.....	16
RESIGNATION.....	17

RETIREMENT.....	17
EXIT INTERVIEWS.....	18
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.....	18
EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS.....	18
REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES.....	18
SECTION III – RULES AND REGULATIONS.....	19
PROFESSIONAL DRESS & GROOMING.....	19
WORK RELATED ILLNESS/INJURY.....	19
PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS.....	19
ERRANDS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS.....	19
TRANSPORTATION OF PUPILS BY PRIVATE MEANS.....	20
FIRE DRILL/CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES.....	20
SCHOOL STAGE PROCEDURES – INSPECTION BY FIRE DEPARTMENT.....	20
FACULTY/STAFF INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY.....	20
ACCEPTANCE & USE OF GIFTS, GRANTS AND DONATIONS.....	21
CONFLICT OF INTEREST.....	21
SCHOOL WELLNESS.....	22
SUBSTANCE ABUSE.....	23
DRUG FREE WORKPLACE.....	23
TOBACCO/SMOKE FREE ENVIRONMENT.....	24
RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS.....	24
SOCIAL NETWORKING.....	25
CONFIDENTIALITY.....	25
RELIGIOUS EXPRESSIONS.....	25
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM.....	26
SECTION IV – ADDITIONAL REFERENCES.....	27
SALARIES – SALARY SCHEDULE PROVISIONS.....	27
SENIORITY.....	27
AGENCY FEE.....	27
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE.....	27
ABSENCES.....	27
PERSONAL DAYS.....	27
HOLIDAYS.....	27
VACATION DAYS.....	28
LEAVE REQUEST PROCEDURES.....	28
SICK LEAVE.....	28
SICK LEAVE BANK.....	28
BEREAVEMENT LEAVE.....	28
EXTENDED LEAVE OF ABSENCE.....	28
ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE.....	28
AFTER SCHOOL ASSISTANCE TO PUPILS.....	28
MEETINGS.....	29
TUITION REIMBURSEMENT.....	29
COURSE VOUCHERS.....	29

EDUCATOR LICENSURE.....	29
SECTION V – SOME STATE & FEDERAL LAWS APPLYING TO ALL PERSONNEL.....	30
MASSACHUSETTS PARENTAL LEAVE ACT (PLA):.....	30
FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT.....	30
MILITARY LEAVE.....	30
JURY DUTY.....	30
NON-DISCRIMINATION/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY.....	31
PROFESSIONAL TEACHER STATUS/SCHOOL NURSE STATUS.....	31
HARASSMENT.....	31
CONVICTED OF A CRIME.....	31
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.....	32
PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT.....	32
SECTION VI – ITEMS PERTAINING TO PUPILS & OTHERS.....	33
MEDICATION POLICY.....	33
CHILDREN ACCOMPANYING STAFF TO THE WORKPLACE.....	33
PETS/ANIMALS IN THE WORKPLACE.....	33
HEALTH & EMERGENCY INFORMATION SHEETS.....	33
FIELD TRIPS.....	33
STUDENT RECORDS.....	34
SALES THROUGH SCHOOLS.....	34
RESEARCH STUDIES INVOLVING STUDENTS.....	34
HOME INSTRUCTION (PROLONGED ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT).....	34
EMERGENCY RESPONSE MANUAL.....	34
HOMEWORK POLICY.....	35
SCHEDULING OF TESTS ON RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS.....	35
DISMISSAL OF STUDENT BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL.....	35
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION.....	35
DISCIPLINE.....	35
ADDENDUM TO TITLE IX FOR ALL HANDBOOKS.....	36

SECTION I – SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATION

ABOUT THIS EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

This Employee Handbook was created to provide all employees of Westford Public Schools with an overview of policies and procedures. It contains important information about general personnel policies, practices, privileges, and the obligations of being an employee. Additionally, this handbook includes all notifications required by law.

This handbook does not constitute a contract and makes no guarantees of employment, compensation, or benefits. The Superintendent and/or School Committee reserve the right to make changes to the policies and practices at any time, at their sole discretion. They may also interpret and administer these policies in light of changing circumstances, events, and applicable statutory guidelines.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The School Committee is the elected body that establishes goals and policies for Westford Public Schools, appoints the Superintendent and approves the budget.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE	
Kathryn Clear, Chair	kclear@westfordk12.us
Valery Young, Vice-Chair	vyoung@westfordk12.us
Laurie Oliver, Secretary	loliver@westfordk12.us
Bill McDonald	wmcDonald@westfordk12.us
Tom Laflamme	tlafLamme@westfordk12.us
Shana Farnsworth	sfarnsworth@westfordk12.us
Jessica Silverman	jsilverman@westfordk12.us

CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATION			
Christopher Chew Ed.D.	Superintendent	cchew@westfordk12.us	x2102
Courtney L. Moran	Assistant Superintendent	cmoran@westfordk12.us	x2104
Jenny Lin	Director of School Finance	jlin@westfordk12.us	x2100
Gerard Coughlin	Director of Special Education & Social Emotional Learning	gcoughlin@westfordk12.us	x2111

PRINCIPALS - SCHOOLS - ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

BUILDING ADMINISTRATION				
Miller Elem. PreK-2	Melissa Boylan, Principal mboylan@westfordk12.us	x3862	Caitlyn Johnson, Asst Principal/Spec Educ cjohnson@westfordk12.us	x3847
Nabnasset Elem. PreK-2	Nina Balfé, Principal nbalfé@westfordk12.us	x3551	Ashley Jayne, Asst Principal/Spec Educ ajayne@westfordk12.us	x3451
Robinson Elem. PreK-2	Kevin LaCoste, Principal klacoste@westfordk12.us	x3110	Gina Kutarnia, Asst Principal/Spec Educ gkutarnia@westfordk12.us	x3111
Day Elem. Gr 3-5	ChrisLouis Sardella, Principal csardella@westfordk12.us	x3652	Chrissy Michaud, Asst Principal/Spec Educ cmichaud@westfordk12.us	x3653
Abbot Elem. Gr 3-5	Peter Myerson, Principal pmyerson@westfordk12.us	x3450	Melissa Richard, Asst Principal/Spec Educ mrichard@westfordk12.us	x3484
Crisafulli Elem. Gr 3-5	Sharon Kennelly, Principal skennelly@westfordk12.us	x3754	Samantha Holmgren, Asst Principal/Spec Educ sholmgren@westfordk12.us	x3753
Blanchard MS	Adam Ingano, Principal aingano@westfordk12.us	x6163	Patti Demins, Assistant Principal pdemins@westfordk12.us	x6171
Stony Brook MS	Allison Hammer, Principal ahammer@westfordk12.us	x6755	Alec Lapan, Assistant Principal alapan@westfordk12.us	x6754
Westford Academy	Dan Twomey, Principal dtwomey@westfordk12.us	x7404	Betsy Murphy, Dean bmurphy@westfordk12.us Bob Ware, Dean bware@westfordk12.us Amanda Welch, Dean awelch@westfordk12.us	x7416 x7438 x7403

SYSTEM WIDE DIRECTORS, COORDINATORS, LEADERS, and SUPERVISORS

EQUITY, CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION			
Julie Kelley	Curr Coordinator, STEM (K-5)	jkelly@westfordk12.us	x2122
Erin Hogan	Curr Coordinator, Humanities (K-5)	ehogan@westfordk12.us	x2118
Janet Keirstead	Curr Coordinator, ELA Gr (6-12)	jkeirstead@westfordk12.us	x7333
Christopher Connole	Curr Coordinator, Social Studies (6-12)	cconnole@westfordk12.us	x7317
Christopher Jeffcoat	Cur Coordinator, STEM (6-12)	cjeffcoat@westfordk12.us	x7430
Stephanie Devlin	Curr Coordinator, World Language (6-12)	sdevlin@westfordk12.us	x7355
Andrea Mejia	Curr Coordinator, Fine Arts (K-12)	amejia@westfordk12.us	x7268
Brian Roark	Curr Coordinator, Health & Wellness (K-12)	broark@westfordk12.us	x7445

Lauren Clark	School Counseling Coordinator (9-12)	lclark@westfordk12.us	x
Joanne Anderson	Assistant Special Education Director	joanneanderson@westfordk12.us	x
Kelly Diette	Student Support Leader (6-8)	kdiette@westfordk12.us	x
Sejal Costa	Student Support Leader (9-12)	scosta@westfordk12.us	x
Laurie Bryson	Lead Nurse	lbryson@westfordk12.us	x
Jeff Bunyon	Director of Athletics	jbunyon@westfordk12.us	x
Lisa Sanderson	Instructional Technology Supervisor	lsanderson@westfordk12.us	x
Kevin Murphy	School Technology Manager	kmurphy@westfordk12.us	x

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS HOME PAGE

Website: <http://www.westfordk12.us>

SCHOOL CALENDAR

[2025-26 School Year](#)

SCHOOL CANCELLATION AND DELAYS

The Superintendent will exercise one of the following options when weather conditions dictate a change in the normal opening of the school day:

- Cancellation of school
- Delayed opening of schools: 1-hour or 2-hour option
 - If a 1-hour delay is announced, preschool and kindergarten will be held
 - If a 2-hour delay is called, AM preschool and kindergarten will be canceled

** Bus pick-up times will be delayed accordingly. Example: If school is delayed by 2 hours, buses will pick up the students 2 hours later than the usual pick-up time.*

Announcements of no school or delayed opening will be communicated by the following methods:

- Radio stations: WBZ1030; WRKO 680
- Television stations: Channels 4, 5, 7 & Fox 25
- Posting on the Westford Public Schools web page
- Staff members are notified via automated phone message system.

**Note: Each school will have appropriate procedures regarding school scheduling.*

WESTFORD MISSION & VISION

Westford Public Schools values 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 their variability and honor their diversity.

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

CORE VALUES

As an entire district, we embrace the **SPiRiT** core values:

- **Safety:** physical, mental, and emotional well-being
- **Perseverance:** fostering resilience and growth mindsets
- **Inclusion:** committing to equity for all
- **Respect:** both of ourselves and those around us
- **Integrity:** in our work, in our actions, in our choices
- **Teamwork:** collaborating with others toward a common goal

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Standards of conduct are guidelines for all employees to follow, helping to create a safe, comfortable, and productive work environment that serves as a model worthy of emulation by students. All staff members are expected to carry out their assigned responsibilities with conscientious concern for the well-being of both staff and students.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Westford Public Schools expects its employees to uphold the highest standards of moral, legal, and ethical conduct in the workplace. If employees find themselves in a situation that they believe may be unethical or illegal and are uncertain how to proceed, they are expected to contact their supervisor or the Human Resources Department for guidance and direction.

All Town of Westford employees are required to complete the online training program through the State Ethics Commission website within thirty (30) days of hire, and every two (2) years thereafter.

Website: <http://www.mass.gov/ethics>

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Westford Public Schools expects all staff and students to model behavior that aligns with our Core Values. The school system is deeply committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment, one that is free from the damaging effects of bullying and cyberbullying. It is our goal to eliminate all forms of bullying and aggression that harm our students and school culture and that stand in the way of the learning process.

To support efforts in responding promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, Westford Public Schools has established clear policies and procedures for receiving and acting on reports. These protocols ensure that all members of our school community - including students, parents, and staff - are fully aware of the steps that will be taken when bullying incidents are reported.

Westford Public Schools: [Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#)

SECTION II – GENERAL PERSONNEL INFORMATION

STAFF HIRING

Westford Public Schools will endeavor to attract, secure, and retain the highest qualified personnel for all positions. It is the responsibility of the Superintendent and Principals to determine personnel needs and to recruit suitable candidates. All applications for employment, whether on a permanent or temporary basis, will be advertised and processed through SchoolSpring.com.

To be eligible for a teaching position, an applicant must meet the license requirements imposed by law and provide satisfactory evidence of citizenship and/or legal right to work, as well as any required previous relevant work experience. All teachers will also be required to submit verification of subject matter competency.

Any offer of employment is contingent upon applicable licensure, confirmation of a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) check, a national fingerprint background check, passing a pre-employment drug test, and completing the Conflict of Interest On-line Training.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:38G- Definitions; Provisional Educator, Provisional Educator with Advanced Standing and Standard Educator Certificates

M.G.L. 71:41- Professional Status for Teachers; Contracts; Good Cause Protection for Principals; Dismissal of Principals by Superintendent

M.G.L. 71:38R- Criminal background check of current or prospective school employee, volunteer, or other persons having direct and unmonitored contact with children; criminal offender record information; state and national fingerprint-based criminal background checks

EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

Westford Public Schools requires all new teachers to participate in the New Staff Orientation Program. The goal of Westford's teacher induction and mentoring programs is to support and retain new teachers, enhance their effectiveness, and ultimately improve student learning. This program aims to ease the transition from preservice to professional practice, foster professional growth, and build a positive and supportive environment for beginning educators.

More specifically, the program aims to:

- Integrate new educators into the Westford culture;
- Develop effective pedagogical practices;
- Foster a supportive and collaborative professional environment;
- Promote continuous professional growth and resilience;
- Ensure equity and inclusion in practice;
- Empower educators to be innovative and take safe risks; and
- Cultivate responsible and empathetic educators.

All new employees meet with a member of the Human Resource Department to complete the onboarding process prior to beginning work.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4105](#) – Staff Orientation [Induction and Mentoring Handbook](#)

STUDENT TEACHERS

Westford Public Schools welcomes the opportunity to partner with colleges and universities by hosting both interns and student teachers. Westford Public Schools recognizes that our primary responsibility is to provide a quality and rigorous education to our students. Allowing interns and student teachers cannot in any way interfere or diminish the educational experience provided to our students. Internships and student teaching opportunities shall be undertaken in accordance with the following guidelines.

Internship or Student Teaching - approval process

1. Interns and students teaching assignments must receive approval by the appropriate supervising administrator, most often the building principal. All requests for student teaching assignments must be submitted along with supporting documentation from the college or university to the Assistant Superintendent's office. Each principal maintains a copy at the school level.
2. The intern or student teacher must review any policies and requirements and pass a criminal history records check including a CORI and fingerprint background check prior to the commencement of the assignment. *Students engaged in a practicum do not.*
3. Upon final approval of the internship or student teaching assignment, the assigned cooperating teacher or professional will meet with the intern or student teacher to review legal requirements relating to the privacy of student records, civil rights policy, crisis plan, and any other policy related to the intern or student teaching assignment.
4. Interns and student teachers arriving at Westford Public Schools specifically to do their student teaching or internship shall not receive compensation from Westford Public Schools and are not considered employees of Westford Public Schools. However, interns and student teachers are subject to similar screening requirements conducted by the school district, and they must follow all Westford Public Schools' protocols and procedures.
5. Student teaching (or an internship) is allowed only if it does not in any way diminish the educational services provided to the students of Westford and only at the discretion of the building principal. If it becomes apparent that the student teaching assignment or internship is diminishing educational services to our students, the supervising administrator may ask the student teacher or intern to discontinue the internship or student teaching assignment.

Internship or Student Teaching - guidelines

1. The assigned cooperating educator will supervise the intern or student teacher and be responsible for all aspects of the assignment.
2. The assigned cooperating educator will be in good standing, shall hold a valid professional teaching license and have achieved professional teacher status in Westford.
3. Interns and student teachers may attend building meetings and participate in parent conferences with their cooperating educator. It is best practice to ask for the parent/caregiver's verbal acknowledgement prior to starting a meeting or conference.
4. In the event an intern or student teacher is undertaking work which would require a professional license, the cooperating educator should be mindful that the intern or student teacher is operating under the auspices of the cooperating educator's license. All such work must be directly supervised by the cooperating educator and must in all respects comply with legal standards and regularly accepted practices sanctioned by the school district.
5. Interns and student teachers are not authorized to use physical restraints on students.
6. All reports, reviews, evaluations or other documentation provided to the college or university regarding the intern or student teacher performance, prepared by the cooperating teacher, shall be reviewed by the building principal or supervising administrator before being provided to the college or university.

7. Westford Public Schools reserves the right to determine whether an intern or student teacher successfully completes the internship or student teaching.
8. Westford Public Schools reserves the right to terminate the placement at any time.
9. The cooperating educator will forward any voucher received from the college or university to the Assistant Superintendent's office.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4302](#) - Student Teacher
[Intern/Student Teacher Request Form](#)

PERSONNEL FILES

Westford Public Schools maintains a personnel file on each employee. The personnel file includes such information as the employee's job application, resume, records of training, documentation of performance appraisals and salary increases, and other employment records.

Personnel files are the property of Westford Public Schools, and access to the information they contain is restricted. Generally, only supervisors and management personnel of Westford Public Schools who have a legitimate reason to review information in a file are allowed to do so.

Employees who wish to review their own file should contact the Office of Human Resources. With reasonable advance notice, employees may review their own personnel files in the Human Resources office and in the presence of an appointed individual.

Confidential personnel files are maintained at the Central Office by Human Resources under the auspices of the Superintendent of Schools.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: M.G.L.
4:7- Public Records; Definitions
M.G.L. 66:10 – Inspection of Public Records
M.G.L. 71:42C – Records of Teacher; Inspection
Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4112](#) – Personnel Records

CHANGE OF NAME OR ADDRESS

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify Westford Public Schools of any changes in personnel data. Personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, number and names of dependents, individuals to be contacted in the event of an emergency, educational accomplishments, and other such status reports should be accurate and current at all times. If any personnel data has changed, notify the Office of Human Resources using the [Employee Information Form](#).

Name change requires the completion of a new I9 (which requires an updated drivers license and social security card). For those individuals who hold a professional license with DESE, Westford must also receive proof that their license has been updated. No records will be changed until documentation is received.

REQUIRED FORMS

Statewide Applicant Fingerprint Identification System (SAFIS)

Westford Public Schools shall have access and shall obtain evidence of a national fingerprint based criminal history background check for any employee of the school department who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children.

Code of Massachusetts Regulations Reference: 603 CMR 51:00
MA Session Laws Ch 459 of the Acts of 2012 Website: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/chri/lawsregs.html>

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4503](#) – Fingerprint Based Criminal History Checks

CRIMINAL OFFENDER RECORD INFORMATION (CORI)

Westford Public Schools shall have access to and shall obtain all available criminal offender record information annually from the criminal history systems board of any current or prospective employee or volunteer of the school department, who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children, including any individual who regularly provides school related transportation to children.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: 105 CMR 950.000 71:38R

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4120](#) – Criminal Offender Record Information

W-4

The [W-4](#) form is used so that your employer can withhold the correct Federal Income Tax from your pay. Because your tax situation may change, you may want to refigure your withholding each year and complete a new form as needed. Members of the Human Resources department will facilitate your request, but are not financial advisors.

M-4

The [M-4 form](#) is used so that your employer can withhold Massachusetts Income Tax from your wages. If you claim the same number of exemptions for Massachusetts and Federal Income Taxes, only the W-4 needs to be completed. Members of the Human Resources department will facilitate your request, but are not financial advisors.

I-9

The Immigration Reform and Control Act legally mandates that U.S. employers verify employment eligibility status of newly hired employees and make it unlawful for employers to knowingly hire or continue to employ unauthorized workers. Employees are required to fill out the [I-9](#)

DIRECT DEPOSIT

Direct deposit is required by all employees. Direct deposit saves time, eliminates lost, stolen, or forged checks, and your money is deposited even if you are away on payday. Direct Deposit allows the town to credit your net pay to your account and to correct any over or under deposit to your account. The initiation of Direct Deposit takes two payroll cycles after receipt of the authorization form. You will receive a Direct Deposit Statement verifying the amount of the deposit on each payday. To change banks or accounts, you will need to fill out a new [authorization form](#).

PAYROLL CALENDAR

All school employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis. The number of payroll periods is subject to contractual language. Employees are asked to enroll in Direct Deposit. Enrollment forms should be completed and returned to the Office of Human Resources for processing.

If direct deposit is not an option for you, all live checks will be available on the date of issuance in the Business Office, located at Central Office, 23 Depot St., between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. Paychecks not picked up by 4:00 pm will be mailed directly to your home address on file via USPS.

[2025-26 payroll schedule](#)

BENEFITS

Permanent employees who work 20 or more hours per week are benefit eligible. Employee benefits commence on the first day of the month following the employee's start date.

TAX SHELTERED ANNUITY (403B)

Presently the Town of Westford has set up deduction options for Tax Sheltered Annuity Plans (403b). School employees may enroll or make changes in a tax sheltered annuity program anytime during the year. Accounts must be arranged by the employee and their financial planner prior to submitting a request to Human Resources. The district's third party company is TSA Consulting Group (TSACG)

<https://www.tsacg.com/individual/plan-sponsor/massachusetts/westford-public-schools/>

DEFERRED COMPENSATION

The Town of Westford offers a 457 Deferred Compensation Plan that allows participants to save for retirement with pre-tax dollars through salary deductions.

Massachusetts Deferred Compensation SMART Plan Great West Retirement Solutions

P.O. Box 173764

Denver, CO 80217-3764

P 1-877-457-1900 F 1-866-745-5766

<http://www.mass.gov/smartplan/index>

INSURANCE

The Town of Westford provides eligible employees and their dependents the opportunity to participate in a variety of voluntary and contributory insurance plans which may change from time to time. Employees have 30 days from the date of hire to enroll in the Health, Dental, Life and/or Disability Plans. Otherwise, the employee will have to wait until the next open enrollment period (October). At the time of a qualifying event such as marriage, divorce, birth/adoption of a child, loss of coverage through a spouse, or death of a family member the employee may elect a plan at that time.

- **Health Insurance:** The Town of Westford provides employees and their eligible dependents the opportunity to participate in various Health Insurance Plans (HMO & PPO).
- **Voluntary Dental Insurance:** The Town of Westford provides employees and their eligible dependents the opportunity to participate in a voluntary Dental Insurance Plan. Dental must be in place when you retire to continue coverage and may not be reinstated once coverage is canceled.
- **Voluntary Life Insurance:** The Town of Westford provides employees and their eligible dependents the opportunity to participate in a voluntary Life Insurance Plan. Only benefit eligible employees can participate in a Town sponsored life insurance plan.
- **Voluntary Short & Long Term Disability Plan:** The Town of Westford provides employees the opportunity to participate in a voluntary Short & Long Term Disability Insurance Plans.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE/RETIREMENT (BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY)

Anyone granted a leave of absence should contact Human Resources to ensure continuous insurance coverage for the period of their absence. Employees who go on an unpaid leave of absence must assume responsibility for payment of any health, life, LTD, STD, or dental insurance coverage. If you are a pension-eligible retiree of the Town of Westford and begin receiving your pension at retirement, you may be eligible to continue certain benefits. Or Pension-eligible retirees of the Town of Westford may be eligible to continue certain benefits, depending on their individual situation.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 32:16 – Involuntary Retirement; Right to Hearing and Appeal

M.G.L. 32:90F – Relating to the Continued Employment of Certain Employees after Mandatory Retirement Age M.G.L.

32:90G – Relating to Certain Veterans Who Have Reached the Age for Mandatory Retirement

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4108](#) – Retirement

TERMINATION OF INSURANCE

Upon leaving employment of the Town of Westford, benefits terminate on the last day of the month following the date employment ends. During this period, the employee will be notified and given an opportunity to continue benefits under COBRA.

COBRA

Under the federal law entitled the “Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985, known as COBRA, employees and their covered dependents may have certain rights to continued group health insurance coverage, for 18 months, if they lose their eligibility due to: termination of employment; or reduction in work hours. Enrolled dependents may also have the right under COBRA to continue coverage for 36 months if their eligibility is terminated due to: loss of status as a dependent, the employee’s eligibility for Medicare; divorce or legal separation from the employee; or death of the employee.

The cost of COBRA coverage is 100% of the total premium, and is to be paid in full by the eligible employee, spouse or dependent.

OBRA

As a part-time, seasonal or temporary employee of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or a Massachusetts local government employer, you are required to participate in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Deferred Compensation Plan. The Plan is an alternative to Social Security coverage as permitted by the federal Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. As an OBRA employee, you must contribute at least 7.5% of your gross compensation per pay period to the Plan.

Massachusetts Deferred Compensation SMART Plan

Empower

P.O. Box 173764

Denver, CO 80217-3764

P 1-877-457-1900

F 1-866-745-5766

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

Flexible Spending Accounts allow you to set aside a portion of “pre tax” dollars to cover certain health and dependent care expenses. These contributions are deducted from your paycheck prior to federal and state taxes.

HRC Total Solutions

111 Charles Street

Manchester, NH 03101

603-647-1147

<http://www.hrcts.com/>

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Westford Public Schools cares about the health and well-being of its employees and recognizes that a variety of personal problems can disrupt their personal and work lives. While many employees solve their problems either on their own or with the help of family and friends, sometimes employees need professional assistance and advice.

Through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Westford provides confidential access to professional counseling services for help in confronting such personal problems as alcohol and other substance abuse, marital and family difficulties, financial or legal troubles, and emotional distress. The EAP is available to all employees offering problem assessment, short-term counseling, and referral to appropriate community and private services.

The EAP is strictly confidential and is designed to safeguard your privacy and rights. Information given to the EAP counselor may be released only if requested by you in writing. All counselors are guided by a Professional Code of Ethics. Personal information concerning employee participation in the EAP is maintained in a confidential manner. No information related to an employee's participation in the program is entered into the personnel file. There is no cost for employees to consult with an EAP counselor. If further counseling is necessary, the EAP counselor will outline community and private services available. The counselor will also let employees know whether any costs associated with private services may be covered by their health insurance plan. Costs that are not covered are the responsibility of the employee.

Minor concerns can become major problems if you ignore them. No issue is too small or too large, and a professional counselor is available to help you when you need it.

Employee Assistance Program (EPA) <http://www.allonehealth.com/MIIAEAP/>

EMPLOYEE ARREST

In the event of an arrest of an employee of Westford Public Schools on criminal charges, the Superintendent will evaluate the case on an individual basis and determine the appropriate action to be taken under the guidelines stated in the policy.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4117](#) – Employee Arrest

DISMISSAL OR DEMOTION OF STAFF

Please refer to the following:

Massachusetts General Law Reference: M.G.L. 71:42 – Dismissal or Demotion of Employees by Principals and Superintendent; Review and Arbitration of Dismissal

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4106](#) – Dismissal or Demotion of Staff

Refer to your negotiated contract

EVALUATION OF STAFF

Supervisors and employees are strongly encouraged to discuss job performance and goals on an informal, day-to-day basis. Additional formal performance evaluations are conducted to provide both supervisors and employees the opportunity to discuss job tasks, identify and correct weaknesses, encourage and recognize strengths, and discuss positive, purposeful approaches for meeting goals.

Please refer to the following:

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P2108](#) Instructional Program; and [P4403](#) Evaluation of Staff

Refer to your negotiated contract.

RESIGNATION

Resignation is a voluntary act initiated by the employee to terminate employment with Westford Public Schools. All voluntary employment terminations initiated by an employee require the employee to provide the district with written notice of an intent to resign by contacting the supervisor or the Office of Human Resources.

The Superintendent of Schools is authorized to accept resignations from employees of the schools on behalf of the School Committee, and shall report said resignations to the School Committee at its next regular meeting. Employees are encouraged to notify the building administrator and the Human Resource department of such intent at as early a date as possible and in accordance with the appropriate negotiated agreement.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4107](#) – Resignation

Refer to your negotiated contract

RETIREMENT

Staff members who intend to retire are encouraged to indicate their plans to the Superintendent of Schools at as early a date as possible and/or in accordance with the appropriate negotiated agreement. The retirement benefit selection determines if either you or your survivors will receive all or a portion of your contributions and interest in the form of a refund, retirement allowance or survivor benefit. Employees will be enrolled in one of the following retirement plans based on your job classification.

- Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System You are eligible to join the MTRS if you are employed as a teacher or administrator in a Massachusetts public school outside the City of Boston or in any charter school in Massachusetts.

To be eligible, you must meet all of the following criteria:

- You are covered by a contractual agreement regarding your employment.
- You are employed on at least a half-time basis.
- You are certified by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Your contractual agreement requires that you be certified by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as a condition of your employment.

The contribution rate is determined by the date when the member first enrolls in a Massachusetts public retirement system.

Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System
One Charles Park, 2nd Floor
Cambridge, MA 02142-1206
617-679-6877
Website : www.mass.gov/mtrb

- Middlesex Retirement System Membership in the Middlesex Retirement System is required by law for all employees who are in a permanent position and who work at least 50% of the time in an eligible position. The amount each employee must contribute to the Middlesex Retirement System each year is set by statute.

Middlesex Retirement System
25 Linnell Circle, Box 160
Billerica, MA 01865
800-258-3805 Website: www.middlesexretirement.org

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Exit surveys are encouraged when employees leave Westford Public Schools as the system may benefit from your honest and candid impressions and suggestions. Formal exit interviews with Human Resources and/or Superintendent are available upon request. Keys, badges, educational materials, mobile devices and equipment shall be returned to the building Principal.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Westford Public Schools shall adopt and implement a Professional Development Plan for all principals, teachers, and other professional staff. The Professional Development Plan shall be updated annually. The Westford Public Schools budget shall include funds for the Professional Development Plan.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:38G – Definitions; Provisional Educator, Provisional Educator with Advanced Standing and Standard Educator Certificates

M.G.L. 71:38Q – Professional Development Plan for Professional Staff

M.G.L. 71:59C – School Councils

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4502](#) - Professional Development Plan

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Any staff member requesting to attend a conference or workshop should initiate such a request with their immediate supervisor. The goals of such workshops and conferences should relate to the vision of Westford Public Schools. Workshops are approved based on relevance, alignment to Westford's vision, availability of resources such as funding and availability of substitutes.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4119](#) – Educational Workshops

[Course/conference request form](#)

REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

Building supplies are purchased at the beginning of each year. Should you need additional supplies please contact your immediate supervisor. Prior approval and supporting receipts are required for any reimbursement for job related expenses (excluding taxes) as outlined in the School Committee policy. All receipts should be submitted in a timely fashion.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P3506](#)– Expense Reimbursements

SECTION III – RULES AND REGULATIONS

PROFESSIONAL DRESS & GROOMING

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the business image Westford Public Schools presents to the community. During business hours or when representing Westford, all employees are expected to come to school clean and to wear clothing that meets or exceeds their high regard for education and presents an image consistent with their job responsibilities.

WORK RELATED ILLNESS/INJURY

To assist in providing a safe and healthful work environment for employees, students, and visitors, Westford Public Schools has established workplace safety protocols. The Office of the Superintendent, with the assistance of building administrators, has responsibility for implementing, administering, monitoring, and evaluating the safety program. Its success depends on the alertness and personal commitment of all.

Westford provides information to employees about workplace safety and health issues through regular internal communication channels such as supervisor-employee meetings, bulletin board postings, memos, or other written communications.

Each employee is expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all work activities. Employees must immediately report any unsafe condition to the appropriate supervisor. Employees who violate safety standards, who cause hazardous or dangerous situations, or who fail to report or, where appropriate, remedy such situations, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

In the case of accidents that result in injury, regardless of how insignificant the injury may appear, employees should immediately notify their supervisor who must then fill out an [Accident Report](#) within 24 hours of the incident and provide it to the Office of the Superintendent. Employees must also fill out the [Medical Authorization Form](#). Such reports are necessary to comply with laws and initiate insurance and workers' compensation benefits procedures.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4113](#) – Worker's Compensation Insurance

PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS

Use of school telephones for personal business is prohibited except in emergencies.

Unless personal cell phones are used for instructional purposes, personal cell phones should be silent or on vibrate while in the presence of students since ringing cell phones can be a distraction to the teaching and supervision of students. Also, employees should not be checking texts, FB and any other social media during the school day while with children, including morning, recess, or afternoon duties. No staff member should be taking pictures of any students and posting them to FB or other social media outlets.

ERRANDS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS

To ensure both student and staff safety, an employee needing to leave the building during school hours is required to seek prior approval from the building Principal or their designee. Students are not to be sent on errands outside the building.

TRANSPORTATION OF PUPILS BY PRIVATE MEANS

In order to best protect you and your student(s) involved in a field trip, faculty must follow field trip regulations and have signed permission slips from parents delineating who the driver is and include the year, make and model of vehicle. Faculty transporting students to the field trip must follow the set itinerary. Non-school personnel are required to show a valid driver's license and a current vehicle registration; the faculty member running the field trip is required to keep copies of drivers' information. All employees are discouraged from providing transportation to students before, during, and after school hours.

Westford Public Schools Policy:

[P5404](#) – Student Field Trips

[P5405](#) – Student Travel

[P6120](#) – Field Trips

FIRE DRILL/CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Every school has fire drills and crisis management procedures. All employees will familiarize themselves and students with the fire drill and crisis management procedures for their school or area.

SCHOOL STAGE PROCEDURES – INSPECTION BY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Westford Fire Department has established a policy that prior to the performance of any stage productions in Westford Public Schools, persons responsible will contact the Westford Fire Department for a safety inspection of the site. No performance will be allowed without the issuance of a permit for that purpose. A permit will be issued, only after inspection, and will be valid **ONLY** for the production at hand.

FACULTY/STAFF INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Internet Access To Global Electronic Information Resources On The World Wide Web Is Provided By Westford Public Schools To Assist Employees In Obtaining Work-Related Data And Technology. The Following Will Help Ensure Responsible And Productive Internet Usage.

- All Internet usage is limited to job-related activities.
- Personal use of the Internet is not permitted.
- All Internet data that is composed, transmitted, or received via our computer communications systems is considered to be part of the official records of Westford and, as such, is subject to disclosure to law enforcement or other third parties. Consequently, employees should always ensure that the business information contained in Internet email messages and other transmissions is accurate, appropriate, ethical, and lawful.
- The equipment, services, and technology provided to access the Internet remain at all times the property of Westford. As such, Westford reserves the right to monitor Internet traffic, and retrieve and read any data composed, sent, or received through our online connections and stored in our computer systems.
- Data that is composed, transmitted, accessed, or received via the Internet must not contain content that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or disruptive to any employee or other person. Examples of unacceptable content may include, but are not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comments or images that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

- The unauthorized use, installation, copying, or distribution of copyrighted, trademarked, or patented material on the Internet is expressly prohibited. As a general rule, if an employee did not create material, does not own the rights to it, or has not gotten authorization for its use, it should not be put on the Internet. Employees are also responsible for ensuring that the person sending any material over the Internet has the appropriate distribution rights.
- Internet users should take the necessary anti-virus precautions before downloading or copying any file from the Internet. This includes annual training. All downloaded files are to be checked for viruses; all compressed files are to be checked before and after decompression.

Please refer to the following:

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P6302](#) – District Acceptable Internet Use

ACCEPTANCE & USE OF GIFTS, GRANTS AND DONATIONS

Students and their parents/caregivers are discouraged from the routine presentation of gifts to school employees, on occasions such as holidays and/or the end of the school year. Students and their parents/caregiver may make contributions to the school in honor of a school employee. The School Committee considers it appropriate to write letters to staff members expressing gratitude or appreciation.

Public employees may not accept any gift worth \$50 or more that is given because of the position they hold. Public employees may accept gifts that are worth less than \$50. Asking for or accepting a gift because of your official position, or because of something you can do or have done in your official position, is prohibited. . Accepting a gift intended to reward past official action or to bring about future official action is illegal, as is giving such gifts. Accepting a gift given to you because of the municipal position you hold is also illegal. Meals, entertainment event tickets, golf, gift baskets, and payment of travel expenses can all be illegal gifts if given in connection with official action or position, as can anything worth \$50 or more. A number of smaller gifts together worth \$50 or more may also violate these sections.

Written disclosure is required using the “[Disclosure of Appearance of Conflict of Interest Form](#)” as required by G.L.C.268A§23(b)(3),

The law also prohibits supervisors from accepting gifts of any value from staff members.

Reference: Massachusetts General Law Reference:
M.G.L. 268A - Conduct of Public Officials, Employees

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4115](#) – Gifts to School Personnel
[Student Handbooks](#)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All employees must complete Conflict of Interest training, as needed and legally required, within 30 days of being notified to do so. The below summary provides examples and is intended to help employees understand how that law applies to them. This summary is not a substitute for legal advice, nor does it mention every aspect of the law that may apply in a particular situation. Employees can obtain free confidential advice about the conflict of interest law from the Commission's Legal Division.

The Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law, codified in Chapter 268A of the Massachusetts General Laws, is a comprehensive set of regulations designed to ensure that public employees act with undivided loyalty to the public interest. For public school employees, including teachers, administrators, and school committee members, the law places restrictions on their conduct both on and off the job to prevent conflicts between their private interests and their public duties.

Some key provisions as they relate to public school employees:

- Financial Interests and Participation: A public school employee may not participate in any "particular matter" in which they, an immediate family member (spouse, parents, children, or siblings), or a business they are affiliated with has a financial interest. This includes discussing, voting on, or delegating the matter. A financial interest can be large or small, positive or negative.
- Gifts and Gratuities: Public school employees are prohibited from asking for or accepting gifts and gratuities valued at \$50 or more that are given because of their official position or to influence their official actions.
- Misuse of Position and Public Resources: Employees cannot use their official position to obtain something of value (\$50 or more) for themselves or someone else that would not be properly available to others.
- Use of Public Resources: Public school employees are prohibited from using public resources (e.g., school telephones, computers, copy machines) for private business or political activities. For example, a teacher cannot use the school's resources to run a private tutoring business.
- Outside Employment and Contracts: A public school employee may not hold a second paid job if the responsibilities are "inherently incompatible" with their public duties. An employee generally cannot have a financial interest in any contract with the same school district, other than their regular employment contract.
- Political Activity: Public school employees have the right to engage in political activity on their own time and using their own resources. However, they cannot use their public position or public resources to engage in political activity, as this would be seen as securing an "unwarranted privilege."

No employee of the Westford Public Schools will engage in or have a financial interest in, directly or indirectly, any activity that conflicts or raises a reasonable question of conflict with their duties and responsibilities in the school system; nor will any staff member engage in any type of private business during school time or on school property.

Employees will not engage in work of any type where information concerning customer, client, or employer originates from any information available to them through school sources.

In cases where the situation results after initial employment, no employee shall be placed in any position where the direct administration or supervisory authority over the position is exercised by a spouse or relative of that employee.

Employees with questions about how Chapter 268A applies to them may contact the State Ethics Commission's legal Division.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 268A-Conduct of Public Officials, Employees

Westford Public Schools Policy:

[P4109](#) –Conflict of Interest

[P4303](#) - Tutoring for Pay

SCHOOL WELLNESS

Westford Public Schools is committed to providing a school environment that enhances the development of lifelong wellness practices by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. The Westford Public Schools Wellness Policy provides guidelines for teachers pertaining to the serving of food at school functions including but not limited to, fundraising, snacks, rewards and celebrations.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P5512](#) School Wellness Policy (Regulation)

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance in the workplace is prohibited. Violations of this prohibition will result in discharge or other appropriate action consistent with the Westford Public Schools' disciplinary processes that may require such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.

Reporting to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol is strictly prohibited by the Westford Public School System and will result in immediate corrective action up to and including termination. The Westford Public School System has the responsibility to protect its employees and students from the serious risks of substance abuse. The use of drugs or alcohol affects job performance and creates an unsafe environment for employees.

The term "drug" includes alcohol, illegal substances, over-the-counter medications, and controlled substances that may alter an employee's behavior or judgment.

Violation of the substance abuse policy includes reporting to work under the influence, or the use, possession, manufacture, purchase, transfer, or sale of a controlled or illegal substance on work/school premises. Upon suspicion that an employee may be abusing a substance, an investigation will be conducted and corrective action will follow, if deemed appropriate.

AllOneHealth

www.allonehealth.com, www.emiia.org

800-451-1834

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4201](#) - Drug Free Workplace

DRUG FREE WORKPLACE

It is Westford Public Schools' desire to provide a drug-free, healthful, and safe workplace. To promote this goal, employees are required to report to work in appropriate mental and physical condition to perform their jobs in a satisfactory manner. While on Westford premises and while conducting business-related activities off Westford Public Schools premises, no employee may use, possess, distribute, sell, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. The legal use of prescribed drugs is permitted on the job only if it does not impair an employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job effectively and in a safe manner that does not endanger other individuals in the workplace.

Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment, and/or required participation in a substance abuse rehabilitation or treatment program. Such violations may also have legal consequences.

Employees with questions or concerns about substance dependence or abuse are encouraged to use the resources of the Employee Assistance Program. They may also wish to discuss these matters with their supervisor or the Office of Human Resources to receive assistance or referrals to appropriate resources in the community.

Employees with drug or alcohol problems that have not resulted in, and are not the immediate subject of, disciplinary action may request approval to take unpaid time off to participate in a rehabilitation or treatment program through Westford Public School's health insurance benefit coverage. Leave may be granted if the employee agrees to abstain from use of the problem substance; abides by all Westford's policies, rules, and prohibitions relating to conduct in the workplace; and if granting the leave will not cause Westford any undue hardship.

Under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, an employee who performs work for a government contract or grant must notify Westford Public Schools of a criminal conviction for drug-related activity occurring in the workplace. The report must be made within five days of the conviction.

While Westford Public Schools recognizes that addiction may be an illness and will make reasonable accommodations to assist those employees who are seeking appropriate assistance to deal with their problems, it nonetheless prohibits employees from reporting to work with any illegal drugs or alcohol in their systems. Employees who engage in these prohibited activities are subject to disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: M.G.L. Chapter 94C – Drug Free School Zones

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4201](#) – Drug Free Workplace

TOBACCO/SMOKE FREE ENVIRONMENT

Westford Public Schools are dedicated to providing a healthy, comfortable, and productive environment for staff, students, and citizens. The School Committee believes that education has a central role in establishing patterns of behavior related to good health and shall take measures to help its students to resist tobacco use. Therefore, the School Committee has established the following policy:

Smoking and the use of tobacco products shall be prohibited on school district property. This shall include school buildings and school owned/contracted/leased vehicles. The fine for smoking is \$100.00. An employee can be cited for smoking on school property or in school vehicles by a Board of Health official or an agent of the Board of Health.

Any violation of this policy by staff shall be referred to the appropriate supervisor. First-time violators shall receive a verbal warning with a written notation being kept by the appropriate supervisor. A second violation will receive a written warning with a copy being placed in the personnel file. Further violations shall be considered insubordination and shall be dealt with accordingly and be based upon established policies and procedures for suspension and dismissal of staff. Employees may voluntarily attend approved “Stop Smoking Programs” which may be funded at School Committee expense.

Any violation of this policy by students shall be reported by the staff to the building Principal at the elementary/middle school level and the Assistant Principal/Deans at the high school level.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

AllOneHealth www.allonehealth.com www.emiaa.org

800-451-1834

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:37H-Publication of School Committee Rules and Regulations Relative to the Conduct of Teachers and Students

Town of Westford Tobacco Regulations Reference: Regulations affecting smoking and the sale, vending and distribution of tobacco in Westford

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4202](#) - Smoke Free Environment

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

Teachers and school staff working with students have a responsibility to maintain respectful and appropriate relationships with colleagues, students, parents, and members of the community. In order to maintain the respect and confidence of one’s colleagues, of students, of parents, and of members of the community, staff members should strive for the highest possible degree of professional conduct at all times. Whenever there is doubt about the intentions of a staff member in their relationships with a student(s), concerns should be brought to the attention of the Principal. Failure to do so may put students and the staff member at risk.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Westford Public Schools believes the teaching of cyber safety and responsible online behavior is essential in the lives of students. Therefore, safe and responsible behavior shall be explicitly taught at our schools and parents/caregivers are requested to reinforce this behavior at home. [P6302](#)

All employees are expected to use good judgment when engaging in social networking, bearing in mind that as employees of the district they are representative of the Westford Public Schools. Employees are advised to refrain from connecting with students and parents on social networking websites.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P6302](#) Acceptable Use of District-wide Computing Environment

CONFIDENTIALITY

Effective and appropriate communication between administrators, staff, parents and students is vital to the success of the educational process. In order to ensure that such communication can take place in confidence, it is necessary to protect the right to privacy of students and staff.

Individuals associated with students in any capacity shall: (1) Not disclose confidential information about students obtained in the course of professional services unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law. (2) Not accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity that will require the disclosure of confidential information that has been gained by reason of official position. (3) Not knowingly making disparaging, false, or malicious statements about staff or students. (4) Not withhold pertinent information that is not confidential.

Any violation of this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including immediate suspension or dismissal.

Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations 603 CMR 23.00: Student Records

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P5507](#) – HIV/AIDS; [P6111](#) – Student Records; [P6301](#) – District Computing Environment; [P7109](#) – New Member Orientation

RELIGIOUS EXPRESSIONS

Teachers and school administrators, when acting in those capacities, are representatives of the state and are prohibited by the establishment clause from soliciting or encouraging religious activity, and from participating in such activity with students. Teachers and administrators also are prohibited from discouraging activity because of its religious content, and from soliciting or encouraging antireligious activity.

Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion, including the Bible or other scripture: the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries all are permissible public school subjects.

Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature, and social studies. Although public schools may teach about religious holidays, including their religious aspects, and may celebrate the secular aspects of holidays, schools may not observe holidays as religious events or promote such observances by students.

Though schools must be neutral with respect to religion, they may play an active role with respect to teaching civic values and virtue, and the moral code that holds us together as a community. The fact that some of these values are held also by religions does not make it unlawful to teach them in school.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM

The presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom should be on an informative basis. The teachers must guard against giving their personal opinions on sectarian or political questions or any other controversial issues until the students have had the opportunity to find, collect, and assemble factual material on the subject; to interpret the data without prejudice; to reconsider assumptions and claims; and to reach their own conclusions. By refraining from expressing personal views before and during the period of research and study, the teacher is encouraging the students to search for truth and to think for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled, weighed, and relationships seen before drawing inferences or conclusions, is among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P6121](#) - Teaching About Controversial Issues.

SECTION IV – ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

SALARIES – SALARY SCHEDULE PROVISIONS

Initial salaries are established at the time of hiring, consistent with any contractual scales or salary guidelines that exist for the position.

Refer to your negotiated contract.

SENIORITY

Seniority for the purpose of this handbook is the length of continuous employment as an employee in the Westford Public Schools measured from the date that the employee entered said bargaining unit or agreement. Please refer to the negotiated agreement for conditions of seniority.

Refer to your negotiated contract.

AGENCY FEE

Refer to your negotiated contract.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Refer to your negotiated contract.

ABSENCES

Absences that do not require prior approval from your supervisor should be submitted via an online absence management and substitute placement system.

PERSONAL DAYS

Refer to your negotiated contract.

HOLIDAYS

Teachers and certain other salaried staff who work on a school calendar basis do not receive separate paid holidays. Full time (12 month) employees are eligible for paid holidays as specified in the various union contracts and agreements. Westford Public Schools recognizes the following holidays.

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Columbus Day
Presidents' Day	Veterans' Day
Patriots' Day	Thanksgiving
Good Friday *	Day after Thanksgiving
Memorial Day	Christmas
Independence Day	Juneteenth *

**Based on school calendar*

VACATION DAYS

Refer to your negotiated contract.

LEAVE REQUEST PROCEDURES

Leave Requests are to be submitted to the building Principal or direct supervisor via the District's online absence management app (Frontline). Bereavement and Jury Duty Leave must be supported by appropriate documentation such as a copy of the obituary, court notification or other acceptable proof. A request that extends a long weekend, school vacation break or religious holiday celebration must receive prior approval from the Superintendent of Schools. Included with the request must be a statement explaining the purpose for the request. Requests must be approved by the Superintendent prior to the date or period of time being requested. Refer to your negotiated contract.

SICK LEAVE

Regular full-time employees and part-time employees are eligible to accrue sick leave. Sick leave is to be used in the event of personal illness or eligible family leave, non-job related injury or disability. Sick leave may be used for doctor's visits that cannot be scheduled outside of normal work hours. Refer to your negotiated agreement regarding the provisions of sick leave.

SICK LEAVE BANK

Refer to your negotiated contract.

BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Employees should consult their respective collective bargaining contracts and agreements to ascertain the amount of bereavement leave to which they are entitled.

EXTENDED LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Unpaid leaves of absence may be requested as specified in union contracts/agreements and are subject to approval of the Superintendent of Schools. A leave of up to one year without pay may be granted to professional status employees. If such leave is granted, the employee shall notify the Superintendent in writing of the intention to return and the date of return by March 15 of the leave year.

Refer to your negotiated contract.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

Refer to your negotiated contract.

AFTER SCHOOL ASSISTANCE TO PUPILS

Staff members who elect to participate in afterschool clubs, activities, or extra help are strongly encouraged to ensure the safe departure of students from school or the location of the activity. Staff members are asked to supervise the safe departure of students to the school bus, caregiver, guardian, or other appropriate adult, or have safely left the premises in their own vehicle. Students should not be left on school premises unsupervised under any circumstances.

Payment for stipends for after school clubs and activities; please refer to your negotiated contract.

MEETINGS

Refer to your negotiated contract.

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

Westford Public Schools encourages all employees to participate in professional development activities to pursue higher educational programs leading to advanced degrees or certificates. To this end, tuition reimbursement benefits have been negotiated for certain employee groups and information is outlined in your respective union contract and employee agreement.

COURSE VOUCHERS

Refer to your negotiated contract.

EDUCATOR LICENSURE

Please refer to the [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)

SECTION V – SOME STATE & FEDERAL LAWS APPLYING TO ALL PERSONNEL

MASSACHUSETTS PARENTAL LEAVE ACT (PLA):

The PLA requires that an employee on leave be restored to his/her previous or a similar position upon return to employment following leave. That position must have the same status, pay, length of service credit and seniority as the position the employee held prior to the leave. If an employee's job was changed temporarily because of pregnancy prior to leave (e.g. hours were reduced or duties were changed as an accommodation) then the employee should be restored to the same or similar position held prior to such temporary leave.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: M.G.L Chapter 149 § 105d

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

The Westford Public Schools follow the federal guidelines under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). FMLA requires employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave to "eligible" employees for certain family and medical reasons. Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, and for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if there are at least 50 employees within 75 miles.

Other Provisions: Special rules apply to employees of local education agencies. Generally, these rules provide for FMLA leave to be taken in blocks of time when intermittent leave is needed or the leave is required near the end of a school term.

U.S. Department of Labor Websites: <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/> <http://www.dol.gov> under section Special Rules concerning Employees of Local Educational Agencies: Title 29 Chapter 28 Subchapter 2618 Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4118](#) – Family & Medical Leave
[WPS Required documentation](#)

MILITARY LEAVE

When an employee is called to military service, the employee must give advance written notice to the school district of the military leave. Written notice of service may include copies of orders or other written documentation with respect to being called to service.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: Website: <http://www.mass.gov> under Chapter 33: Section 59.

JURY DUTY

Westford Public Schools encourages employees to fulfill their civic responsibilities by serving jury duty when required. Employers in Massachusetts are required to pay an employee's regular wages for any work missed for the first three days of service. This is true for full-time, part-time, temporary, or casual employees. After the third day, the state compensates jurors at the rate of \$50 per day.

Employees must show the jury duty summons to their supervisor as soon as possible so that the supervisor may make arrangements to accommodate their absence. Of course, employees are expected to report for work whenever the court schedule permits.

Employees are granted time off with pay to serve Jury Duty. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the Human Resources Department for submission to the Payroll Department. Any compensation received by the Court must also be submitted to the Human Resources Department for submission to the Director of School Finance.

NON-DISCRIMINATION/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

Westford Public Schools does not tolerate discrimination against students, parents, employees or the general public on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, pregnancy related conditions, pregnancy status, disability, homelessness, religion, age or immigration status. Westford Public Schools is also committed to maintaining a school environment free of harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, pregnancy related conditions, pregnancy status, age, genetic information, ethnic background, ancestry, disability, or any category protected by state or federal law. In addition, the District provides equal access to all designated youth groups. Consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, the District also does not discriminate against students on the basis of homelessness.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: M.G.L. 71:39 Restriction on Information Required from Applicants for Positions.

PROFESSIONAL TEACHER STATUS/SCHOOL NURSE STATUS

As cited in Massachusetts General law, a teacher, school librarian, school adjustment counselor, school social worker, or school psychologist who has served in Westford Public Schools for the three previous consecutive school years shall be considered a teacher, and shall be entitled to professional teacher status.

The Superintendent, upon the recommendation of the Principal, may award professional teacher status to any teacher who has served in the Principal's school for not less than one year, or to a teacher who has attained professional status in any other public school district in the commonwealth. A teacher without professional teacher status shall be notified in writing on or before May 15th whenever such person is not to be employed for the following school year. Unless such notice is given, a teacher without professional status shall be deemed to be appointed for the following school year.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: M.G.L. 71:41 – Professional Status for Teachers, Contracts, Good Cause Protection for Principals; Dismissals of Principals by Superintendent

M.G.L. 71:42 – Dismissal or Demotion of Employees by Principal and Superintendent; Review and Arbitration of Dismissal

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4501](#) – Professional Teacher Status

Refer to your negotiated contract.

HARASSMENT

The School Committee is committed to maintaining a work and educational environment free from all forms of harassing conduct. Harassment including, but not limited to, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sex, creed, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability will not be tolerated in the Westford Public Schools. All employees, students, contracted vendors, and other members of the school community will conduct themselves in an appropriate manner with respect, dignity, courtesy, and fair treatment for all individuals while on school grounds, school property, or property within the jurisdiction of the school district, school buses, or attending or engaging in school activities.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: M.G.L. 151B:3A – Policy on Sexual Harassment Website: www.eeoc.gov

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P4203](#)– Harassment

CONVICTED OF A CRIME

Refer to 603 CMR 7.14 (8a)

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Westford School Systems and the Westford Police Department agree to coordinate their efforts to prevent substance abuse (defined as illegal drugs and alcohol) by the students of Westford and to prevent violence-involving students of Westford.

Furthermore, we agree to respond effectively and cooperatively for everyone's protection from incidents of school delinquency and criminal behavior. The joint effort of cooperative response will focus on incidents, which take place on school grounds, within school property or at school sponsored events.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Mandated reporters who are staff members of schools, medical facilities, or other public or private institutions, may notify the Department of Social Services directly or notify the person in charge of the facility (or their designee) who is then responsible for contacting the Department of Social Services. Mandated reporters must make an oral report by immediately telephoning the local Department of Social Services area office or the hotline after business hours. In addition, a written report must be submitted within 48 hours.

These reports should contain (when available) the child's name, date of birth, address, information on the child's caregiver/guardian, the nature and extent of the neglect, abuse, and/or injuries, the manner in which this information was learned of, and any other pertinent information.

Mandated reporters are also required to submit their name, contact information, and relationship with the child.

Massachusetts law states that any mandated reporter who fails to file required oral and written reports may be punished by a fine of up to \$1000.00. Every Westford Public Schools employee is required to complete annual training on DCF's mandated reporter protocol.

Under the law, mandated reporters who file a report in good faith are protected from liability in any civil or criminal action filed in connection to the report.

Massachusetts General Law Reference: M.G.L. Chapter 119, Section 51A – Public Welfare

The Mandated Reporter Statute: C.119 51-A

SECTION VI – ITEMS PERTAINING TO PUPILS & OTHERS

MEDICATION POLICY

The Westford Public Schools shall follow the Medication Administration Protocol from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Regulation 105 CMR 210.000. The Head Nurse shall adapt, without changing the context, this protocol to make it relevant to the Westford Public Schools. This adaptation shall be approved by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. A notebook containing all school health policies, regulations, protocols, and forms will be available in each school nurse's office.

All prescription and over the counter medications needed by staff during the school day should be kept in the original container in a secure location. To ensure student safety, staff should report any missing or lost medication immediately to an administrator.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P5503](#) – Administration of Prescription Medications

CHILDREN ACCOMPANYING STAFF TO THE WORKPLACE

In order to protect the safety and well-being of employees and students, and to eliminate liability to the district, children of staff are prohibited from being in the school building during the work day.

PETS/ANIMALS IN THE WORKPLACE

Pets/animals are not allowed in school buildings in order to protect the health and safety of employees and students, to eliminate liability to the district and to maintain a professional and clean environment. Exceptions can be made for curriculum related purposes at the discretion of the building principal. Service animals, as defined by the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, are permissible for use.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P5513](#) Animals in Schools

HEALTH & EMERGENCY INFORMATION SHEETS

A nurse in each school building will be responsible for the collection and maintenance of all staff and student health and emergency information sheets. This information should be disseminated to appropriate staff.

FIELD TRIPS

Students participating in field trips, sponsored by the public schools, shall submit caregiver approval in writing prior to the event. School Committee policies detail the procedures for all field trips. It shall be the policy of Westford Public Schools to obtain all available Criminal Offender Record Information (C.O.R.I.) from the Criminal History Systems Board and Statewide Applicant Fingerprint Identification System (SAFIS) for employee(s) or volunteer(s) who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children over the course of the field trip. Staff members are reminded that field trips should relate to the appropriate curriculum and enhance the learning experience.

“The Department of Public Health grants registration to the Westford Public Schools for the limited purpose of permitting the delegation of prescription medications to unlicensed, properly trained responsible adult(s) for students on field trips and short term school events, when a school nurse (RN) is not available...”

(Adapted from the Westford Public Schools Medication Administration Protocol and www.mass.gov/dph/regs/reg105cmr210.pdf).

Teachers should consult their building administrator(s) and the school nurse for Field Trip Protocol regarding medication of students.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P5404](#) - Student Field Trips; [P5405](#) Student Travel; [P6120](#) - Field Trips; [P4120](#) - Criminal Offender Record Information; [P4503](#) – Fingerprint Based Criminal History Checks
[WPS: Field Trip request form](#)

STUDENT RECORDS

State and federal laws governing school records allow parents and legal guardians to inspect and amend the school records of their children in accordance with 603 CMR, Section 23.08 of the Massachusetts Department of Education student regulations. Students may also inspect their own records upon reaching the age of 14 or Grade 9. A professionally qualified school staff person shall be available, upon request, to interpret any of the contents. No information in a student record shall be given to a third party without the specific written consent of the student and/or his or her parents. A student's temporary record is destroyed after notification after five years. A student's permanent record is retained for 60 years.

Access to student records is available through the schools Administrative Offices.

Teachers, nurses, guidance counselors, and administrators are obligated to be current on the Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504, Title 1 Reports, and any other correspondence relating to the academic, emotional, and/or medical concerns of each student in their school or class.

Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations 603CMR, Section 23.08: Student Records Westford Public Schools Policy: [P6111](#) - Student Records; [P4111](#) – Review of Student Files

SALES THROUGH SCHOOLS

Staff and Students shall not sell materials or products for private gain in school buildings or on school property. However, they may sell tickets and materials for school-sponsored events with approval of the Principal or designee. Students will not solicit staff (either in or out of school) to purchase tickets or merchandise of any sort, including those for school-sponsored activities.

Students/staff/vendors are prohibited from selling competitive food during school lunch hours.

RESEARCH STUDIES INVOLVING STUDENTS

If school personnel or students are the subjects of a research study conducted within a school building, then approval for such a study must be given by the School Committee which will evaluate the ethical procedures involved. If the research study is conducted at the high school or by a high school student attending Westford Academy, then approval must be obtained by the Institutional Review Board (IRD) that has been established on-site to ensure the ethical treatment of subjects

HOME INSTRUCTION (PROLONGED ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT)

When homebound instruction is under way, the program design for each student is determined by his or her educational plan and consists primarily of academic tasks which are coordinated by the regular/special education teacher(s) and the home instruction teacher.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P6201](#) – Homebound Instruction

EMERGENCY RESPONSE MANUAL

All employees should be familiar with their *individual school plan on Crisis Response Management*.

HOMEWORK POLICY

The School Committee recommends the appropriate assignment of homework. Homework should be a useful adjunct to in-school learning. It should be an application or adaptation of a classroom experience; it should not be assigned for disciplinary purposes. Teachers should use discretion in the assignment of homework prior to weekends, vacations, and holidays. Homework and projects should not be assigned so that the due dates will conflict with the celebration of any religious holidays.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P6112](#) – Homework

SCHEDULING OF TESTS ON RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Teachers shall reference the Westford Public Schools Calendar when scheduling homework and tests.

DISMISSAL OF STUDENT BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL

In the event a student should be sent home during the school day due to illness or disciplinary reasons, they must be accompanied home by a Caregiver/legal guardian or a designated person. The student must be kept in school until the end of the session if a parent/legal guardian cannot be reached.

A student of legal age may transport themselves home.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P5110](#) – Dismissal of Student by School Personnel

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Teachers shall adhere to the educational philosophy of the Westford Public Schools. Curriculum and Instruction shall be designed as detailed per Westford Public Schools Policy.

Westford Public Schools sanctions the use of audio-visual material for curriculum-related purposes only. Instructional AV material should be viewed with advanced planning and pre and post-viewing activities and/or study guides. This information will be available for administrator's review at the beginning of the unit of study.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P6101](#) – Educational Philosophy; [P6103](#) – Curriculum & Instruction

DISCIPLINE

The primary goal of our disciplinary policies and procedures is to ensure that the student develops a sense of responsibility for his/her own actions. If we accept the premise that we are preparing students to take their own place in adult life, then we must also prepare them for the reality that the adult world does not excuse irresponsibility, forgetfulness, or poor judgment; nor does it look with favor on the individual who does not acknowledge the rights of others. Disciplinary policy should be viewed as a vehicle through which self-discipline is developed. Sending students to the office for disciplinary purposes should be held to an absolute minimum. However, staff members will report to building administrators any student behavior that they feel may be drug or alcohol induced. The use of drugs or the consumption of any alcoholic beverage on school property or at school functions is prohibited. Under no condition is a student to be stationed in the corridor for disciplinary reasons.

Westford Public Schools Policy: [P5301](#) - Student Conduct; [P5312](#) - Corporal Punishment; [P5302](#) - Student Handbooks; [P5314](#) – Suspension, Exclusion, Expulsion; [P6301](#) - District Computing Environment; [P6302](#) - District Acceptable Internet use & specific school handbooks

ADDENDUM TO TITLE IX FOR ALL HANDBOOKS