

ELEMENTARY HANDBOOK 2026-2027



Westford Public Schools
23 Depot Road

Westford, MA 01886

TRANSLATIONS

Amharic: የዚህን የተማሪ መመሪያ መጽሐፍ የተተረጎመውን ስናቀርብልዎ ደስተኞች ነን። የተተረጎመ ቅጂ ወይም ማንኛውንም ተዛማጅ ግንኙነት ወይም መረጃ ለመቀበል ከፈለጉ ለባክዎን የትምህርት ቤቱን ዋና ቢሮ ያነጋግሩ።

French: Nous serions heureux de vous fournir la version traduite de ce manuel de l'étudiant. Si vous souhaitez recevoir une copie traduite ou toute communication ou information pertinente, veuillez contacter le bureau principal de l'école.

Gujarati: અમે તમને આ સ્ટુડન્ટ હેન્ડબુકનું ભાષાતંત્રિ ત સસં કરણ પ્રદાન કરવા માટે પ્રસન્ન થઈશું. જો તમને અનુવાદિત નકલ, અથવા અન્ય કોઈપણ સબ ધિધિત જાહેર ાત અથવા માહિતી મળે વામાં રસ હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને મખ્ય કાર્યાલય લયનો સપં ક્ કરો.

Hindi: हमें आपको इस छात्र पुस्तिका का अनुवादित संस्करण प्रदान करने में खुशी होगी। यदि आप अनुवादित प्रति, या कोई प्रासंगिक संचार या जानकारी प्राप्त करने में रुचि रखते हैं, तो कृपया स्कूल के मुख्य कार्यालय से संपर्क करें।

Khmer: យើងមានសុចក្តីសោមនស្សសរីរិកយក្នុងការផ្តល់ឱ្យអ្នកនូវកំណបនសៀវភៅសិសស។ ប្រសិនបើអ្នកចាប់អារម្មណ៍ក្នុងការទទួលបានច្បាប់ចម្លងដល់បានបកប្រែការបកស្រាយព័ត៌មានដល់ពាក់ព័ន្ធដល់ទៀតសូមទាក់ទងការិយាល័យផ្ទះ។

Korean: 이 학생 핸드북의 번역본을 제공하게 된 것을 기쁘게 생각합니다. 번역본이나 기타 관련 공지 또는정보를 받고 싶으시면 본사로 문의하십시오.

Portuguese: Teremos o prazer de lhe fornecer uma versão traduzida deste Manual do Aluno. Se tiver interesse em receber uma cópia traduzida, ou qualquer outra comunicação ou informação correlata, entre em contato com o escritório principal.

Pashto: موږ به خوښ يو چې تاسو ته د دې زده کونکي لاسي کتاب ژباړل شوی نسخه چمتو کړو. که تاسو د ژباړل شوي کاپي، يا کوم اړوند ارتباط يا معلوماتو تر لاسه کولو کي لياالتيا لرئ، مهرباني وکړئ د ښوونځي اصلي دفتر سره اړيکه نويښی.

Russian: Мы будем рады предоставить вам переведенную версию настоящего справочника для студентов. Если вы заинтересованы в получении переведенной копии или любого другого сообщения или информации, пожалуйста, свяжитесь с главным офисом школы.

Simplified Chinese: 我们很乐意为您提供学生手册的翻译版本。如果您有兴趣收到学生手册的翻译版本或任何其他相关通知或信息,请联系助理学监办公室

Spanish: Nos complacería proporcionarle la versión traducida de este Manual del Estudiante. Si le interesa recibir una copia traducida, o cualquier comunicación o información pertinente, comuníquese con la oficina principal

Traditional Chinese: 我們很樂意為您提供學生手冊的翻譯版本。如果您有興趣收到學生手冊的翻譯版本或任何其他相關通知或信息,請聯繫助理學監辦公室

Turkish: Size bu Öğrenci El Kitabının tercüme edilmiş bir versiyonunu sunmaktan memnuniyet duyarız. Çevrilmiş bir kopya veya ilgili başka bir duyuru veya bilgi almakla ilgileniyorsanız, lütfen ana ofisle iletişime geçin.

Ukrainian: Ми будемо раді надати вам перекладену версію цього посібника для студентів. Якщо ви зацікавлені в отриманні перекладеної копії або будь-якого іншого пов'язаного оголошення чи інформації, будь ласка, зв'яжіться з головним офісом.

Vietnamese: Chúng tôi rất vui được cung cấp cho bạn bản dịch của Sổ tay Sinh viên này. Nếu bạn muốn nhận bản dịch hoặc bất kỳ thông tin hoặc thông tin liên quan nào, vui lòng liên hệ với văn phòng chính của trường.

Dear Parents, Guardians and Caregivers,

We extend a warm welcome to you as the new school year begins, and are looking forward to getting to know your children and helping them to reach their full potential.

The purpose of this handbook is to share important general information about policies and procedures of Westford's elementary schools. The procedures in this handbook are consistent throughout the system and are based upon the policies of Westford Public Schools, which are noted with reference numbers. The complete text of policies can be accessed [online](#). Policy manuals are also available for reference in each school office. In addition to this handbook, principals will send home information about school procedures and the Code of Conduct, which reflect the unique culture and character of each school.

Please take a few moments to read the contents of this handbook and review pertinent information with your child. The handbook contains many answers to questions you may have about day-to-day procedures and policies and is a useful reference to keep on hand. Please follow your child's school procedures for indicating your permissions for community and world publishing.

As partners in your child's education, we look forward to a successful and rewarding 2026-27 school year.

Sincerely,

Elementary Administrative Team

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STRATEGIC DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT PLAN



WESTFORD
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Strategic District Improvement Plan 2027-2030

Our Overarching Mission and Values

We value the development of curious lifelong learners who are responsible, empathetic members of the community, demonstrating innovation through a wide variety of opportunities within inclusive, joyful learning environments that embrace their variability and honor their diversity. We believe in preparing our students for active, positive participation as both local and global citizens by developing and fostering creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Core Values



Strategic Objectives

- 1. Ensure Equity:** Continue to infuse our equity work into our curriculum, instruction and assessment—the heart of what we do—to ensure high-quality learning experiences for every student
- 2. Ensure Equity:** Assess our organizational structures to ensure equitable learning environments for all of our students
- 3. Promote Social Emotional Wellbeing:** Prioritize mental health and wellness for all of our students and staff by exploring strategies to minimize academic and or social emotional “pressure valves” that negatively impact performance

- Westford Academy - Blanchard - Stony Brook - Abbot - Crisafulli -
- Day - Miller - Nabnasset - Robinson - ROUTES -

WESTFORD ELEMENTARY CORE VALUES

The Pre-K-5 elementary administrative team has consistent core values so each of six school communities can show our Westford **SPiRiT**. Throughout the school year classroom lessons and whole school meetings will incorporate the following core values.

S safety	Students of the Westford Public Schools will demonstrate SAFETY . They will honor others' space and property, and will keep their hands, feet, and other objects to themselves. They will exhibit self-control by walking as they travel throughout the school building, by using an appropriate voice level for the setting, and by following directions and instructions given by adults the first time. They will use words and adult intervention to solve problems.
P erseverance	Students of the Westford Public Schools will demonstrate PERSEVERANCE . They will set goals and strive to reach them each day. They will work hard and not give up even when something is difficult. They will demonstrate a growth mindset when met with challenging tasks and activities. They will keep a positive attitude.
I nclusion	Students of the Westford Public Schools will demonstrate INCLUSION . They have a responsibility to break down barriers by inviting new people into teams, circle of friends, and experiences as they work to be a unified, collaborative community. They will show acceptance to everyone around them.
R espect	Students of the Westford Public Schools will demonstrate RESPECT . They will think about others before speaking or taking any action. They will appreciate the contributions of others, while showing respect for themselves, other people, personal and/or community property, and the environment. They will treat others the way that they want to be treated.
I ntegrity	Students of the Westford Public Schools will demonstrate INTEGRITY . They will do the right thing, even when no one is watching. They will show good character. They will be honest, fair, and humble. They will exercise their best effort and judgment in all activities in which they participate and will set goals that promote positive academic, social, and personal development.
T eamwork	Students of the Westford Public Schools will demonstrate TEAMWORK . They will encourage others to do their best. They will listen to the ideas of others, while also sharing their ideas to ensure the best end product. They will show empathy, considering another person's situation, feelings, or motives before speaking or taking action. They will compromise when necessary. They will behave in a manner that allows all others to enjoy a safe, positive learning community.

DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION**978-692-5560**

Superintendent of Schools Christopher Chew, EdD	cchew@westfordk12.us Extension 2102
Assistant Superintendent Courtney Moran, M.Ed.	cmoran@westfordk12.us Extension 2104
Director of Special Education and Social Emotional Learning Melissa Boylan, M. Ed.	mboylan@westfordk12.us Extension 2111
Title VI and Title IX Coordinator Courtney Moran	cmoran@westfordk12.us Extension 2104
Homeless Coordinator/504 Melissa Boylan	mboylan@westfordk12.us Extension 2111
Director of Finance Jenny Lin, CPA	jlin@westfordk12.us Extension 2106
Transportation Coordinator Jennifer Piper	jpiper@westfordk12.us Extension 2119
Food Services Director Colleen Wallace	cwallace@westfordk12.us Extension 2109

WESTFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEEschool-committee@westfordma.gov

Mrs. Kathryn Clear, Chair	kclear@westfordk12.us
Mrs. Valery Young, Vice Chair	vyoung@westfordk12.us
Mr. Thomas Laflamme	tlaflamme@westfordk12.us
Mr. William McDonald	wmcdonald@westfordk12.us
Ms. Laurie Oliver, Secretary	loliver@westfordk12.us
Ms. Shana Farnsworth	sfarnsworth@westfordk12.us
Ms. Jessica Silverman	jsilverman@westfordk12.us

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DIRECTORY

SCHOOL	ADMINISTRATOR NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION
Abbot	Peter Myerson, Principal TBH , Assistant Principal Nancy Beckwith, Admin. Assistant TBH , Admin. Assistant	School Website 25 Depot Street Westford, MA 01886 978 692-5580
Crisafulli	Sharon Kennelly, Principal Samantha Holmgren, Assistant Principal Amy Dulong, Admin. Assistant Laura Barbella, Admin. Assistant	School Website 13 Robinson Road Westford, MA 01886 978 392-4483
Day	Chris Louis Sardella, Principal Chrissy Michaud, Assistant Principal Kathy Norton, Admin. Assistant Radhika Chintapalli, Admin. Assistant	School Website 75 East Prescott Street Westford, MA 01886 978 692-5591
Miller	TBH , Principal Caitlyn Johnson , Assistant Principal Leslie Howard, Admin. Assistant Radhika Chintapalli, Admin. Assistant	School Website 1 Mitchell Way Westford, MA 01886 978 392-4476
Nabnasset	Melissa Richard, Principal TBH , Assistant Principal Cindy Santana, Admin. Assistant TBH , Admin. Assistant	School Website 99 Plain Road Westford, MA 01886 978 692-5583
Robinson	Kevin LaCoste, Principal Gina Kutarina, Assistant Principal Kelley Holston, Admin. Assistant Laura Barbella, Admin. Assistant	School Website 60 Concord Road Westford, MA 01886 978 692-5586

DISCLAIMER: Westford Public Schools reserves the right to make necessary changes in the student handbook

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Westford Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, homelessness, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability in admission to, access to, employment in, or treatment in its programs and activities. Accordingly, no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study of such public school or in employment in its services in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI); on the basis of sex, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; on the basis of disability, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II); or on the basis of age, in accordance with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (Age Discrimination Act) and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967. Nor does it discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, gender identity or sexual orientation, in accordance with Chapter 622 of the Acts of 1971 (M.G.L. c. 76 s. 5) and M.G.L. Chapter 151B. The District also does not discriminate on the basis of homelessness in a manner consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act.

GENERAL INFORMATION

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL CALENDAR 2026-2027

STARTING AND DISMISSAL SCHEDULE

School	Start	Dismissal	Early Dismissal
W Academy G9-12	8:00 a.m.	2:20 p.m.	11:25 a.m.
Stony Brook G6-8	8:00 a.m.	2:20 p.m.	11:25 a.m.
Blanchard G6-8	8:00 a.m.	2:20 p.m.	11:25 a.m.
Abbot G3-5	8:55 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	12:10 p.m.
Crisafulli G3-5	8:55 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	12:10 p.m.
Day G3-5	8:55 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	12:10 p.m.
Miller PK-2	9:05 a.m.	3:10 p.m.	12:20 p.m.
Nabnasset PK-2	9:05 a.m.	3:10 p.m.	12:20 p.m.
Miller & NAB Only A.M. preK	9:05 a.m.	11:35 a.m.	11:35 a.m.
Miller & NAB Only P.M. preK	12:40 p.m.	3:10 p.m.	No School
Robinson K-2	9:00 a.m.	3:05 p.m.	12:15 p.m.
Robinson preK Only A.M. preK	9:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	12:15p.m.
Robinson preK Only P.M. preK	12:35 p.m.	3:05 p.m.	No School

****ATTENTION VISITORS****

All visitors must enter the school through the front door. Entry is permitted once the visitor identifies themselves and provides reason for visit by using the door buzzer security system. All visitors must proceed to the Main Office, where they are asked to sign in and obtain a visitor badge. You may be asked to provide identification upon entering the building. We appreciate your cooperation to ensure the safety of our students and staff

HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Home/school communication is a vital component of school success. Forms of communication may include newsletters, email messages, automated telephone messages, web sites, and parent/caregiver nights. The Superintendent of Schools will alert parent/caregiver through email or an automated phone message using contact information listed on the student's emergency card. If contact information changes, please contact your child's school office.

We believe that strong partnerships between families and school staff are built on open, respectful, and positive communication. When questions or concerns arise, we encourage you to reach out directly to the appropriate person listed below. Working together, we can ensure the best possible support and success for every student.

Subject	Who to contact:
Classroom questions or concerns	Classroom teacher who can direct you to additional support, as needed (e.g. counselor or administration)
Scheduling concerns	Prek-5 building administrators (Principal/ Assistant Principal)
Curriculum questions or concerns	Classroom teacher or building administrator
Special Education questions or concerns	If your child has a special education liaison, please reach out to them first. If not, then contact the school's assistant principal
Behavioral concerns	Classroom teacher or school counselor
Social, emotional, personal or family issues	School counselor
Health issues	School nurse
Homeless or temporary housing (McKinney Vento Status)	Principal/Assistant Principal to inform them of your status
Attendance	Call the school absence line or main office.
Report Cards (accessing)	Administrative Assistant
Harassment or discrimination concerns	Principal
Bullying	Principal/Assistant Principal
504's	Principal
Transportation	Dee Bus if related to bus or van concern. For bus passes or related issues contact the director of transportation
Food Service	School Cafeteria Manager and then Director of Food Services.
Ethics	Massachusetts State Ethics Commission (888) 485-4766

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

Research indicates a high correlation between the number of days absent and academic achievement. Habitual absenteeism may contribute to low academic achievement. The Westford School Committee and the Westford Public Schools believe in the importance of regular school attendance. Except in cases of illness and extenuating circumstances, students are expected to be present when school is in session. Parents/Caregivers are strongly urged not to schedule family vacations during school days and not to extend the scheduled vacation periods. In addition to compromising the attendance law, family vacations interrupt the educational process of each course in ways that make-up work cannot reverse. Teachers are not required to provide advance assignments to students, and the school and the individual teacher(s) are not required to assume responsibility for providing individual tutoring or extensive individual help for the student when they return.

According to Massachusetts General Law (School Attendance, Chapter 76), all children between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) must attend school, and a school district may excuse up to seven (7) day sessions or fourteen (14) half day sessions in any period of six (6) months. The law also states that Parents/Caregivers must be provided each year with the instructions for calling a designated phone number at a designated time to inform the school of the absence of a student and the reason for the absence. In addition, Parents/Caregivers must provide the school with a home, work, or other emergency telephone number so that they may be contacted during the school day so the school may call and inquire about said absence.

Parent/Caregiver and School Responsibilities

Parents/Caregivers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child under their control attends school daily. When, due to unexcused absences, a student has missed two (2) or more periods in five (5) school days, or has missed five (5) or more school days in the school year, the parents/caregivers will be notified and provided an opportunity to meet with the Principal, or Principal's designee, to develop an action plan to address the student's school attendance. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human services, housing and non-profit agencies.

Pupil absence notices to parents/caregivers and pupil absence meetings with parents/caregivers will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 76, §1B. Each Principal or designee will notify a student's Parents/Caregivers within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the Parents/Caregivers have not informed the school of the absence.

Additionally, under Massachusetts General Laws chapter 119, section 51A, a report of educational neglect can be filed with the Department of Child and Family Services (DCF), on behalf of a child under the age of eighteen (18), if a child is not attending school on a regular basis.

Truancy

Students who are absent without legitimate excuses are considered truant. Truancy and leaving the school building without permission are serious offenses and will be discussed with the parent or caregiver.

A student who is considered a habitually truant may be considered for an application for a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA), which is filed in the Juvenile Court.

Absence due to family vacation

Families are strongly discouraged from taking vacation while school is in session. A packet of work from the teacher cannot replace what happens in the classroom; therefore, it should not be requested.

If any planned travel will result in a student's absence for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, a parent/caregiver must proactively un-enroll their child from school and identify the school in which they will enroll their child during said absence.

Reporting a Student Absence

Whenever a child is going to be absent from school, the parent/caregiver is required to call the school on the date of absence. The absentee line is available twenty four (24) hours per day. When calling the school, please note the reason for absence (sickness, medical appointment, religious holiday). Voice mail will take the message when office personnel are not available to answer the telephone. In the event that a child's name is on the school's absentee list and a telephone call has not been received, the office will call the child's home. If verification is not received from home, the office will refer to the list of names supplied by the parent/caregiver to call for verification. It is the parent/caregivers responsibility to provide a home, work or other emergency numbers so they can be contacted during the school day with inquiries about absences. If verification is still not received, the school may call the Westford Police Department to investigate the absence.

Note: Students may not attend night events (club/activities, concerts, STEM Fair, PTO Activities, etc.) if they were absent that school day due to illness.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Examples of **excused absences** are absences for illness of the student (a doctor's certificate is required for an absence of five (5) days or more), death in the student's family, observance of a religious holiday, court appointments, or school sanctioned absences. An **unexcused absence/tardy** occurs when school-age children are absent from school, *with or without parent/caregiver approval*, for any other reasons, including, but not limited to, family vacation, doing errands, etc. When, due to unexcused absences, a student has missed two (2) or more periods in five (5) school days, or has missed five (5) or more school days in the school year, the school will notify the parent/caregiver of the attendance record. Following, a meeting will be conducted with the parents/caregivers and student to develop a plan to address the student's attendance.

Tardiness

Being on time is everyone's responsibility. Children are tardy if they arrive after the start of the school day and must report to the office before entering classrooms to sign in as tardy.

Returning to school after an absence

When a student is absent from school five consecutive days or more due to illness a note from a physician stating the reason for absence should be forwarded to school upon the child's return.

Observance of a religious holiday (School Committee [P5114](#))

Observance of a religious holiday shall be viewed as valid justification for student absence, late homework/project submission and delayed testing, only when the teacher has been notified of the observance date no later than two weeks in advance. It is the responsibility of the student's parent/caregiver to notify the teacher of these dates at the beginning of the school year.

Dismissal

If there is a change to your child's dismissal plan, the following procedure should be followed:

- A note must be received to inform the school of the change. The note must indicate: who will be picking up the child, if other than the parent/caregiver, and indicate whether it is a school lobby or car pick up.
- Parents/Caregivers must sign out the student in the main office. Students will be dismissed from the office
- Refer to the school office for more specific information pertaining to your child's school
- Vehicle Identification Cards (VIC) must be visible during car pick up.
- Students will only be dismissed to individuals identified as having parent/caregiver permission to do so.

EARLY RELEASE & SCHEDULE

During the course of the year, there are early release days to provide time for teachers' professional development, planning and parent/caregiver/teacher conferences. On early release days, instruction continues as usual. It is important for students to attend school each day. If changes in dismissal or special arrangements are needed on early release days please notify the school in writing. The district calendar may be accessed [here](#).

SCHOOL CLOSING

If inclement weather or other significant hardship forces the cancellation of school, the Superintendent of Schools will contact families via automated telephone system. The decision is also announced on several radio & television stations including: WBZ (1030), WRKO (680), WBZ (4), WCVB (5), WHDH (7), FOX (25). The district [website](#) will also post this information.

In the event of a delayed start, the morning preschool session will be cancelled. However, full day preschool students will follow the district wide delay schedule.

DELAYED OPENING/EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

The Superintendent will consider a delayed opening of either one or two hours as a response to inclement weather or other emergency conditions. A decision to open with a delay will be communicated to the public and to staff in the same manner as a no school announcement.

When a decision is made for a delayed opening or cancellation, or in the case of emergency closings, parents and guardians will be notified by telephone through our automated notification system. Announcements will also be broadcast on radio & television stations WBZ (1030), WRKO (680), WBZ (4), WCVB (5), WHDH (7), FOX (25).

In addition, parents/caregivers may check the school district website www.westfordk12.us. Please do not call the school unless it is an emergency.

In the best interest of public safety, please do not call the police, fire, or public works departments for "No School" information as their lines need to be kept open for emergency purposes. The best practice is to listen to one of the radio or television stations listed above or check the [Westford Public Schools website](#) for information.

Please Note: In the event of a delay or snow day, the Early Arrival Option (EAO) and clubs such as chorus, band and orchestra will not take place.

ACADEMICS

Consistent with Massachusetts regulations, 603 CMR 26.05(1), the Westford Public Schools, through its curricula and materials, encourages respect for the human and civil

rights of all individuals, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, disability, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. In accordance with district guidelines, families may request information from the building principal on available accommodations related to curriculum content.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Westford Public Schools offers a wide range of instructional programs and utilizes resources to help meet the needs of all of our students. Westford embraces Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create a more inclusive and effective learning environment to meet the needs of a wide range of students, including those with disabilities, learning differences, and diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. By providing multiple means of engagement (the "why" of learning); multiple means of representation (the "what" of learning); and multiple means of action & expression (the "how" of learning), our educators provide flexible pathways to achieve high learning goals for everyone

HOMEWORK

(School Committee [P6112](#))

Homework should be a useful adjunct to in-school learning. It should be an application or adaptation of a classroom experience. Homework consists of assignments or activities intended for:

- Preview/Preparation for an upcoming class.
- Practice/Refinement/Reinforcement of skills and concepts learned in class.
- Integration of newly learned concepts and skills with what students already know.

We acknowledge that students work at different paces; therefore, the homework times listed in our regulation ([P6112](#)) are intended to be used as a guide. These times are to identify a maximum number of minutes per night and do not reflect the amount of homework a teacher is "supposed to" assign to students. Homework assignments are assigned at the discretion of the teacher as long as it meets at least one purpose listed above and does not exceed the times listed below. As a result, teachers are welcome to assign less than the maximum amounts. Additionally, if a teacher sees that a student has mastery of a certain concept and, as a result, the student will not benefit from additional practice, it is appropriate to modify the quantity or expectations to avoid "busy work" assignments.

The maximum times below refer to assigned nightly homework and do not include reading for pleasure or practice with a self-selected text, which is encouraged. Home expectations for long-term projects that are assigned will be included in the nightly maximum.

HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Time Expectations	Teacher Responsibilities	Student Responsibilities	Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities
K	There will be no regularly assigned nightly HW. Teachers will provide students/families with suggestions on activities that will reinforce concepts taught in the classroom.	Students are encouraged to practice reading or listening to someone read to them each night with an adult or older child.	Parents/Caregivers are encouraged to incorporate the school-suggested activities with their child, when appropriate. Parents/Caregivers are encouraged to read with their child on a nightly basis.
1st grade (0 to 10 minutes) 2nd grade (0 to 15 minutes)	HW will be assigned with a greater emphasis on literacy and math. No HW will be assigned over weekends or school vacations/holiday breaks.	HW is a cooperative effort between the parent/caregiver and child.	HW is a cooperative effort between the Parents/Caregivers and child. Parents/Caregivers are encouraged to designate an appropriate HW area with limited distractions for their child. Parents/Caregivers should stop the student if HW is exceeding the maximum number of minutes. If your child's HW exceeds maximum minutes on a consistent basis, please communicate with the classroom teacher so adjustments can be made.
3rd grade (0 to 20 minutes)	HW will be assigned with a greater emphasis on literacy and math. No HW will be assigned over weekends or school vacations/holiday breaks.	HW is primarily the responsibility of the student. Students should complete HW on time and according to teacher guidelines. Students are responsible for obtaining from their teachers any missed assignments.	Parents/Caregivers are encouraged to designate an appropriate HW area with limited distractions for their child. Parents/Caregivers should ensure that the HW submitted to the teacher is a true reflection of the child's ability and/or understanding. Parents/Caregivers should assist their child to ensure the student's HW has been completed and is ready to be returned to school. Parents/Caregivers should stop the student if HW is exceeding the maximum number of minutes. If your child's HW exceeds maximum minutes on a consistent basis, please communicate with the classroom teacher so adjustments can be made.
4th grade (0 to 30 minutes) 5th grade (0 to 40 minutes)	In addition to focusing on literacy and math, there may be HW in other subject areas as well. In addition, long-term projects will be assigned. Homework expectations for long-term projects are included in the nightly maximum as well. No HW will be assigned over weekends or school vacations/holiday breaks.	HW is primarily the responsibility of the student. Students should complete HW on time and according to teacher guidelines. Students are responsible for obtaining from their teachers any missed assignments.	Parents/Caregivers are encouraged to assist their child in making sure there is an appropriate HW area in the home. Parents/Caregivers should ensure that the HW submitted to the teacher is a true reflection of the child's ability and understanding. Parents/Caregivers should assist the child to ensure the student's HW has been completed and is ready to be returned to school. Parents/Caregivers should stop the student if HW is exceeding the maximum number of minutes. If your child's HW exceeds maximum minutes on a consistent basis, please communicate with the classroom teacher so adjustments can be made.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Some students with disabilities require specialized instruction and/or supportive services to help them make effective progress in school. These services can include, but are not

limited to, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, specialized instruction within our outside of the general education classroom. Parents/caregivers or teachers may refer students they are concerned about to the Office of Student Support. Within five (5) school days of such a referral, a consent form authorizing an evaluation of the student will be forwarded to the parents/caregiver(s). Upon receipt of the parents/caregiver(s)' consent, an evaluation will be conducted and a Team meeting will be held to determine if the student is eligible for special education services. School districts are required to provide the student's parents an opportunity to consult with the Director of Special Education and Social Emotional Learning or their designee (e.g. Elementary Assistant Principal) regarding the evaluators who will be used by the school district to conduct the assessments comprising the team evaluation, including the initial evaluation to determine eligibility and any subsequent reevaluations. This requirement may be met by meeting with the parent prior to an evaluation or by incorporating information on this consultation opportunity in the notice sent to the parents when a district is requesting permission to conduct an evaluation.

Special education services are available in all of the elementary schools to students with disabilities who meet state and federal regulations for such services. Before services can be provided, a student must have a team evaluation consisting of multi-source assessments to determine if the student has a disability as defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; is not making effective progress in school; that the lack of progress is related to the identified disability and that the student requires specialized instruction and/or related services in order to access the general curriculum.

Upon completion of the evaluation, the evaluation team must answer the following questions:

- Does the student have a disability? If so, what type of disability?
- Is the student making effective progress in school? If not, is the lack of progress a result of the student's disability?
- Does the student require specially designed instruction in order to make effective progress in school or does the student require related services in order to access the general curriculum?

If the student is found eligible for special education services, the Team will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) identifying the necessary services.

Westford Public Schools proudly collaborates with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council ([SEPAC](#)). The SEPAC is a group of dedicated parents who, in partnership with the district, help foster an understanding, respect, and support of all students and families with special needs in Westford. Membership is open to all parents/guardians interested in Special Education.

SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

Section 504 is a federal civil rights law that ensures students with disabilities have equal access to education. It prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities by any program or activity that receives federal funding, including public schools.

Under Section 504, if a student has a physical or mental impairment that significantly limits one or more major life activities—such as learning, reading, concentrating, or walking—they may be eligible for accommodations and support at school. These supports are designed to provide the student with the same opportunities to succeed as their peers.

Section 504 is different from special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as it provides accommodations rather than modifications and/or specialized instruction.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

Westford Public Schools is committed to identifying students who may be eligible for English language support services in school. Westford is committed to working with parents/caregivers and ensuring accurate placements in the ELL program. Students who may be eligible are identified through our registration process. At registration, a student's parent/caregiver fills out a Home Language Survey. If the survey indicates that a language other than English is spoken in the home, the student's English proficiency is assessed. If the student has transferred from another district in Massachusetts, records are reviewed to determine whether the student is already identified as an English Learner (EL) or Former English Learner (FEL). If the student has transferred from another WIDA state, we contact their previous school and review any existing ACCESS scores. When there are no ACCESS scores or information from the previous school, we follow the ELL identification procedures and criteria outlined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

If a language other than English is used in the home, Westford is required to assess the child in English to determine an initial proficiency level in speaking, listening, reading and writing in English. The intention of the screener is to ensure that any student needing specialized instruction in American Academic English is identified and provided with that instruction. However, that also means that many students who must take this screening test are already proficient.

Steps for determining who is screened and who is not:

- If a student has only attended private school and therefore has not previously been screened in a MA public school, Westford administers the language screener when the home language survey indicates a second language is spoken in the family.
- If a student is from another public school in the U.S. and the home language survey indicates a second language is spoken in the family, then Westford administers the screener if the student was not previously screened.

- Students who have never attended school in the US and whose home language survey indicates a second language is spoken in the family must be screened as well.

Parents and caregivers are notified of potential screening within 10 days of the student's first day of school. If found eligible, a letter is sent to notify parents and caregivers. At this point they may accept, or opt-out of services.

English Language Development instruction is individualized according to each student's English proficiency and other academic needs. ESL staff work on developing students' ability to understand, speak, read, and write in English. Consultation with classroom and subject area teachers occurs in order to support and reinforce work in their content area classrooms. At the elementary level, instruction is provided in flexible groups either within a classroom (push-in) or in a separate space (pull-out).

Each spring, ACCESS for ELLs test scores are reviewed to identify whether students are making expected growth in English language proficiency. If students do not meet the growth target identified by DESE, the ESL teacher works with the Director and school-based team to review the student's progress and make a support plan. Supports may include, but are not limited to, general education literacy and/or math support, adjustments to ELL instruction, referral to a school-based support team, collaboration with special education teams, or tutoring. In addition, student progress is monitored throughout the school year and progress is reported to families through progress reports, grades, comments, and meetings.

Students receiving ELL support are required to participate in statewide assessments. If parents/caregivers elect to exclude their child from ELL services, they must check the box marked "No" on the Permission for Services form or contact the principal.

Students exit the ELL Program after passing statewide testing, and based on the results of standardized testing, classroom performance and teacher recommendation. Parents will be notified in writing if their child no longer qualifies for services.

Westford is committed to fostering academic and social and emotional development and growth for all students. As such, collaborative partnerships among schools, families, and community organizations are crucial to student engagement and success. Westford established an [English Learner Parent Advisory Council \(ELPAC\)](#) to promote and support the success of all ELs.

ELPACs are intended to advise school districts, school committees, boards of trustees, and schools regarding matters that pertain to ELs, such as providing advice on ELE programs, meeting regularly with school officials about educational opportunities for ELs, and providing input on school or district improvement plans as they relate to ELs.

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT

(School Committee [P5514](#))

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act requires that schools immediately enroll homeless students in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment, such as school records, medical records or proof of residency, as long as the student has been properly immunized. Information on lead screenings as well as immunization records may be transferred over the phone. Parent/Caregiver intending to register students who are homeless should be aware of the following guidelines:

- Homeless students have a right to either remain in their school of origin or to attend school where they are temporarily residing.
- Students who move from a homeless situation into a permanent residence during the course of a school year have the right to stay in the school they were attending while they were temporarily homeless. If the child or youth continues their education in the school of origin but begins living in an area served by another school district, the school district of origin and the school district in which the homeless child or youth is living must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child or youth with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the school districts cannot agree upon a method, the responsibility and costs for transportation are to be shared equally.
- Students who choose to enroll in school where they are temporarily residing must be enrolled immediately, even if they do not bring the records usually required for enrollment with them.

If a homeless student arrives without records, the school district's designated Homeless Education Liaison will assist the family and contact the previously attended school system to obtain the required records.

A child who is homeless and attending any school served by the local educational agency is eligible for Title I services and the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act defines “homeless children and youths” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes—

- Children and youths who are:
 - sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as “doubled-up”);
 - living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; or
 - abandoned in hospitals;
- Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

- Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Additional information is available at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/mv/>

STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

(School Committee P5515)

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the educational stability of students in foster care and their equal access to the same free and appropriate public education through high school graduation as provided to other students as required by law. Educational stability has a lasting impact on students' academic achievement and wellbeing, and the Westford Public Schools are committed to supporting district and community efforts to ensure that students in foster care have access to high-quality, stable educational experiences.

The law requires that foster care students continue to attend their school of origin, unless after a collaborative decision-making process it is determined to be in the student's best interest to enroll in and attend school in the district in which a foster care provider or facility is located (if different). The law also requires that when it is not in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the student is immediately enrolled and attending in a new school district, even if records normally required for enrollment cannot be quickly produced. Additionally, the law requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF), The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the school district to designate points of contact; and also that the district collaborate with DCF and other school district to ensure that students will receive transportation to the school of origin if needed.

Best Interest Determination

Decisions about whether a student in foster care should continue to attend the school of origin should be made collaboratively by DCF, the student (as appropriate), the student's family and/or foster family (and if different, the person authorized to make educational decisions on behalf of the student), the school and district of origin, and (when different) the local district where the student is placed. Best interest determinations should focus on the needs of each individual student and take into account a variety of factors. Every effort should be made to reach agreement regarding the appropriate school placement of a student in foster care. However, if there is disagreement regarding school placement for a student in foster care, DCF will finalize the best interest determination.

The district can seek review of DCF's decision by utilizing a Foster Care School Selection Dispute Resolution Process established by DESE and DCF. Decisions made through this process are not subject to review. Under the law, to promote educational stability, students should continue to attend their schools of origin while best interest determinations are being made.

Transportation

The district of origin must collaborate with DCF on how transportation will be provided

and arranged to ensure that students in foster care who need transportation to remain in their school of origin will receive such transportation while they are in foster care.

Transportation options may include using Title I funds, establishing regional collaboration districts, coordinating with existing routes for transportation, seeking help from foster parents/caregiver(s), etc. Absent other agreements between the district and DCF, the district of origin is responsible for providing transportation to and from the school of origin.

Immediate Enrollment

If it is in the best interest of a student in foster care to leave the school of origin, the student must be enrolled in school in the local school district immediately. To minimize disruption of the student's education, the law requires the district to enroll the student in a new school right away, without waiting to receive the typical student enrollment documentation (other than emergency contact information). The enrolling school must immediately contact the child's school and district of origin to obtain the relevant records and documentation, and the school and district of origin should immediately transfer those records. To facilitate enrollment, DCF representatives will present the district with a form that indicates the student is in foster care, along with their state agency identification badge, when enrolling students.

HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION

(School Committee [P6201](#))

The homebound instruction is designed for students who cannot attend school for a variety of medical or emotional factors substantiated by a qualified healthcare provider. Instructional tutoring may be short or long term. The instruction is designed for each student and is determined by their educational plan and consists primarily of academic tasks which are coordinated by the regular / special education teacher(s) and the home tutor.

The goal is to provide instructional support for students assigned to the Homebound Instruction Program and provide the schools and the classroom teacher(s) with periodic reports of student progress.

CRISIS INTERVENTION

If, in the opinion of administration, school counselor or nurse, a student is judged to be at-risk of harming themselves or others, the following will occur:

1. The student's parent/caregiver will be notified of the concern.
2. The parent/caregiver may be asked to pick up their child from school.
3. Upon re-entry a team meeting might be recommended. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss discharge summary (if available), factors which might impact school performance and possible accommodations/strategies.

NOTE: During the period that the student is being evaluated, the student's daily absences will be excused as medically necessary.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Instrumental Music instruction is offered to students in Grades 3-5. Students may select a string instrument in Grades 3-5, or a band instrument in Grades 4-5. Instruction takes place during the school day. There may be additional rehearsals that take place outside of the school day. Additional information about enrolling in the Instrumental Music Program is shared at the beginning of each school year with families and also available on the website.

SEX EDUCATION

(School Committee [P6123](#))

All fifth graders have an opportunity to participate in a Human Growth and Development Unit. The goal is to help students recognize why and how their bodies are changing, as well as discuss the beginning stages of puberty. There will be information about the reproductive system, emotional maturity, and healthy decision-making regarding nutrition and hygiene. . M.G.L. c. 71, § 32A notes that parent/caregiver must be provided an “opt-out” provision for courses that focus on human sexual education, the biological mechanics of human reproduction and sexual development, or human sexuality issues. Parent/Caregivers wishing to review curricula and/or exempt their child/children from instruction of these topics must contact the building Principal in writing. A parent/caregiver who is dissatisfied with a decision of the principal concerning notice, access to instructional materials, or exemption for a student under this policy may send a written request to the superintendent for review of the issue. The superintendent will review the issue and give the parent/caregiver a timely written decision.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards provide parents/caregivers with more in-depth information and are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and will reflect performance towards standards. Refer to the [report card website](#).

MCAS TESTING

Elementary students in grades 3, 4, and 5 will participate in English Language Arts and Mathematics MCAS testing. Additionally, students in grade 5 participate in Science, Technology, and Engineering MCAS testing. The MCAS test gives teachers an idea of the progress students have made in learning the knowledge and applying the skills outlined in the Massachusetts Curriculum frameworks. The results of the assessment are one tool teachers use to plan instructional practices and supports students need to be successful. The results of the MCAS do not determine placement for the next grade level nor have any influence over how teachers report individual student progress for this school year.

Students with disabilities who are unable to participate in standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations, may complete the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) — a portfolio of work samples that demonstrate a student’s academic knowledge, skills, and achievements. During MCAS testing, no exams/quizzes will be administered, or homework will be assigned.

TEACHER CONFERENCES

Scheduled parent/caregiver and teacher conferences are held twice a year. Conferences are scheduled in advance and each conference is allotted 15 minutes. The purpose of the conference is to provide an overview of your child's academic progress.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS

(School Committee [P6109](#))

Students shall be promoted to, or retained in, the grade level to which they are best adjusted academically, socially, and emotionally. Students are promoted to the next grade level unless a decision is made otherwise. This decision is made jointly by the school administrator, school counselor, teachers, and parents/caregivers with the school administrator moderating any disagreements and making the final decision. The educational program shall provide for the continuous progress of children from grade to grade with children normally spending one year in each grade.

FIRE ALARMS / BUILDING EVACUATIONS

Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code (527 CMR 1.00), outlines several requirements for fire drills in elementary schools to ensure the safety of students and staff. Elementary schools are required to conduct fire drills at least four times each school year. One of these drills must be held within the first three days of the school year. This is to ensure that all students, especially those new to the school, are familiar with the fire drill procedures and evacuation routes as soon as possible.

A fire alarm is a serious matter of student safety. All must follow the directions which are posted in each room. Students must leave the building immediately in an orderly fashion. Students will return to class once cleared to enter the building.

Other drills performed at the school level may include controlled evacuation and intruder drills. Parents and caregivers following any such drill.

SCHOOL HEALTH

(School Committee [P5501](#))

Students should report to the nurse for health emergencies, illness assessment, first aid/injuries, emotional support, medication administration, health screenings and physicals, health record updates, and any health-related concerns. If the nurse is not in the Clinic, the student should report to the Main Office. The nurse will contact the parent/caregiver listed on the student emergency card for any student who must be dismissed for a health related reason. The student will remain in the clinic until the parent/caregiver arrives at the school.

Medication Information

- According to School Committee Policy 5503, the school nurse is the only person allowed to administer medication to students in the Westford Public Schools. For field trips, the nurse may delegate a daily prescription medication, Epipen, or inhaler to unlicensed personnel.

- If a prescription medication is to be given at school, it must be in the original pharmacy bottle with the prescription label attached and the Medication Administration Plan must be completed. If requested, the pharmacy will provide you with a 'school bottle'.
- Medications are kept in the Nurses' Clinic with the exception of emergency medications (e.g. inhalers, EpiPens). A student may carry their EpiPen or inhaler if approved by the parent, their physician, and the school nurse.
- If your child takes regular medication outside of school, it is suggested you contact the school nurse.
- If your child has an allergy requiring an EpiPen, please contact the nurse to develop an Allergy Health Care Plan (these can be found on the WPS website).
- Parent/Caregiver should arrange to retrieve medications at the end of the school year. Medications left at school will be properly disposed of.
- Please telephone or meet with the nurse regarding a special medication situation: a student's self-administration of medications, short-term medications, over the counter medications, and investigational new drugs.

Physicals & Immunizations

- Physicals: Westford Public School regulations require that students have up to date physical examinations in kindergarten and 3rd grade. Documentation of the physical (including height, weight and blood pressure) should be given/mailed to the school clinic. Information related to physical examinations are required for new students.
- Immunizations: Students must meet current Massachusetts Department of Public Health immunization requirements. School health records are reviewed periodically to determine the immunization status of each student. Verification of immunizations should be submitted to the school nurse to update the student's health record.

Medical Screenings

Postural screenings are done on an opt-in basis. Vision screenings are completed in grades K-5. Hearing screenings are completed in grades K-3. Height & weight screenings are completed in grade 4. The parent/caregiver will be notified of screening results by letter or telephone only if the student has failed a screening exam or requires further care from their health care provider. Findings of these referrals for follow-up should be returned to school to update a student's health record.

Medical Exclusion from School

A student may be dismissed or excluded from school for any of the following:

- Temperature over 100.4° (oral temperature)
- Disruptive cough
- Suspected infection of eye, ears, nose, throat, skin, scalp
- Severe abdominal pain or headache
- Suspected communicable disease

- Suspected pediculosis (live head lice)
- Suspected fractures or any severe or disabling injury
- Questionable need for sutures
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Head injury
- Immunizations which are not up to date
- Antibiotic therapy started less than twenty four (24) hours before returning to school
- Students diagnosed with Strep throat should be excluded from school until:
 - Fever free x 24 hrs (**without** fever reducing medicine such as Advil, ibuprofen, Tylenol, etc.)
 - Well appearing
 - On antibiotics x 12 hrs by start of school day

Emergency cards are distributed to all students on the first day of school. These cards should be completed by the parent/caregiver. Complete information is necessary to ensure your student's health and safety while at school. All information is confidential and must be updated if there are any changes.

FOOD SERVICES

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has approved free school meals for all students. This means that breakfast and lunch will continue to be served at no cost to all students. However, second meals, extra entrees, desserts, bottled water, and snacks are not free and will be charged to the student's meal account in Nutrikids. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education no longer allows students or adults to purchase if there are insufficient funds in the individual's meal account or if the individual does not have cash in hand to make the purchase. Since all first meals in Massachusetts are free for students, these extra purchases would apply to a la carte items such as bottled water, snacks, and extra entrees. We kindly ask that you have a conversation with your student explaining this new practice so that your student does not experience an awkward or embarrassing situation if they are denied the purchase of an item for which they do not have funds.

As always, you may fund your student's lunch accounts through the online MySchoolBucks.com payment site or by sending cash or a check payable to Westford School Lunch Program to school with your student.

Please note that even though first meals are free, it is very important for families who would qualify for free or reduced meals based on household financial needs to continue to complete the Household Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals for the 2025-2026 school year. We strongly encourage all families who would qualify based on financial need to submit this form, as it is very important for the district's records and allows us to waive other fees. The application is available on the district website, at each school's main office, and in the Food Service Office located in the Millennium Building. If you are unable to print the application from the district website, contact the Food Service Office, and an application will be mailed to you. Please note that all students who

qualified based on financial need the previous year (those families who submitted financial-based applications or were directly certified for free/reduced lunches) will have a carryover grace period of thirty days into the school year.

Additionally, you may want to consider applying for SNAP, the federal nutrition program that provides eligible residents with monthly financial assistance to purchase groceries. More SNAP information can be found at gettingsnap.org or by calling Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333.

BIRTHDAYS

Party invitations should not be brought to school and birthday invitations should be distributed to children outside of school hours. School personnel are prohibited from releasing student information for this purpose. The increasing number of food allergies and medical conditions related to diet pose serious ramifications when food is brought into the school. For this reason, classes will recognize student birthdays without food.

CLASSROOM REWARDS

Food will not be used as an incentive or as a reward. Any exception to this rule would be under the discretion of a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst and only after receiving consent from the parent/caregiver.

SNACKS

Nutritious snacks are to be provided from home, and should be easy to eat. Refrigeration and microwaving are unable to be provided.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are learning experiences organized to enhance the school curriculum. Written parent/caregiver permission is required for all children to participate. The permission includes all the details of the trip, including the cost and/or scholarship. Schools look for volunteers to chaperone field trips. All chaperones must be approved through the CORI and fingerprinting process.

LOCKERS

(School Committee [P5310](#))

Each student is assigned a locker and is responsible for its maintenance and condition. The school cannot be responsible for lost or stolen articles in view of the fact that each student has an individually assigned locker. School lockers are school property and may be searched by school authorities at any time. Students do not have an expectation of privacy in their school lockers. The parent/caregiver of any student involved in a locker search will be notified of the locker search.

OUTDOOR RECESS/ACTIVITIES

It is important to dress appropriately for outside activities/recess. Outdoor activities/recess is held whenever possible except in inclement weather or when the outside temperature exceeds 90°F or is below 20°F, which includes humidity and wind chill factors. Please note that other variables, which may be unique to each school, are

also considered when making decisions regarding indoor versus outdoor recess. Any student not well enough to be outdoors for recess during acceptable weather conditions should remain at home unless we have a communication from the student's physician recommending that they remain in the building. Playground boundaries are established for all play areas. In addition to staying within the assigned area, students must also stay within sight of the playground supervisor. The final decision as to outdoor recess/activities will be at the discretion of the building administrator.

INDOOR RECESS

When indoor recess is announced, the teacher will suggest activities that children can enjoy.

- Students are to remain in designated areas and cooperate with the teacher or supervisor.
- Running around the room and loud noises are unacceptable behaviors.

CARE OF THE BUILDING

To help maintain a clean and attractive school, students should follow these simple rules:

- Student desks, chairs and lockers are school property and are to be kept clean and unmarked.
- Throw trash daily in a wastebasket or recycling container.
- Gum chewing is not permitted in the building unless otherwise required by an accommodation.

DRESS CODE

(School Committee [P5323](#))

Students are expected to meet reasonable standards with regards to health, safety, and cleanliness, and to dress in a way that is appropriate for the learning environment. Students shall have the right to express themselves through their dress and appearance choices, and should also respect the school district's intent to sustain an inclusive learning community that supports a diverse range of identities.

The district is responsible for ensuring that student dress choices do not interfere with the health and safety of any student, do not create a hostile or intimidating atmosphere for any student, and do not cause any disruption or disorder within the school.

School staff shall enforce the dress code consistently and equitably, and in a manner that respects the privacy, comfort, and well-being of the student. Dress code enforcement should not reinforce or increase marginalization of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income, body maturity, or body type/size. Conversations about dress choice should be a collaborative discussion with the student to achieve an appropriate and satisfactory solution. If necessary, the student's parents/caregivers may be contacted to help address the issue. Should a satisfactory solution not be reached, decisions regarding the safety, respect, or disruption of the learning environment will be made by the building principal.

Students Shall Not Wear:

- clothing depicting hate speech, profanity, pornography, violent images or language;
- clothing with images or language depicting drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or other controlled substances;
- clothing or accessories that could be considered dangerous, used as weapons, or could cause damage to school property;
- hats or hoods of any type in school during school hours*; or
- outdoor clothing, such as winter coats, should be removed in school*.

**Individual accommodations may be made based on medical, religious, or sensory needs.*

Students Shall Wear:

Clothing and footwear appropriate for the learning environment or activity. More specific dress student dress guidelines, which shall be inclusive, gender neutral and accessible to all students may be provided for certain school activities, including but not limited to:

- Wellness classes
- School-sponsored special events, performances, and ceremonies
- Field trips
- Extra-curricular activities and clubs
- Athletics
- Science labs
- Recess/playgrounds

BICYCLES / SKATEBOARDS / SCOOTERS

Riding a bike/skateboard/scooter to school is a privilege that has a responsibility for the rider's safety and the safety of others. Parent/Caregiver will decide if a student is ready for that privilege.

- Bikes/skateboards/scooters are to be walked in the schoolyard coming to school and going home. The school driveway is too busy for riding bicycles, skateboards or scooters.
- Immediately upon arrival at school, bicycles are to be parked in the rack or other designated places.
- All bicycles are to be locked. The school is not responsible for any bikes, scooters or skateboards lost.
- Students riding bicycles, scooters or skateboards to school are dismissed with riders and pick-ups.
- Students are to ride on the right side of the road at all times.
- Helmets are required.

Any student not following these and other rules for bicycle safety may lose their privilege to ride a bicycle, scooter or skateboard to school.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Students who remain in the building after school must be under the supervision of a faculty/staff member. Students in any other area of the building, and not supervised, may be subject to disciplinary actions.

STUDENT RECORDS

(School Committee [P6111](#))

Westford Public Schools complies with applicable federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to student records. Those laws and regulations are designed to ensure a parent's/caregiver's and eligible student's rights to access, inspect, and to request amendment of the child's student record. The Massachusetts Student Record Regulations and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) apply to all information kept by a school on a student in a manner such that they may be individually identified. The regulations divide the record into the transcript and the temporary record. The transcript includes only the minimum information necessary to reflect the student's educational progress. This information includes name, address, course titles, grades, and grade level completed. The transcript is kept by the school system for at least sixty years after the student leaves the system. The temporary record contains the majority of the information maintained by the school system about the student. This may include such things as standardized test results, school sponsored extracurricular activities, and evaluations and comments by teachers, counselors, and other persons. The temporary record is destroyed no later than seven years after the student leaves the school system.

The following is a summary of major parent/caregiver and student rights regarding their student records:

Inspection of Record: A parent/caregiver, or a student who has entered the ninth grade or is at least fourteen (14) years old, has the right to inspect all portions of the student record upon request. The record must be made available to the parent/caregiver or eligible student within ten (10) days of the request, unless the parent/caregiver or eligible student consents to a delay. In the event the parent/caregiver or eligible student requests copies of a student record, the District may charge the parent/caregiver/eligible student for said copies at the District rate.

Confidentiality of Record: With a few exceptions, no individuals or organizations but the parent/caregiver, eligible student, and school personnel working directly with the student are allowed to have access to information in the student record without specific, informed, written consent of the parent/caregiver or eligible student.

Amendment of Record: The parent/caregiver and eligible students have the right to add relevant comments, information, or other written materials to the student record. In addition, the parent/caregiver and eligible students have the right to request that information in the record be amended or deleted. The parent/caregiver and eligible students have a right to a conference with the school principal to make their objections known. Within a week after the conference, the principal must render a decision in writing. If the parent/caregiver or eligible student is not satisfied with the decision, the

student record regulations contain provisions through which the decision may be appealed to higher authorities in the school system.

Destruction of Records: The regulations require that certain parts of the student record, such as the temporary record, be destroyed a certain period of time after the student leaves the school system. School authorities are also allowed to destroy misleading, outdated, or irrelevant information in the record from time to time while the student is enrolled in the school system. Before any such information may be destroyed, the parent/caregiver and eligible student must be notified, and have an opportunity to receive a copy of any of the information before its destruction.

TRANSFER OF RECORDS

It is the practice of Westford Public Schools to forward the student record of any student who transfers to another public school district upon request of the receiving district.

SPECIAL EDUCATION RECORDS

Special Education records will be destroyed seven (7) years after date of graduation. These records are kept in, and may be picked up from, the Special Education Office in the Central Office Administration Building.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT

Unless there is a court order to the contrary, a non-custodial parent (parent without physical custody of the child) of any public school student has the right, subject to certain procedures, to receive information regarding the student's achievements, involvement, behavior, etc. A non-custodial parent who wishes to have this information shall submit a written request annually to the child's school principal. Upon receipt of such a request, the principal shall send written notification to the custodial parent by certified and first class mail that the records and information will be provided to the non-custodial parent in twenty one (21) calendar days unless the custodial parent provides documentation of the non-custodial parent's ineligibility to access such information. In all cases where school records are provided to a non-custodial parent, the electronic and postal address and any other contact information for the custodial parent shall be removed from the records provided. Any such records provided to the non-custodial parent shall be marked to indicate that they may not be used to enroll the student in another school. Upon receipt of a court order that prohibits the distribution of information pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, §34H, the school will notify the non-custodial parent that it shall cease to provide access to the student record to the non-custodial parent.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION

Directory Information is defined as the information contained in the student record which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Directory Information may be disclosed without prior written consent. Federal law requires that the District release the names, addresses and telephone listings of students to military recruiters and institutions of higher education upon request for recruitment and scholarship purposes, without prior consent. In addition, the District may release the following directory information about a student without prior consent: a student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major fields of study, dates of

attendance, weight and height of members of athletic teams, class participation in officially recognized activities and sports, degrees, honors and awards, post-high school plans and directory information such as homeroom assignments. Homeless status is confidential and shall not constitute directory information.

The following categories of information has been designated by the Westford School Committee as Directory Information:

- first name, last initial;
- dates of attendance;
- grade level;
- extracurricular activities; and
- awards or honors.

Parent/caregiver or legal guardians must notify the school in writing by September 30th to impose any restriction to the District's release of Directory Information as it applies to their child. Authorization to withhold Directory Information will remain in effect until the beginning of the next school year or until the parent/caregiver submits written notification to the school office.

THIRD PARTY ACCESS

Authorized school personnel includes (a) school administrators, teachers, counselors, and other professionals who are employed by the school committee or who are providing services to the student under an agreement between the school committee and a service provider, and who are working directly with the student in an administrative, teaching, counseling, and/or diagnostic capacity; (b) administrative office staff and clerical personnel, employed by the school committee or under a school committee service contract, and whose duties require them to have access to student records for purposes of processing information for the student record; and (c) the Evaluation Team which evaluates a student, shall have access to the student record of students to whom they are providing services, when such access is required in the performance of their official duties. The consent of the parent/caregiver or eligible student shall not be necessary.

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

During the course of the school year, members of the school staff may photograph or videotape students participating in school activities as a way of assessing learning or documenting learning activities. News photographers and cameramen may also visit our schools to take photos or videos of students engaged in school-related activities. These photos and videos may be selected to appear in school publications such as parent/caregiver newsletters or student literary journals, in local newspapers, or on cable or commercial TV. In addition, written work or art work produced by students may be selected to appear in school publications or released to the media

Occasionally student work or photographs of students participating in school activities, or highlights of their school achievements, may be displayed on the [Westford Public Schools website](#)

Only the student's first name and last initial will be published on school department pages. Westford Public Schools will not publish student work or photographs in print or on the Internet without the parent/caregiver written permission. *The School Committee recognizes three levels of publishing audiences as defined in the School Committee Policies: [P6302](#) and [P6115](#).*

STUDENT INTERACTION

During the school year students may encounter conflict with other children. The levels of student conflict ranges from difference of opinion, arguing and perhaps inappropriate verbal or physical confrontation. Ongoing conflict is not necessarily bullying. Students experiencing behavior that violates the school Code of Conduct should tell the other child/children to stop the specific behavior. If the behavior doesn't stop the offended student should communicate this to the nearest adult, as well as their classroom teacher. School staff will determine all facts of the situation and make a decision on consequences for each student violating the Code of Conduct. Students should be encouraged to communicate directly with adults at school when concerned about how others are treating them. If children communicate information about Code of Conduct violations to a parent/caregiver, rather than school staff, the respective parent/caregiver should contact the classroom teacher. All conflict isn't necessarily a Code of Conduct infraction. Students witnessing violations of the Code of Conduct have a responsibility of reporting this behavior to the nearest adult.

In every case of student misconduct for which suspension may be imposed, a principal shall exercise discretion in deciding the consequence for the offense; consider ways to re-engage the student in learning; and avoid using long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried. Alternatives may include the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive behavioral interventions and supports.

STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

The atmosphere of a school is a reflection of the attitude of its students and staff toward the school and toward each other. It is of equal concern that we achieve an atmosphere of order, self-discipline, safety, and mutual respect. Westford Public Schools strive to provide all students with a quality education in a safe school environment. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which promotes a safe, orderly learning environment within the schools and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including the possibility of expulsion for serious offenses if they fail to do so. In imposing disciplinary action, school staff should consider the need to maintain or restore an orderly learning environment, the overall disciplinary record of the individual student, and the need to improve the student's behavior where appropriate. Because effective discipline involves the participation of staff, parents or guardians, and students, school officials are required to contact parents or guardians of students under age 18 for offenses of this discipline policy which may result in a student's suspension or expulsion.

A student whose safety or learning at school is jeopardized by other students is expected to report the matter to a professional staff member. Retaliation in any form against a person who makes a complaint is forbidden. Staff members who are aware of disruptive students should take appropriate action, including immediately reporting matters which cannot be appropriately handled in the classroom to the school administration.

Below is a list of unexpected behaviors and possible logical consequences a student may receive. When necessary, we will communicate these consequences to the parent/caregiver and ask for support in reinforcing expectations. Whenever possible, guidance will provide support to students in helping to reinforce school expectations.

Behavior	Logical Consequences
Cutting in Line, Running inside School, Yelling, etc.	School staff members will provide redirection. For example, a student may be asked to retrace their steps and walk in the hallway if they are running.
Disruptive or Uncooperative	School staff may ask student to take a break. School staff may use verbal and/or non-verbal cues to redirect student. During class meetings, teacher may role play the expectations for cooperative behavior. When possible, student may be given limited choices to get back on track. At times, nonaggressive behavior may be ignored until student calms down.
Name Calling/Spreading Rumors	School staff may have a conversation with student about the power of words and how it may make another child feel. Student may be asked to complete an act of kindness or a verbal or written apology appropriate to the situation.
Inappropriate Contact with Others/ Throwing Objects at Others	School staff will ask student to leave the area. School staff will have a conversation with student and ask for a written reflection about safe choices. Student may be separated from victims for a determined period. Additionally, students may not be allowed to participate in related activities for a determined period.
Not allowing others to participate	Students will participate in a discussion about including others. Students may lose privileges if the exclusion happens during a game or activity. Students may be expected to invite others to join for the next activity.
Leaving area without permission	School staff will review rules with students. Student's freedom to use restrooms, go to lockers or other areas of the school will be closely monitored. A plan will be in place for frequent infractions.
Disrespectful to Adult	School staff will have a conversation with students about respect and tone. Students may be asked to write an apology after careful reflection.
Damage to Property	Administration will work with the student and student's family to determine the best way to repair or replace damaged property.
Stealing	Students will return or replace stolen items.
Cheating, Plagiarism	Administration and teachers will have a discussion about the personal consequences related to cheating and plagiarism. Students will be required to give up free time to redo assignments.
Spitting, Hitting, Biting	Students will be separated from victims immediately. If appropriate, students will have a discussion with the school nurse about the related health consequences for these behaviors.

Obscene Gestures, Swearing	Students will discuss how inappropriate gestures and language are offensive to others.
Physical Altercations, Causing Injury	Students will be separated from victims immediately. A behavior agreement will be written to prevent further altercations. In some cases, the school resource officer will have a discussion with the family.
Using discriminatory comments regarding one's race, color, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity or homelessness.	Students will participate in lessons to support understanding of diversity and inclusion. Lessons may include book studies or role plays to reinforce an understanding of the effects of these comments. Harassment and bullying behaviors will be investigated by administration with consequences outlined in the Westford Public Schools bullying prevention and intervention plan.
Skipping School or Leaving School Grounds	Students will have a conversation with a school resource officer about school attendance and safety.
Striking an Adult	Students will be removed from the situation immediately. A consequence will then be determined by administration in consultation with the parent/caregiver. A behavior agreement will be written to prevent further altercations.
Bus incidents	Bus incidents may result in suspensions from the bus
Violating of acceptable use policy	Students are expected to abide by the acceptable use policy for internet use and technology. Violations may include a loss of technology privileges as determined by administration.

The following items are not allowed in school

- Jackknives, weapons or any dangerous objects
- Matches and lighters
- Toys which resemble weapons
- Any other objects that might be a safety concern in a large group situation
- Handheld electronic devices such as eReaders, Gameboys, iPads, iPods, cameras, Smart Watches and any other electronic devices
-
- Making calls or texts on any personal mobile device are not permitted during the school day
- Students shall not sell materials or products such as stickers, trading cards, or other items, for private gain in school buildings, on school property, or the bus.
- Bats, lacrosse sticks, hard balls, or other sports equipment that may pose a danger
- Toys that become a distraction may be banned by the administration
- Pets with the exception of approved service animals

Each school has a written Code of Conduct outlining expected behavior of the school community. This Code of Conduct will be distributed at the beginning of the school year and is considered part of the elementary school handbook.

TEXTBOOKS & EQUIPMENT

Students will be responsible for all textbooks and equipment issued by the school. Students will be charged a replacement fee for all lost or damaged books or equipment. A replacement for a lost and/or stolen textbook or piece of equipment will be issued upon full payment for the original.

CELL PHONE/SMART WATCHES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Westford is committed to creating a learning environment where everyone can focus, connect with each other face-to-face, and stay safe. To help us do this, we ask that elementary students keep their cell phones and smartwatches turned off and put away during the entire school day. This means from the time they arrive at school until the end of the school day.

We know that cell phones and smartwatches can be helpful sometimes, but using them during the school day can make it hard for students to:

- Focus on Learning: When phones and watches are out, it can be tempting to look at them instead of listening to the teacher or working on schoolwork.
- Connect with Friends: School is a great place to make friends and play together. We want students to talk and interact with each other without screens in the way.
- Stay Safe and Be Present: Being aware of what's happening around us is important for safety. Phones and watches can sometimes be distracting.

If a student uses their cell phone or smartwatch during the school day:

- The device will be collected by a staff member.
- The device will be kept safe until the end of the school day.
- A staff member will talk to the student to help them understand the policy.
- For repeated issues, parents or guardians will be contacted to discuss how we can work together to follow the policy.

We understand that sometimes families need to get in touch with their children. If there is a real emergency, parents/caregivers should always call the school office directly. Our school staff is trained to help students in emergency situations and can get in touch with families quickly if needed. We know that families want what's best for their children, and we appreciate your help in making our school a focused and connected learning environment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

We believe everyone is a super scholar! That means each student tries their hardest and shows what they know by doing their own work. Students are taught that they should use their own brain to answer the questions. Looking at someone else's paper or getting answers from them isn't fair to anyone. For written expression, it means using your own ideas and words. We read books and look things up to learn, but when we write or create something, students need to say it in our own way. Copying words or ideas from a book or website without saying where they came from isn't appropriate.

Why is Doing Your Own Best Work Important?

- When you do your own work, you learn the most! Mistakes help you grow your brain and understand things better.
- Everyone in our class is working hard to learn. When someone doesn't do their own work, it's not fair to the students who are trying their best.
- When you do your own work, your teachers and classmates know they can trust you to be honest. Make sure you give credit for someone else's words, artwork, or ideas.

If we don't do our own best work, like copying answers or using someone else's ideas without saying so, there will be consequences. This might mean:

- Having to do the work again to show what you know.
- Talking to a teacher or the principal to understand why it's important to do your own work.
- Parents might be called to help us learn about being honest in our schoolwork.

DISTRICT ACCEPTABLE INTERNET USE

(School Committee [P6302](#))

Westford Public Schools uses the internet and various other digital technologies as teaching and learning tools. The district views these technologies as valuable resources, but acknowledges they must be used responsibly. While the nature of the internet is such that full protection from inappropriate content can never be guaranteed, students using computers in the school must cooperate with the staff members supervising computer areas and follow the instructions for computer use in each area. The use of the Internet and district technology resources is a privilege, not a right. Violation of district rules will result in loss of network/computer privileges for a period of time commensurate with the offense. Users will also be held responsible for damage they cause and will be subject to school rules regarding damage to property. The superintendent will refer any potential illegal activities to the appropriate local authority.

Westford Public Schools believes the teaching of cybersafety 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.

Responsible use of technology helps students to achieve their personal and academic potential and become successful citizens. The district believes that cybersafety and responsible online behavior should be taught in a partnership between home and school.

Users communicating via any school digital technology shall avoid profane or other potentially offensive language. Additionally, users shall never use school computers or any other technology to convey intentionally hurtful messages.

To be safe online, students must act with caution, both at school and at home, particularly in unsupervised situations. Students shall never give out personal

information, such as full name, home phone number, home address, or credit card information over the school's network. Additionally, any password issued to a user is for the personal use of the recipient only.

Unauthorized tampering with computers or peripherals is forbidden, and may be dealt with as vandalism, if damage occurs.

WPS recognizes the need to restrict the publication of personal information for safety reasons. To ensure security and safety of our children, the published work of K-8 students will be identified by first name and last initial, and student photos and audio recording may only be used with parent/caregiver permission.

Digital Citizenship

As we continue to infuse more technology into our learning, we want to continue to ensure our students are being appropriate and making good choices while using technology throughout the day. Chromebooks are for school use only and students should use them for school related work only. Chromebooks cannot be used on the bus, during before school care or during recess. Students know that if they do not follow the rules, consequences may include loss of technology privileges.

- Users of the District's Computing Environment (Users) shall not post personal contact information about themselves or other people. Students and teachers shall not post personal contact information concerning other people which includes the person's last name, address, telephone, work address.
- Users shall not agree to meet with someone they have met online without parent/caregiver approval and participation.
- Users shall promptly disclose to a teacher or other school employee any message they receive that is inappropriate or makes them feel uncomfortable.
- The image and/or work of any student shall not be displayed on the District's Web site without written permission of the student and their parent/caregiver.
- Users shall respect the privacy of others in the District Computing Environment.
- Users shall not attempt to learn the password, access the files or mail of other users.
- Users shall not post private information about another person.
- Users shall not attempt to gain unauthorized access to or through the District Computing Environment to any other computer system or go beyond their authorized access.
- Users shall not make deliberate attempts to disrupt the District Computing Environment's performance or destroy data by spreading computer viruses or by any other means.
- Users shall not use the District Computing Environment to engage in any other illegal act.

- Users are responsible for their individual accounts and shall take precautions to prevent others from using their accounts. Under no conditions should a user provide their password to another person.
- Users shall immediately notify the designated administrator if they identify a possible security problem.
- Users shall follow the local site's virus protection procedures.
- All restrictions against inappropriate language, conduct and harassment apply to public messages, private messages and material posted on Web pages.
- Users shall not knowingly or recklessly post false or inaccurate information.
- Users shall limit their use of the environment to educational and professional or career development activities.
- Users shall not post chain letters or engage in "spamming." Spamming is sending an annoying or unnecessary message to a large number of people.
- The Superintendent, Principals and/or their designees have the right to reclaim allocated resources with reasonable notice to users.

BULLYING

(School Committee [P5304](#))

Generally, bullying happens when someone keeps hurting, frightening, threatening or leaving someone out of activities on purpose. Bullying can happen at school or away from school. Bullying can happen face to face, behind someone's back, on-line, in a text message, repeated phone calls or a combination of each type. Examples of bullying are: hitting or kicking; name calling or threatening or leaving friends out of activities just to hurt their feelings. Please see the legal definition of bullying, and information about filing a report of bullying, in the WPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, below.

The Westford Public Schools' [Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#) is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying. The district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The principal or his/her designee is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

The district is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process. We understand that members of certain student groups, such as students with disabilities, students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and homeless students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The district will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

We understand that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics,

including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parent/caregiver status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics. The district will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/caregiver involvement.

Definitions

Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c.71, §370, as noted below:

- Perpetrator is a student or member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional, who engages in bullying or retaliation.
- Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student or staff person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
- Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.
- Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Prohibition Against Bullying And Retaliation: Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- At a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

- Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited. As stated in M.G.L. c.71, §370, nothing in the Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Reporting Bullying Or Retaliation: The district expects students, parent/caregiver, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of suspected bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or assistant principal. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Reports may be made orally or in writing. The “[WPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form](#)” has been developed for student, parent/caregiver or other non-school or district staff to report incidents of suspected bullying. This form can be obtained in every school office, or it can be filled out online. Use of the “WPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form” is not required as a condition of making a report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or assistant principal.

Determinations: With the principal’s receipt of the complaint of bullying or retaliation, the principal or their designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or their designee will determine what remedial action may be required, if any, and determine what responsive and/or disciplinary actions will be taken. The principal’s finding and determinations shall be documented in writing. All notices to the parent/caregiver must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or their designee cannot report specific information to the target’s parent/caregiver about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a “stay away” order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

Taking Disciplinary Action: If the principal or their designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or their designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school’s or district’s code of conduct. Disciplinary sanctions may include, but are not limited to, suspension or expulsion from school. Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the principal or their designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or their designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or their designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately. The principal or their designee will monitor the effectiveness of any such interventions employed and, where appropriate, recommend alternative or supplemental interventions.

Relationship To Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, gender identity, homelessness, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies. In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c.71, §37H, §37H1/2, or 37H3/46, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

HARASSMENT

(Schools Policy [P5303](#))

The goal of the Westford Public Schools is to maintain a positive school atmosphere conducive to learning. All conduct and communication will be free from all forms of harassment due to race, sex, sexual orientation, color, religion, age, gender identity, homelessness, national origin, and disability. It shall be a violation of this policy for any member of the Westford Public Schools to harass another person, student or staff member, through conduct or communications. This policy applies to any member of the Westford Public Schools including but not limited to students, staff, outside contractors, and volunteers.

Electronic Conduct/Harassment

All restrictions against inappropriate language, conduct, and/or harassment apply to public messages, private messages, and material posted on web pages. No images of school personnel or facsimiles may be posted online without written consent of the individual. Recording, videoing or photographing students or staff without permission is prohibited.

WESTFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT/WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A relationship of communication exists between Westford Public Schools and the Westford Police Department in conjunction with the Middlesex District Attorney's Community-Based Justice Program to the extent of informing the administration when one of its students is involved in any incident or potential incident that would jeopardize

the well-being of students, faculty, or individuals within the greater school community. Should such an incident or potential incident occur, the Administration will receive notice from one of the above mentioned agencies which may result in communication between the student and administration. The outcome of this meeting may result in disciplinary action which could affect participation in school-related events.

SCHOOL BUSES

(School Committee P5319)

All students who plan to ride the bus still need to register for a bus pass. Parents/caregivers must register all students who plan to ride the bus, whether they qualify for fee-based transportation or not. All registrations for bus transportation will require online registration. Please visit our [WPS Transportation website](#) for information on obtaining a Westford Public Schools bus pass. Students must ride their assigned bus. Because many of our buses are at or near capacity, we cannot honor requests to ride a different bus.

Parents/caregivers of students at the Pre-2 level are required to greet their student at the bus stop at the end of the school day.

So that all students enjoy a safe ride to and from school, the following guidelines are in place:

1. Students riding the bus to and/or from school must display a bus pass.
2. The “code of conduct” for your school will apply to students while on the bus.
3. The bus driver will give a signal to students to board the bus after it comes to a complete stop.
4. Students will board and leave the bus in a single file and in an orderly manner.
5. If the student misses the bus, do not drive after the bus. In this situation, please drive the student to school. To ensure the safety of all children, adults should not board the bus.
6. While on the bus, students should keep body parts and objects inside the bus. Throwing items inside the bus is strictly prohibited.
7. Damaging the bus, smoking, or the use of matches will result in a severe consequence determined by the school administrator.
8. Food and drinks are not allowed on the bus.
9. Only the driver and their designee will open bus windows.
10. Students will not open the emergency door for other than emergency reasons as directed by the bus driver.
11. Students should have written permission to leave the bus at bus stops other than the one for their neighborhood. The note should be given to the bus driver for verification.
12. Talking between the driver and any passenger should be kept to a minimum,

The Director of Finance is responsible for establishing proper standards of safety in the operation of buses and shall ensure their enforcement by the bus contractor.

When a parent/caregiver requests a change in the assigned bus stop, the following safety review criteria is used to evaluate the safety of a bus stop:

1. Site lines of the traffic from both directions in approaching the stop.
2. Speed limit and traffic conditions at the location of the bus stop.
3. Hills and turns that impede traffic visibility of the stop and proximity to the bus stop.
4. Ability of a school bus to navigate in an area.
5. Width of a road
6. Grade level (age) of students.
7. Ability of the school bus to safely pull out of a side street onto a main road.
8. Time constraints.
9. Number of students involved at a bus stop.
10. Any other unique conditions.

All requests to change a bus stop must be in writing and must include the reason for making the request. Send this written request to the Director of Finance who will make the final decision after consultation with safety officers and the bus company.

Bus Discipline Policy

- **1st Offense:** Referral for misbehavior on the school bus will result in a student conference with the building administrator. At that time, appropriate disciplinary action will be administered and parent/caregiver will be notified regarding each written report from the driver.
- **2nd Offense:** May result in a bus suspension of up to three (3) days
- **3rd Offense:** May result in a bus suspension of up to five (5) days
- **4th Offense:** Chronic or severe behavior may result in permanent bus suspension or loss of bus privileges for the remainder of the school year. The Superintendent of Schools will be notified.

Motor Vehicle Idling

Operators of any bus or motor vehicle are prohibited from and may be fined for prolonged idling of said vehicle on school grounds pursuant to M.G.L. c. 90, § 16B.

MANDATED REPORTING

Massachusetts law designates school personnel as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Due to the nature of an educator's work, they are likely to come into contact with children and observe potential signs of abuse or neglect. A mandated reporter is required to report when, in their professional capacity, they have "reasonable cause to believe" that a child under the age of 18 is suffering from: physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse; neglect, physical dependence upon an addictive drug at birth; Being a sexually exploited child; Being a victim of human trafficking.; or Death.

All professional staff are informed and trained annually of their obligations to report cases of child abuse and neglect as specified in M.G.L. Chapter 119, §51A-51F and M.G.L. Chapter 71, §37L.

PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

(School Committee [P5324](#))

Physical restraint is defined as direct physical contact that prevents or significantly restricts a student's freedom of movement. Physical restraint shall be considered an emergency procedure of last resort, and shall be prohibited except when a student's behavior poses a threat of assault, or imminent, serious physical harm to self or others, and the student is not responsive to verbal directives or other lawful and less intrusive behavior interventions, or such interventions are deemed to be inappropriate under the circumstances. The Westford Public Schools complies with the requirements of Massachusetts regulations governing the use and reporting of physical restraint in schools. 603 CMR 46.00.

Physical restraint shall not be used: (a) as a means of discipline or punishment; (b) when the student cannot be safely restrained because it is medically contraindicated for reasons including, but not limited to, asthma, seizures, a cardiac condition, obesity, bronchitis, communication-related disabilities, or risk of vomiting; (c) as a response to property destruction, disruption of school order, a student's refusal to comply with a public education program rule or staff directive, or verbal threats when those actions do not constitute a threat of assault, or imminent, serious, physical harm; or (d) as a standard response for any individual student.

No written individual behavior plan or individualized education program (IEP) may include use of physical restraint as a standard response to any behavior. Physical restraint is an emergency procedure of last resort. Physical restraint in a public education program shall be limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary to protect a student or another member of the school community from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm.

Nothing in Westford Public Schools policy, or the applicable regulations, prohibits: (a) the right of any individual to report to appropriate authorities a crime committed by a student or other individual; (b) law enforcement, judicial authorities or school security personnel from exercising their responsibilities, including the physical detainment of a student or other person alleged to have committed a crime or posing a security risk; or (c) the exercise of an individual's responsibilities as a mandated reporter pursuant to MGL c. 119, § 51A.

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY / CHAPTER 622 & TITLE IX

In accordance with the regulations of Chapter 622 of the Acts of 1971, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, all courses of study, extra-curricular activities, services, and facilities offered by the school are available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, gender identity or national origin.

Furthermore in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, United States of America, no person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity.

Under both Chapter 622 and Title IX, provisions for grievance procedures are made. Any student, parent, guardian or other person or group who believes that these regulations have been or are being violated, may so notify the Principal, Superintendent of Schools, and Chapter 622/Title IX Coordinator. The School Department will respond promptly, but no later than 30 days, in writing to the party filing the grievance. The party filing the grievance may also submit a copy of the grievance to the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity of the Department of Education. Should a non-compliance be found, procedures for making changes will be made immediately initiated both to correct the non-compliance and to provide particular remedies to the person or group affected.

TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972

The Westford Public Schools does not tolerate discrimination against students, Parents/Caregivers, employees or the general public on the basis of sex. The Westford Public Schools is also committed to maintaining a school environment free of harassment based on sex, including harassment based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy status. The Westford Public Schools' policy of nondiscrimination extends to students, staff, the general public, and individuals with whom it does business; no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in employment, admission to a public school of Westford or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study of such public school on account of sex.

How to Report Sexual Harassment

Individuals are encouraged to report allegations of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator(s) identified below or the Principal. Any report of sexual harassment, as defined under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, will be responded to promptly in accordance with the *District's Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures*, available [here](#)

Reports of discriminatory harassment not constituting sexual harassment as defined under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, will be initially addressed through the *District's Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure* and may, if dismissed under that procedure, be investigated in accordance with the *District's Civil Rights Grievance Procedures*, available [here](#)

Upon receipt of a report of sexual harassment, the Title IX Coordinator will: (1) promptly and confidentially contact the complainant to discuss the availability of supportive measures; (2) inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a Title IX Formal Complaint; (3) consider the complainant's wishes with respect to supportive measures; (4) if the school district does not provide the complainant with supportive measures, document the reasons why such response was

reasonable; and (5) explain to the complainant the process for filing a Title IX Formal Complaint.

Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be directed to the District's Title IX Coordinator and/or the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

The District's Title IX Coordinator is:

Courtney Moran, Assistant Superintendent 978-692-5560 cmoran@westfordk12.us

TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENT

(School Committee [P5323](#))

The Westford Public Schools strives to provide a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment in which all students can thrive and succeed in its schools. The Westford Public Schools prohibits discrimination (see policy [P5303](#)) on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation and ensures that all students have equal rights of access and equal enjoyment of the opportunities, advantages, privileges, and courses of study.

NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)

PPRA affords parent/caregiver certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

- **Consent** before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas ("protected information survey") if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE): political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent/caregiver; mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family; sex behavior or attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships; legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers; religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parent/caregiver; or income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.
- **Receive notice** and an opportunity to opt a student out of the following: any other protected information survey, regardless of funding; any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under state law; and activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.
- **Inspect**, upon request and before administration or use: protected information surveys of students; instruments used to collect personal

information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum. These rights transfer from the parent/caregiver to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under state law.

The Westford Public Schools will/has develop(ed) and adopt(ed) policies, in consultation with parent/caregiver, regarding these rights, as well as arrangements to protect student privacy in the administration of protected information surveys and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes. The District will directly notify parent/caregiver of these policies at least annually at the start of each school year and after any substantive changes. The District will also directly notify, such as through U.S. Mail or email, parent/caregiver of students who are scheduled to participate in the specific activities or surveys noted below and will provide an opportunity for the parent/caregiver to opt their child out of participation in the specific activity or survey. The District will make this notification to the parent/caregiver at the beginning of the school year if the District has identified the specific or approximate dates of the activities or surveys at that time. For surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, parent/caregiver will be provided reasonable notification of the planned activities and surveys listed below and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out of such activities and surveys. Parent/Caregiver will also be provided an opportunity to review any pertinent surveys.

Specific activities and surveys covered under this requirement include: the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales or other distribution; the administration of any protected information survey not funded in whole or in part by DOE; and any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening as described above. Parent/Caregiver who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with: Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-5901.

WEAPONS POLICY MGL CHAPTER 269, SEC. 10

It is illegal to have a weapon in school or on school property. Students who are in possession of a weapon or a look alike risk expulsion from school. In all cases, authorities will be notified, the student will be immediately suspended from school, and an expulsion hearing will be held. Weapons are defined as guns, knives, bows, arrows, darts, or any other objects, which in the opinion of the administration may cause harm to you or others.

Whoever not being a law enforcement officer, and notwithstanding any license obtained by them under the provisions of Chapter 140, carries on their person a firearm as hereinafter defined, loaded or unloaded, in any building or on the grounds of any secondary school, college, or university without the written authorization of the Board or Officer in charge of such secondary school, college, or university shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or by imprisonment for not more than one year, or both. For the purpose of this paragraph, "firearm" shall mean any pistol, revolver, rifle, or smoothbore arm from which a shot, bullet, or pellet can be discharged by whatever means.

CHILD REQUIRING ASSISTANCE (CRA)

CRA stands for Child Requiring Assistance. This is a legal process initiated by either the parent/caregiver or school to provide supervision and support to children between the ages of 6 and 18 who are experiencing difficulties at home, school, or in the community. A CRA case is not a criminal proceeding but rather a way for parents, guardians, school officials, or in some cases, law enforcement, to seek the court's help in addressing a child's specific behaviors or circumstances.

Reasons for filing a CRA petition include:

- Runaway: Repeatedly running away from home.
- Stubborn Child: Repeatedly disobeying reasonable commands from a parent, guardian, or custodian, which puts the child's well-being at risk.
- Truancy: Habitually absent from school without a valid excuse (for children aged 6-16).
- Habitual School Offender: Repeatedly violating school rules (for children aged 6-16).
- Sexually Exploited Child: Being subjected to sexual servitude, sex trafficking, engaging in sexual conduct for a fee, or being a victim of inducing a minor into prostitution or common night walking/streetwalking (for individuals under 18).

HARASSMENT POLICY

(School Committee [P5303](#))

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, gender identity, creed, marital status, sexual orientation 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 busses, or attending or engaging in school activities.

Harassment means conduct of a verbal or physical nature which is designed to embarrass, distress, agitate, disturb, or trouble any person when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's work or education or of an individual's participation in school programs or activities.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting the individual.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating or hostile learning or working environment.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal, physical or written harassment or abuse
- Unsolicited remarks or remarks of a demeaning nature
- Gestures or physical contact

- Displays or circulation of written materials or pictures derogatory to either gender or derogatory to racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation or disability groups.
- Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievement, or other school matters.
- Demeaning jokes, stories, or activities directed at an individual.

Gender Harassment (Sexual Harassment) includes, but is not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature as listed below:

- Submission is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's participation in school programs or activities.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for work or educational decisions affecting such individuals.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or educational performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working/educational environment.

Each administrator shall be responsible within their school or office for promoting an understanding of harassment and assuring compliance with state and federal laws, and with School Committee policy and regulations governing harassment.

Violations will be cause for disciplinary action up to termination or expulsion.

Retaliation in any form against any person who has filed a complaint relating to harassment will not be tolerated. No individual will be subject to any form of coercion, intimidation, retaliation or discrimination for filing a report of harassment. The consequences for retaliation will be the same as for harassment. False accusations made in bad faith will be subject to the same disciplinary action as the harassment itself.

Following disclosure by a student of an incident involving student-to-student harassment, **one or more** of the following may occur after investigation by an appropriate responder.

- A letter identifying the offending behavior may be written and given to the offender. This is not a disciplinary action. The letter is not kept on file in the Principal's Office. However, it is retained by the Guidance Director. If harassment described by the student involves extreme physical assault, a letter response would not be appropriate, and the matter would be turned over to an administrator for more direct attention and disciplinary action.
- Notification of parent/caregiver when disciplinary action is not required may vary depending on the school level.
- Student may be disciplined.

If students feel that they are being harassed by adult personnel, they are encouraged to report the incident to a counselor and/or administrator. Appropriate action will be taken in all instances.

The following disciplinary actions for a substantiated charge against students that requires action beyond the "letter writing level" may result in the following:

- Student(s) may be suspended.
- Student(s) may be referred to the Superintendent or School Committee
- Police or court action may be initiated.

CRIMINAL OFFENDER RECORD INFORMATION (CORI)

All school visitors who have not completed a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check must be accompanied by a designated school representative at all times. All Westford Public Schools volunteers must complete a CORI check annually, *no later than December 21st each year.*

FINGERPRINTING

(School Committee [P4503](#))

On January 10, 2013 the national criminal background check regulation was signed into law. As a result of this law, in addition to staff, Westford Public Schools requires all field trip chaperones and volunteer athletic coaches to abide by the fingerprinting obligation. Instructions on scheduling an appointment may be found [here](#). Fingerprint reports are sent directly to the Office of the Superintendent. You will only be notified if you are not approved for volunteering.

DUE PROCESS

Westford Public Schools adheres to the student discipline laws and regulations as set forth in M.G.L. ch. 71, § 37H, 37H½ and 37H¾ and 603 CMR 53.00 et seq.

In accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H3/4, as amended through Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022, all school principals and principal's designees and the Superintendent and Superintendent's designees when acting as a decision-maker at a disciplinary hearing or appeal to consider student discipline for violations of school rules other than offenses involving drugs, weapons, assaults on school staff and felony offenses, shall, when deciding the consequences for the student, consider ways to re-engage the student in the learning process. The principal or designee shall not suspend the student until alternative remedies have been employed, and their use and results documented unless specific reasons are documented as to why such alternative remedies would be unsuitable or counter-productive, or unless the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm upon another person while in school. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 3/4(b). Alternative remedies may include, but shall not be limited to: (i) mediation; (ii) conflict resolution; (iii) restorative justice; and (iv) collaborative problem solving.

ALTERNATIVE REMEDIES/SUSPENSION/EMERGENCY REMOVAL/EXCLUSION

Procedural Due Process

A student will not be excluded from school without being afforded appropriate due process as set forth below. If, however, a student's continued presence in school poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the administrator's, judgment there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption, a student who is charged with a disciplinary offense may be removed temporarily from school before receiving due process pursuant to an Emergency Removal (see below for more information).

Suspensions

Suspensions may be short term or long term. Short term suspension means the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive school days or less. Long term suspension means the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year.

Suspensions may also occur in-school or out-of-school. In-school suspension is the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises, for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions during the school year. Long-term suspension means the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. A principal may, in their discretion, allow a student to serve a long-term suspension in school.

During the course of any suspension, a student is ineligible to participate in any school-related activities, including athletic activities. The student and their parents are expected to meet with a school administrator prior to the student's return to class. During the course of an out-of-school suspension, a student may not be on school premises.

IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

An in-school suspension is a removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises. The procedure for an in-school suspension of no more than (10) school days (consecutive or cumulatively for multiple infractions during the school year) will be as follows:

- The administrator will inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged, the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to respond. If the administrator determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the administrator will inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which may not exceed 10 days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.
- On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the administrator will make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in school suspension. The administrator will also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meetings will be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the administrator is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least (2) attempts to do so, such attempts will constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent of the in-school suspension.
- The administrator will send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The administrator will deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the administrator and the parent.

An in-school suspension of more than 10 cumulative days in a school year will be subject to the procedures for long-term suspension.

The Principal may remove a student from privileges, such as extracurricular activities and attendance at school-sponsored events, based on the student's misconduct. Such a removal is not subject to such due process procedures.

SHORT TERM, OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

Except in the case of an Emergency Removal, prior to imposing a short term out-of-school suspension (10 days or less in a school year) for conduct not covered by M.G.L. c. 71, §37H and 37H ½, an administrator will provide the student and their parent/caregiver oral and written notice and an opportunity to participate in an informal hearing.

1. The written notice to the student and the parent/caregiver will be in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate and will include the following:
 - the disciplinary offense;
 - the basis for the charge;
 - the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension;
 - the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the administrator concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent to attend the hearing;
 - the date, time, and location of the hearing;
 - the right of the student and the student's parent/caregiver to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

Written notice to the parent may be made by hand delivery, first-class mail, certified mail, email to an address provided by the parent/caregiver for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the school and parent.

2. The administrator will make reasonable efforts to notify the parent of the opportunity to attend the hearing. To conduct a hearing without the parent/caregiver present, the administrator must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent. The administrator is presumed to have made reasonable efforts if the administrator has sent written notice and has documented at least two (2) attempts to contact the parent/caregiver in the manner specified by the parent/caregiver for emergency notification.

3. The administrator will discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student also will have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the administrator should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate. The administrator will provide the parent/caregiver, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the administrator should consider in determining consequences for the student.

4. The administrator will provide written notice to the student, parent/caregiver, and superintendent of their determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal. The notice of determination may be in the form of an update to the original written notice of hearing.

LONG TERM SUSPENSION

Except in the case of an Emergency Removal, prior to imposing a long-term suspension (more than 10 days of suspension, whether in-school or out-of-school, whether consecutive or cumulative for multiple offenses during a school year), an administrator will follow the procedures for short-term suspension plus additional procedures as follows:

- The notice will include all of the components for a short-term suspension in Section II above, plus the following:
 - In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the administrator may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
 - the right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's/parent's expense;
 - the right to produce witnesses on their behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so;
 - the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;
 - the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the administrator, and a copy of the audio recording provided to the student or parent upon request; and
 - the right to appeal the administrator's decision to impose long-term suspension to the superintendent.
- The Hearing will afford the rights set forth in the notice above. The administrator will also provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the administrator should consider in determining consequences for the student.
- Based on the evidence, the administrator will determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to long-term suspension, what remedy or consequence will be imposed, in place of or in addition to a long-term suspension. The administrator will send the written determination to the student and parent/caregiver by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the school and the parent/caregiver. If the administrator decides to suspend the student on a long-term basis, the written determination will:
 - Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;

- Set out the key facts and conclusions reached;
- Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
- Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school (if more than 10 cumulative days);
- Inform the student of the right to appeal the administrator's decision to the superintendent or designee. Notice of the right of appeal will be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate, and will include the following information stated in plain language:
 - the process for appealing the decision, including that the student or parent must file a written notice of appeal with the superintendent within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the long-term suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or parent may request and receive from the superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar days; and that
 - the long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the administrator's determination on appeal.

No long-term suspension will extend beyond the end of the school year in which such suspension is imposed.

EXPULSION

Students are subject to expulsion (i.e, permanent exclusion) by the Principal for the conduct listed below. (See also, M.G.L. ch. 71, §§37H

- Possession of a dangerous weapon*
- Possession of a controlled substance (such as marijuana, cocaine, or prescription drugs not authorized by the school nurse)
- Assault on teachers, administrative staff or other educational personnel

*This includes not only knives and guns, explosive devices and realistic replicas of such weapons/devices, but also other objects used to assault another person or to otherwise create a dangerous situation, such as a baseball bat, a pair of scissors, matches or a lighter. While such objects would not always constitute "dangerous weapons," administrators and educational professionals will review the circumstances of each case and make a reasonable determination about whether a particular object in a student's possession constitutes a dangerous weapon in the school setting. Any illegal weapon will be turned over to the Police Department. Any student who brings a firearm to school must be expelled for a minimum of one school year, with exceptions granted only by the

superintendent. (The definition of a firearm includes but is not limited to guns (including a starter gun), bombs, grenades, rockets, missiles, mines and similar devices.)

Students are also subject to long term suspension/expulsion by the Principal when charged/convicted of a felony based upon the standards and procedures set forth in M.G.L. c.71, §37H1/2.

Any student who is removed from school for a disciplinary offense under G.L. c. 71, §37H or §37H½ for more than ten consecutive days will have an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress during the period of removal under a school-wide education service plan, and will be so informed at the time of the suspension/expulsion.

Procedures Applicable To Conduct Covered by M.G.L. C. 71, §37H AND 37H ½

When considering the exclusion of a student from school for possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance (such as marijuana, cocaine, or prescription drugs not authorized by the school nurse), or assault on teachers, an administrator may place a student on short term suspension (ten days or less) based upon an informal hearing, to be followed by a formal hearing before the Principal within that period of suspension to determine whether to take additional disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from school.

- The informal hearing will be in the form of a conference between the student and the principal or designee. At this conference, the student (1) shall be informed of the reason for the conference, (2) shall be given the opportunity to present their side of the story, and (3) shall be given a decision on the suspension. If the administrator deems delay of the hearing necessary to avoid danger or substantial disruption, this process may occur immediately after, rather than before, the suspension.
- Prior to putting a suspension into effect, the Principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to telephone and inform the student's parent or caregiver of the impending suspension; this shall include attempts to contact the parents or caregiver at home and at work. Parents may contact the school for additional information regarding the suspension.
- A letter will be mailed to the parent/caregiver of the suspended student stating:
 - The reason for the suspension
 - A statement of the effective date and duration of the suspension
 - A statement regarding whether or not the Principal will schedule a formal hearing to consider further discipline, up to and including expulsion from school in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, §37H

When considering a suspension/expulsion of a student charged with/convicted of felony, the Principal will use the standards and procedures set forth in M.G.L. c.71, §37H1/2. In addition, prior to initiating such procedures, the Principal may meet informally with the student and/or their parents/caregivers to review the charge and the applicable standards if the Principal deems appropriate.

Exception for Emergency Removal

Notwithstanding the provisions for short or long-term suspension set forth above, a student who is charged with a disciplinary offense may be removed temporarily from school if the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the administrator's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption.

The administrator will immediately notify the superintendent in writing of the removal and the reason for it, and describe the danger [or disruption] by the student.

The temporary removal will not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time the administrator will provide the following, as applicable to the length of suspension:

- Make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's parent of the emergency removal, the reason for the need for emergency removal, and other applicable matters;
- Provide written notice to the student and parent as provided in Section II or III above, as applicable;
- Provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the administrator, as applicable, and the parent an opportunity to attend the hearing, before the expiration of the two (2) school days, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the administrator, student, and parent.
- Render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day.

An administrator may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation.

Appeal to the Superintendent

If a decision by an administrator, following the parent meeting, results in suspension of a student for more than 10 cumulative school days for the school year, the student may appeal the decision to the superintendent. In order to do so the student or parent must file a notice of appeal with the Superintendent within five (5) calendar days with a seven (7) day postponement option. The superintendent must hold the hearing within three (3) school days of the student's request, unless the student or parent/caregiver requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days. If the appeal is not filed within this

time frame, the Superintendent may deny the appeal, or may allow the appeal in their discretion, for good cause.

The following apply:

- The Superintendent will make a good faith effort to include the parent/caregiver in the hearing. The superintendent will be presumed to have made a good faith effort if they have made efforts to find a day and time for the hearing that would allow the parent/caregiver and Superintendent to participate. The Superintendent will send written notice to the parent/caregiver of the date, time, and location of the hearing.
- The Superintendent will conduct a hearing to determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and if so, what the consequence will be. The Superintendent will arrange for an audio recording of the hearing, a copy of which will be provided to the student or parent /caregiver upon request. The Superintendent will inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made of the hearing and a copy will be provided to the student and parent/caregiver upon request.
- The student will have all the rights afforded the student at the administrator's hearing for long-term suspension as described in Section III above.
- The Superintendent will issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing which meets the requirements for a long-term suspension as described in Section III above. If the superintendent determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the administrator, but will not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the administrator's decision. The decision of the Superintendent constitutes the final decision of the school district.

DANGEROUS WEAPONS, CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES & ASSAULTS ON EDUCATIONAL STAFF

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, section 37H requires that all student handbooks contain the following provisions:

- Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.
- Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, educational support professional or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

- Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (a) or (b) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After said hearing, a principal may, in their discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (a) or (b).
- Any student who has been expelled from a school district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of their appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.
- Any school district that suspends or expels a student under this section shall continue to provide educational services to the student during the period of suspension or expulsion under section 21 of chapter 76. If the student moves to another district during the period of suspension or expulsion, the new district of residence shall either admit the student to the school or provide educational services to the student in an education service plan, under section 21 of chapter 76.

Students should note that the definition of “assault” includes not only harmful or offensive contact, but also threatening such contact.

Additionally, students should be aware that the federal Gun Free Schools Act mandates that any student who brings a firearm to school be expelled for a minimum of one year, with exceptions granted only by the Superintendent. Under this Act, a firearm includes not only a gun but also an explosive device.

FELONY COMPLAINTS OR CONVICTIONS

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, section 37H 1/2 provides that:

- Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony or upon the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal or designee of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal or designee if said principal or designee determines that the student’s continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and the reasons for such suspension prior to such suspension taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of their right to appeal and the process for appealing such suspension; provided, however, that such suspension

shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

- The student shall have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent in writing of their request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or caregiver within three calendar days of the student's request for an appeal. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on their behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or designee, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such a decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the suspension.
- Upon a student being convicted of a felony or upon an adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the principal or designee of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal or designee determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for such expulsion prior to such expulsion taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of their right to appeal and the process for appealing such expulsion; provided, however, that the expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.
- The student shall have the right to appeal the expulsion to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent, in writing, of their request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the expulsion. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or caregiver within three calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on their behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or designee, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such a decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the expulsion.
- Any school district that suspends or expels a student under this section shall continue to provide educational services to the student during the period of suspension or expulsion under section 21 of chapter 76. If the student moves to another district during the period of suspension or expulsion, the new district of residence shall either admit the student to the school or provide educational

services to the student in an education service plan, under section 21 of chapter 76.

DISCIPLINE AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. In addition to those due process protections afforded to all students, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and related regulations require that additional provisions be made for students who have been found eligible for special education services or who the school district knows or has reason to know might be eligible for such services. Students who have been found to have a disability that impacts upon a major life activity, as defined under §504 of the Rehabilitation Act are, generally, also entitled to increased procedural protections prior to imposing discipline that will result in the student's removal for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or where there is a pattern of short term removals exceeding ten (10) school days in a given year. The following additional requirements apply to the discipline of students with disabilities:

- Students with disabilities may be excluded from their programs for up to ten (10) school days to the extent that such sanctions would be applied to all students. Before a student with a disability can be excluded from their program for more than ten (10) consecutive school days in a given school year or subjected to a pattern of removal constituting a "change in placement", building administrators, the parent/caregiver, and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team will meet to determine the relationship between the student's disability and behavior (Manifestation Determination). In most instances, during disciplinary exclusions exceeding ten (10) school days in a single school year, the student shall have the right to receive the services identified as necessary by the Team to provide them with a free appropriate public education during the period of exclusion.
- If building administrators, the parent/caregiver, and relevant members of the IEP or 504 Team determine that the student's conduct was not a manifestation of the student's disability, the school may discipline the student in accordance with the procedures and penalties applicable to all students but will continue to provide a free appropriate public education to those students with IEPs. The student's IEP TEAM will identify the services necessary to provide a free appropriate public education during the period of exclusion, review any existing behavior intervention plan or, where appropriate, conduct a functional behavioral assessment.
- If building administrators, the parent/caregiver, and relevant members of the IEP or 504 Team determine that the conduct giving rise to the disciplinary action was a manifestation of the student's disability, the student will not be subjected to further disciplinary removal or exclusion from the student's current educational program based on that conduct (except for conduct involving weapons, drugs, or resulting in serious bodily injury to others) until the IEP or 504 Team develops, and the parent/caregiver consent to a new placement, or until the District obtains

an order from court or from the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA) authorizing a change in the student's placement. The student's Team shall also review, and modify as appropriate, any existing behavior intervention plan or arrange for a functional behavioral assessment.

DISCLAIMER: Westford Public Schools reserves the right to make necessary changes in the student handbook