



WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT HANDBOOK 2026 - 2027

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Westford, MA 01886
978-692-5582
<https://bms.westfordk12.us/>

Stony Brook School
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Westford, MA 01886
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TRANSLATIONS

Amharic: የዚህን የተማሪ መመሪያ መጽሐፍ የተተረጎመውን ስናቀርብልዎ ደስተኞች ነን። የተተረጎመ ቅጂ ወይም ማንኛውንም ተዛማጅ ግንኙነት ወይም መረጃ ለመቀበል ከፈለጉ እባክዎን 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 હન્ડબુકનું ભાષાતંત્રિ ત સસું કરણ પ્રદાન કરવા માટે પ્રસન્ન થઈશું. જો તમને અનુવાદિત નકલ, અથવા અન્ય કોઈપણ સબંધિત જાહેરિ અથવા માહિતી મળે વવામાં રસ હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને મખુય કાર્યાલયનો સપર્ક 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: យើងមានសច្ច្តិសោធនសសរីរិកវាយក្នុងការផ្តល់ឱ្យអ្នកនូវកំណបនសៀវភៅសិសស។ បសិនបើអ្នកចាប់អារម្មណ៍ក្នុងការទទួលបានច្បាប់ចម្លងដល់បានបកប្បកាសឬព័ត៌មានដល់ពាក់ព័ន្ធផសង្ស័យទាក់ទងការិយាល័យផង។

Korean: 이 학생 핸드북의 번역본을 제공하게 된 것을 기쁘게 생각합니다. 번역본이나 기타 관련 공지 또는 정보를 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 ليوالتيا لرئ، مهرباني وکړئ د ښوونځي اصلي دفتر سره اړيکه نويسئ.

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.

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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 Public Schools strive to develop an inclusive and equitable school community where every individual is welcomed, respected, valued, and supported.

We strive to reflect and value the faces, voices, and experiences of our diverse community in our curriculum, school activities, and celebrations. We recognize that all members of our community bear a responsibility for this important work. Diversity includes but is not limited to: socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion/spiritual beliefs and values, geography, cognitive and physical abilities, and age. Celebrating diversity in Westford schools entails creating equitable learning environments for all students. The diversity among our students, faculty, and staff is essential to achieving the desired outcomes of the school. We aim for students to feel, learn, and advance in a manner that reflects themselves, and empowers them to acknowledge the positive attributes that they bring to the learning experience.

An inclusive learning environment will allow all students to learn uninhibitedly, make more significant interpersonal connections with peers and educators, see themselves in the curriculum and surroundings, and protect space for that student to bring their whole authentic self to the learning environment and enriches the overall learning experience. Westford Public Schools is committed to cultivating a sense of belonging in the climate of our school, district, and with the community. When our students feel connected to their educational environment, it generates tremendous benefits to their education outcomes.

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. Inquiries about these non-discrimination laws may be directed to the District Coordinators named below.

ADA (Employee) Coordinator: Dr. Christopher Chew, Superintendent of Schools

ADA (Student) Coordinator: Ms. Courtney Moran, Assistant Superintendent

Homeless Coordinator: Mr. Gerard Coughlin, Director of Special Education and SEL

Section 504 Coordinator: Mr. Gerard Coughlin, Director of Special Education and SEL

Title VI Coordinator: Dr. Christopher Chew, Superintendent of Schools

Title IX Coordinator: Ms. Courtney Moran, Assistant Superintendent

Westford Public Schools

23 Depot Street

Westford, Massachusetts 01886

Acceptable Use of District-wide Computing Environment [P6302](#)

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. To encourage that joint commitment of responsible behavior, the district schools will include the following paragraphs of this Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in all the student handbooks for grades 6-12.

School Support for the Safe and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies

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.

Copyright Law: Users shall observe copyright law in using material obtained from network sources; including the citing of sources and also by refraining from using pictures or other images without permission from the owner.

Etiquette: 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.

Online Safety: 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*.

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

Publishing: 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 parental permission.

Massachusetts General Law References:

M.G.L. 71:34D – Student Records: Regulations

M.G.L. 71:34E – Inspection of Records by parent

M.G.L. 71:34H – Publication of School Committee Rules and Regulations Relative to the Conduct of Teachers and Students

M.G.L. 76:5 – Place of Attendance: Discrimination

Other References:

Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations 603 CMR 23:00 Student Records

Federal Law References:

Fair Use Doctrine of Copyright Law 17 U.S.C. Section 107 1988 e. and Sup. IV. Title VII of 1964 Civil Rights Act

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Westford Public Schools Policy References:

P4203 – Harassment

P5301 – Student Conduct P5302 - Student Handbooks P5303 – Harassment

P5304 – Bullying P5502 – Safety

P6115 – Student Publications/Photos, Images, Audiotapes and Exhibits P6118 – Library Materials Selection and Adoption

P6301 – District Computing Environment

Policy Adopted: April 9, 2001

Policy Reviewed: January 31, 2011

Policy Revised: February 14, 2011

RESPONSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

The use of technology resources at our middle schools with Westford Public Schools owned devices, and the freedom and responsibility to utilize personally owned electronic devices is a privilege, not a right.

Personal Devices, WPS Owned Devices and WPS Login credentials

- Students are expected to use WPS devices assigned to them for the purpose of academic activities. Gaming is limited to online interactive tools for learning. (*Gimkit, Kahoot, Blooket, etc.*)
- Students are expected to use their WPS login credentials (00lastname@westfordk12.us) for the purpose of academic activities. Gaming, shopping or other non-academic use is considered inappropriate use of WPS technology.
- Students should not under any circumstances photograph, film, or audio record other students or faculty on campus during the school day with a personal or school-owned device unless it is for a school sanctioned, class assignment and with consent.
- Mobile electronic devices are prohibited from use in bathrooms and locker rooms for the safety of all students.
- Students are responsible for the use of a device assigned to them even if they let someone else use it.

Network Security - Any user of a network provided by Westford Public Schools is expected to abide by the rules of conduct set forth by the District.

- Students must use the network in a way that would not disrupt the use of the network by others, including downloading, storing, distributing, or sharing any software or digital file (such as movies, music, or text) in violation of copyright laws.
- Students must respect bandwidth limits. Streaming audio or video (**Spotify**, iTunes radio, Netflix, etc.) **and video games on WPS owned Chromebooks** impacts network speeds and should be limited to academic use.
- Students must not attempt to connect unauthorized wifi networks or gain access to unauthorized accounts or files.
- Students must not attempt to learn or use network passwords on personal devices and must notify IT of any misuse of the network.
- Students must not attempt to bypass the district's web-filtering.

Personal Safety - All students agree to utilize technology including **social media** tools, being mindful of their own personal safety and of that of all members of the Westford Academy community.

- Students must keep all personal information private, including passwords, user ID's, home address, and phone numbers.
- Students may access only appropriate academic documents and media.
- Students should not photograph or make audio or video recordings without the consent of all those being recorded.
- Students may not harass, bully, cyber-bully, or threaten others in any way.
- Students must use appropriate language in all communications.

Email - Students are assigned an email account for academic purposes.

- Students are encouraged to check email at least once per day.
- Teachers may send email to other students within WPS to collaborate on group projects and assist with school classes.
- Students may send and receive email *outside* the WPS domain for the purpose of school related communication.
- Teachers may send email to students to communicate reminders, course content, pose questions related to class work, and such.
- Students may send email to their teachers with questions or comments regarding class and co-curricular activities.

I understand and will abide by the above terms and conditions of District Harassment Policy [P5303](#) and District Bullying Policy [P5304](#), as well as this Responsible Use Policy, and will use computer and electronic resources for curricular purposes only. I further understand that any violation of this agreement is unethical and may constitute a criminal offense and may result in civil liability to me and my caregiver or guardians, if I am under age 18. Should I commit any violation, I am subject to consequences of the school and district disciplinary code and of state and federal law and furthermore, may result in the suspension of my computer privileges; suspension from school; and/or legal action and prosecution by the authorities.

USER NAME (PRINT): _____

USER SIGNATURE (SIGN): _____

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ADMINISTRATION

Main phone number: 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	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

BLANCHARD SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Adam Ingano
Principal
978-692-5582 x6163

Janet Keirstead
Assistant Principal
978-692-5582 x6171

STONY BROOK SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Allison Hammer
Principal
978-692-2708 x6755

Alec Lapan
Assistant Principal
978-692-2708 x6754

Update 5/20/2026

WESTFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

school-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, Secretary	wmcdonald@westfordk12.us
Ms. Laurie Oliver	loliver@westfordk12.us
Ms. Shana Farnsworth	sfarnsworth@westfordk12.us
Dr. Jessica Silverman	jsilverman@westfordk12.us

Visit the [Westford School Committee website](#) for a schedule of meetings and a complete list of Westford Public Schools policies. Policies are also available in the school's main office.

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALENDAR

Here is the link to the [District Calendar](#).

HANDBOOK DISCLAIMER

The Middle School Student Handbook is designed to provide students and families with general information pertaining to school expectations, programs, and procedures. Central Administration, Blanchard School and Stony Brook School reserves the right to make necessary changes in the student handbook as necessary.

RECORD OF TRANSMITTAL

A parent or caregiver signature is required on the Record of Transmittal form distributed on the first day of school. This form verifies that a caregiver or parent has read and reviewed the handbook with the student. The handbook will be posted online and copies will be made available in the office. Please return the Transmittal Form to the school office by the date provided on the form.

HOME / SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS DISTRICT WEBSITE

A wealth of information and links to all of the [Westford Public Schools](#) websites.

SCHOOL CLOSING / DELAYED OPENING / EMERGENCY RELEASE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Office of the Superintendent of Schools will place emergency automated telephone calls between 5:30 AM and 6:00 AM to notify caregiver or parent of a school cancellation or delayed opening. In the event that the internet or telephone lines are down and calls are not successfully transmitted, the information may also be found on the Westford Public School website at <https://www.westfordk12.us/> and on local television/radio stations.

The automated calls are considered “emergency notifications” and will be made districtwide to all listed numbers. An opt-out option is not available. Any changes in contact information must be provided to the main office.

NO SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following radio stations carry our no school announcements:

- WBZ-Boston 1030 WBZ-TV (Channel 4) Boston
- WCAP-Lowell 980 WCVB-TV (Channel 5) Boston
- WRKO 680 WHDH (Channel 7) Boston
- Fox 25 News Boston
- Cable TV (Channel 8) Westford

POWERSCHOOL REGISTRATION

PowerSchool is specially designed to provide a means of communication and sharing information between caregivers, teachers, students, and administrators. The *PowerSchool* system is integrated into the District’s student information system. Progress report, report card, attendance, and biographical information is communicated through *PowerSchool*. Blanchard and Stony Brook Schools request that all parents apply for *parent* access. To apply, go to the Westford Public Schools home page at <https://www.westfordk12.us/> and click on the *PowerSchool parent* link.

Should sensitive information need to be conveyed to a parent/caregiver in a timely manner, an automated telephone message will be sent out.

SCHOOL WEBSITE

The school website is a primary vehicle for communicating with families. Visit the [Blanchard website](#) or [Stony Brook website](#) for information pertaining to events, activities, student life, and school services.

SCHOOL NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters are sent from the individual school’s principal via email. You may also sign up to receive these emails via the school or district website.

STAFF DIRECTORY

Every teacher is issued an email and voicemail account. A staff directory can be found on the school website at [Blanchard Staff Directory](#) or [Stony Brook Staff Directory](#).

PARENT/CAREGIVER CONFERENCES

Annual parent/Caregiver-Teacher conference events are designated on the district calendar. Individual meetings with a teacher may also be scheduled by contacting the individual teacher directly. Meetings with a team of teachers may also be scheduled by contacting the Counseling Department.

OPEN HOUSE

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend an annual Open House in the fall. The goal of Open House is to provide an opportunity to meet and greet with staff and receive general curriculum information.

SCHOOL POSTINGS

Approval from building administration is required prior to posting on school property.

FORGOTTEN ITEMS

Should a student forget homework, needed school supplies or permission slip, etc. parents should bring forgotten items to the main office. Students may come to the office area to pick up items before or after lunch or with permission from a teacher. Classes will not be interrupted for this reason.

LOST AND FOUND

Any lost articles, books, clothing, etc. should be turned into the office. They will then be placed into the Lost & Found Box at Stony Brook and on a table located outside the main office at Blanchard, where they will be held for a period of time. Clothing will only be stored temporarily. If not claimed, all usable articles of apparel will be donated to a social agency.

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.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MODEL

The Blanchard and Stony Brook Schools provide students with a rich educational experience designed to support the unique needs of young adolescents. Consistent with best practices in middle school, Westford's students are organized into interdisciplinary teams in grades six, seven, and eight. The team creates a smaller community within the school where students are well known by multiple adults. Educator collaboration is at the heart of the Westford middle school model. Teachers meet regularly to plan instruction, interventions, and team activities to build spirit and community.

CURRICULUM

The middle school curriculum is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks incorporating the Common Core State Standards. The teaching teams provide academic instruction in English Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science. Integrated Arts courses provide additional experiential, hands-on activities in the areas of Physical Education, Art, Engineering, Health, and Music/Theater. Additionally, four world languages are offered including Spanish, French, German, and Latin.

SCHEDULE

The middle schools operate on a six-day cycle. Individual building schedules are posted on the school websites.

HOMEROOM/ADVISORY

All students are assigned a homeroom. Students report to homeroom at the start of the school day for attendance, the Pledge of Allegiance, and morning announcements.

An advisory block is built into the schedule each morning. Students may use this time to meet with teachers individually and in small groups, access school resources such as the library and labs, collaborate on projects, or participate in team activities. Music ensembles rehearse during designated advisories in the six day cycle.

SCHOOL COUNSELING

The counseling department works with students to support their academic, social/emotional, and personal development. A counselor is assigned to each grade level and follows students through their middle school career.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TEAM

Caregivers, parents, and/or staff may initiate a referral of any Student to the Instructional Support Team (IST) at any time. The IST is composed of both general education and special education staff. Once a referral has been made to the IST, staff will collaborate to ensure that any student experiencing difficulty in school will receive any needed regular education services or classroom accommodations that the IST deems necessary to address the student's needs. Referrals to the IST are considered a general education initiative. Such referrals do not preclude any caregiver, parent or professional position concerned with the Student's development, from initiating a referral for evaluation for special education services. Further information regarding the special education referral and evaluation process may be obtained from the office of the Director of Pupil Services.

ACADEMIC INTERVENTION

Resources are available to individual students in need of additional assistance with academics, including academic coaching.

EXTRA HELP

Teachers are available to provide occasional extra help for students after school. Students are strongly encouraged to contact individual teachers to make arrangements in advance.

MUSIC ENSEMBLES

Chorus, orchestra, and band programs are offered as part of the middle school curriculum and are graded subjects. These programs are open to all students.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education is required of all students unless excused by a physician in writing. Proper dress is required for all Physical Education classes.

LIBRARY/LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS

The mission of the library is to foster academic excellence by providing services and instruction to students that support the school's curriculum. Library Media Specialists collaborate with faculty in designing learning opportunities with quality resources, information, and technology to help students become effective expert lifelong learners.

Program Goals:

- To encourage a love of reading and an appreciation of good literature.
- To provide students with access to a variety of information, which enables them to define a problem, locate, apply, synthesize and evaluate information throughout the research process.
- To ensure that students achieve the necessary skills to ethically, creatively and critically use information and technology to acquire knowledge.

The following guidelines are listed for your information:

- The default checkout period is three weeks. Borrowed materials should be returned or renewed on the date due. Students may request a longer time for materials required for a project.
- Students are responsible for all library materials in their possession. Care should be given not to lose or damage borrowed materials.
- Please report any lost or damaged materials to the library media specialist. Students will be responsible for any replacement costs. Items must be returned and/or fees must be paid prior to borrowing additional materials from the library.

GRADING

Electronic report cards are issued at the close of each trimester. The report card will indicate grades in each course as well as narrative feedback in conduct and effort. A student's grade is based on their ability to demonstrate mastery of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the Westford Public Schools grade level curriculum. A report card key is included below. Questions concerning grades or progress should be addressed to the individual teachers.

REPORT CARD KEY					
COURSE GRADING					
A+ = 97-100 A = 93-96 A- = 90-92	B+ = 87-89 B = 83-86 B- = 80-82	C+ = 77-79 C = 73-76 C- = 70-72	D+ = 67-69 D = 63-66 D- = 60-62	F = 59 & below	I = Incomplete P = Pass F = Fail NG = No Grade

INCOMPLETE

A student receiving an incomplete grade ("I") in any subject must make up work within four weeks. If the work is not made up, the grade will become an "F". The student is expected to initiate the make-up arrangements with the teacher.

HONOR ROLL

Honor Roll is indicated on the report card each trimester. Criteria for Honor Roll is a grade of "B" or above. Criteria for High Honors is a grade of "A" and no more than one "B".

PROMOTION / RETENTION

Promotion to the next grade is not automatic. A student must pass English Language Arts and two other academic subjects as a minimum for consideration for promotion. A student who fails two or more subjects for the year will be considered for retention.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating/plagiarism may include, but is not limited to, the following: providing materials (tests, quizzes, projects or papers) to another student from a current or previously taken course, copying another student's work or working with other students to complete an assignment when not instructed to do so by the teacher, purposeful communication of information or use of unauthorized resources during a testing environment, and purposeful distribution of work/answers via printed, electronic, or verbal format to other students when such work will be considered for grading purposes. Students may not use Artificial Intelligence/AI-based generators to produce work unless permitted as part of a class assignment. AI-generated products should not be submitted as the student's original creation. In any instance of cheating or plagiarism, including the use of AI, the teacher shall retain the student's work and notify the parent/caregiver and Administration. Incidents of cheating/plagiarism will also be subject to disciplinary action by Administration on a case-by-case basis.

FIELD TRIPS

Westford Public School Policy [P6120](#) – Field Trips

Field trips are organized in conjunction with team or classroom activities. They are an extension of the educational program that expands and reinforces concepts learned in the classroom; all students are encouraged to attend. Students not attending a field trip are expected to be in school working on alternative assignments related to the objectives of the field trip. Parents/caregivers will be asked to make a donation to cover the cost of their child attending. A permission slip completed and signed by a parent/caregiver is required for participation in a field trip. Financial hardship should never keep a student from attending a field trip. Please contact the school principal for financial assistance.

TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are property of the school and loaned to students for use throughout the year. Textbooks must be returned at the teacher's request. Students will be responsible for the replacement cost for any lost, stolen, or damaged textbooks.

PARENT NOTIFICATION REGARDING SEXUAL EDUCATION

M.G.L. c. 71, § 32A notes that parents must be provided an “opt-out” provision for courses (typically sex education or sciences), school assemblies, or other instructional activities and programs that focus on human sexual education, the biological mechanics of human reproduction and sexual development, or human sexuality issues. Parents/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 parents/caregivers a timely written decision.

HOMEWORK

Westford Public Schools Policy [R6112](#) [Regulation] – Homework

Westford Public Schools strive to create lifelong learners and foster an environment of meaningful learning, effective collaboration, and critical/creative thinking that will allow our students to develop the skills needed to become productive and engaged citizens. The School Committee recognizes that academic work may extend into after school hours to support learning objectives. *Assigning homework is optional and at the teacher's discretion*. Homework should not be assigned simply for routine purposes. Nor should it be assigned for disciplinary purposes.

Homework may be a useful adjunct to in-school learning and should serve at least one of the following purposes:

- 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

Homework assignments:

- Should be meaningful for students by having real world connections when applicable.
- Should contain problem-solving activities and assignments that challenge students to think critically.
- May include project-oriented, long-term assignments to enable students to integrate their learning.
- Should be differentiated in accordance with needs, challenging skills, and strengths of Students when necessary.
- Should *incorporate student choice* when appropriate.
- Should provide challenges and extensions to further expand opportunities for learning.

As homework is an important part of the collaborative student/teacher relationship, parents/caregivers and students of appropriate age should be active participants in the process when necessary. In accordance with the regulations referenced below, available channels of communication should be utilized, and students should be encouraged to advocate for their educational needs when appropriate. If a student is struggling with the material, or has significantly surpassed the amount of time an assignment is expected to take, they are encouraged to seek out the appropriate person to voice their concerns. If and when concerns arise, the classroom teacher should be the first person contacted, followed if necessary by the curriculum coordinator, then the administration.

The Superintendent and/or the designee will create guidelines in accordance with this policy that provide more specific guidance to teachers at all grade levels (K-12). These regulations may include specific recommendations on homework over weekends, vacations, and holidays. Regulations should also adhere to district policy regarding religious observances.

Homework - Expectations

We acknowledge that students work at different paces; therefore, the homework times listed in these regulations 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 amount. 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.

Grade Time Expectations	Teacher Responsibilities	Student Responsibilities	Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities
GRADE 6 0 - 60 min. per night	- Teacher teams should coordinate homework (HW) expectations to ensure students do not exceed the maximum time. - HW expectations for long-term projects are included in the nightly maximum as well. - Feedback that is given to students regarding HW assignments should be delivered in a timely manner. - To minimize the amount of HW being done on weekends, teachers will NOT assign HW on a Friday that is due on Monday of the subsequent week. However, students may work on long term assignments over the weekend. - NO HW will be assigned over vacations/holiday breaks.	- HW is primarily the responsibility of the student. - Students should complete HW on time and according to teacher guidelines. - If students struggle with HW (content and/or exceeding maximum time) on a consistent basis, the students should speak with the teacher for assistance. - Students are responsible for obtaining from their teachers any missed assignments.	- Encouraged to assist their child in identifying an appropriate HW area, with limited distractions. - HW is a responsibility that rightfully belongs to the child. Direct participation of parent/caregiver should be minimal. - should help students budget their time around after-school-activities and with the pacing of long-term projects. - Parent/caregiver should encourage students to stop if HW is consistently exceeding the maximum minutes and encourage the child to speak with the teacher for assistance with or adjustments to the homework.
GRADES 7-8 0 to 90 min. per night			

ATHLETICS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS PHILOSOPHY

Westford's Middle School Athletic program is dedicated to fostering improved individual self-esteem through positive reinforcement, sportsmanship, developing the positive aspects of team unity by requiring a season-long commitment, and improving the development of individual skills through regular practice and games. Inherent in this philosophy is the belief that winning is not the major goal of the middle school athletic program.

All students shall be permitted to participate in physical education classes and intramural sports in a manner *consistent with their gender identity*. Furthermore, unless precluded by state interscholastic association policies, all students shall be permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics in a manner consistent with their gender identity.

SCHOOL ATHLETICS

Students may participate in a variety of middle school sports over the course of the year. All sports are open to 7th and 8th graders and students try out to make the team. Cross country and track and field are open to students in all three grades and there are no tryouts. Soccer, field hockey, and cross country are offered in the fall. Basketball is offered in the winter. Track and field, softball, baseball, and volleyball are offered in the spring. **There is an athletic fee per season.** Please see the school website for the fee amount, specific requirements, and tryout information.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students are encouraged to explore after school extracurricular activities. Offerings may vary year to year depending on student interest. Please see the school website for a complete listing. There is a **one-time activity fee per school year**. The amount can be found on the school website. There is an additional fee for the ski club. All students shall be permitted to participate in extracurricular activities in a manner consistent with their gender identity.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Westford Public Schools provides nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities in such a manner as is necessary to afford students with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation. The Westford Public Schools is permitted to establish and utilize skill-based eligibility criteria for participation in extracurricular programs and activities (e.g., school-sponsored athletics) as long as the criteria are rationally related to the purposes and goals of the specific program or activity.

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

Any student participating in a middle school interscholastic team, club or other extracurricular activity, including the school play, must maintain satisfactory academic, disciplinary and attendance standing. The administrative team will make the final determination when deciding eligibility.

A student who is failing a course is not eligible to participate. Eligibility may be restored if a student passes all courses on the next report card issued. Administration reserves the right to discipline, suspend or remove students for behavioral or academic reasons.

PARTICIPATION IN ATHLETICS AND EXTRACURRICULAR EVENTS

All school rules and regulations are in effect for athletics and extracurricular activities. *Students must be in attendance on the day of any after-school activity, practice or competition in order to participate.* Academic requirements and disciplinary commitments take precedence over interscholastic and extracurricular commitments. Coaches and advisors will review specific rules, regulations, and expectations with students.

SUPERVISION BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

Students may only stay after school for an authorized school activity. Students may not be in the building before or after school without supervision. There is no supervision for students prior to the start of the school day at 7:50 and after the late bus leaves at 3:25 PM. Athletes in the building for practices or games may only be in the building if supervised by an adult or staff member.

ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT RECORDS

NEW STUDENT REGISTRATION

Enrollment and student record procedures are designed to support continuity of learning and ensure that all students are able to access instruction and school support as smoothly as possible.

All students new to Westford Public Schools must register at the Central Administration Building located at 23 Depot Street, Westford. Please refer to the [website](#) for more detailed information and forms. Children entering kindergarten must be five years of age on or before August 31st of the year in which the child is to enter kindergarten. Children entering grade one must be six years of age on or before August 31st of the year in which the child is to enter grade one. To register a child, parent/caregiver or legal guardians need to present the following before attending school:

1. Completed registration packet
2. Student birth certificate or passport
3. Proof of guardianship (parent ID or Legal Guardianship papers)
4. Proof of Residency: (document from each column)
 - a. Document from Column A
 - b. Document from Column B
 - c. Document from Column C
5. Proof of medical examination/health record (physical exam done in past year)
6. Proof of immunization

STUDENT TRANSFERS

Students transferring out of school should notify the Counseling Department as soon as possible so that forms can be processed promptly. Once a withdrawal form has been signed, student records are forwarded by mail to the new school.

STUDENT RECORDS

Westford Public Schools Policy [P6111](#) – Student Records

Student records are maintained to support instruction, communication, and continuity of services, while protecting student privacy.

The 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 the student may be individually identified. The regulations divide the record in 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, credits, and grade level completed. The transcript is kept by the school system for at least sixty (60) 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, class rank, school sponsored extracurricular activities, and evaluations and comments by teachers, counselors, and other persons. The temporary record is destroyed no later than seven (7) 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 the eligible student.

Amendment of Record – The parent/caregiver and eligible student have the right to add relevant comments, information, or other written materials to the student record. In addition, the parent/caregiver and eligible student have the right to request that information in the record be amended or deleted. The parent/caregiver and eligible student 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.

Directory Information – 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. ***However, in all instances listed above, parent/caregiver may request that such directory information not be released without prior consent by notifying the school in writing by the end of September of each school year.*** Homelessness status is confidential and shall not constitute directory information.

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

Third Party Access – Authorized school personnel, to include (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.

Complaints – A parent/caregiver or eligible student has the right to file a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S.Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington,D.C. 20202-5920, telephone number (800) 872-5327 or with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148, telephone number (781) 338-3000. If you have any questions regarding this notice, or would like more information and/or a copy of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Student Record Regulations, please contact the building principal.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION

Westford Public Schools Policy [P6111](#) – Student Records

Directory Information is defined as 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. 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
- Awards or honors

Parents/caregivers must notify the school in writing of any restriction they seek to impose on 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.***

STUDENT PUBLISHING

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 newsletters, or student literary journals, in local newspapers, or on cable or commercial TV. In addition, written work or artwork 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 achievements may be displayed on the Westford Public Schools website at <https://www.westfordk12.us/>. 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 parent/caregiver written permission.

The school Committee recognizes three levels of publishing audiences as defined in *Westford Public School Policies* [P6302](#) and [P6115](#):

1. Classroom/School Publishing: All student work and images may be used, displayed, or published in the classroom/school setting unless parent/caregiver notification to the contrary is received by the school.
2. Community Publishing: Upon parent/caregiver approval student work may be used in community publications (e.g., *Eagle, Sun*) The student work may be credited with the student's first name and last initial.
3. World Publishing: Upon written parent/caregiver approval, student work may be displayed on the school district website.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5117](#) – *English Language Learners*

English Language Learner services are provided to ensure students can access the curriculum and participate fully in school learning while developing English proficiency.

All students, as they enroll in WPS, are required to complete a Home Language Survey. If a language in addition to English is spoken at home, or if a student's first language is not English, the student will be assessed for English language proficiency. Students scoring below expectations on the English language proficiency testing and recommended for ELL services will receive ELL support services during the school day. Students receiving ELL support are required to participate in statewide assessments. *If a parent/caregiver guardian elects to exclude their child from ELL services, the parent/caregiver must notify the school in writing.* Students will exit the ELL program after passing statewide testing and consideration of results of standardized testing, classroom performance and teacher recommendation.

Former English Learner (FEL)

Students who at one time were classified and reported as ELL, but who subsequently met Westford English language proficiency criteria, are designated as Former English Learner (FEL). Federal civil rights law requires that FEL students' academic progress is monitored and NCLB requires that FEL students receiving Title III-funded services are monitored for four years.

Communication with parent/caregivers

Report cards and other school information shall be sent to parent/caregiver of ELL students in the same manner and frequency as is sent to other parent/caregiver and to the maximum extent possible, in a language understandable to the parent/caregiver.

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT

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:

1. Homeless students have a right to either remain in their school of origin or to attend school where they are temporarily residing.
2. Children 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.
3. 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 parent/caregiver 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;
- 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;
- 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

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 well-being, 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 districts 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 caregiver 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 parent/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.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is essential to student learning. The school, students, and families share responsibility for promoting consistent attendance and communicating when challenges arise. When absences or transitions occur, the school works collaboratively with families to support continuity of learning and a successful return to school routines.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

The Westford School Committee and the Westford Public Schools believe in the importance of regular attendance by all students. Students are expected to attend school on each day that school is in session since vacation periods are built into the yearlong school calendar. Parents/caregivers are strongly urged not to schedule family vacations during school days and not to extend the scheduled vacation periods. In the event that a parent/caregiver chooses to keep their child/children out of school, *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 these students.* Except in the cases of illness, court appearance, or bereavement, students are expected to be present when school is in session.

A student must be present at least 1/2 day to be recorded as present. Regular attendance is critical for academic success and absenteeism will negatively affect a student's grades. For extended absences due to illness, medical documentation should be provided to the clinic.

According to M.G.L. c. 76, all children between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) must attend school, and a school district may excuse [only- illness, court appearance or bereavement] up to seven (7) day sessions or fourteen (14) half-day sessions in a school year.

Attendance records are available to parents/caregivers via *PowerSchool*

REPORTING AN ABSENCE

If you are absent from school, a parent/caregiver should call the school office the night before or by 8:30 AM on the day of your absence. To report an absence or tardiness, please call 978-692-5582 for Blanchard or 978-692-2708 for Stony Brook. If we do not hear from your parent/caregiver, school personnel will make efforts to contact them. It is important to stress, however, that it is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to contact the school.

DISMISSAL FROM SCHOOL

Dismissal from school at the request of a student's parent/caregiver will be granted only for serious reasons. No student will be dismissed from school unless the student's parent/caregiver contacts the office directly by telephone or letter. Students will not be allowed to leave the building without a parent/caregiver's signature. Parents/caregivers must come into the office and sign their child out for early dismissal. In the event of an illness, parent/caregivers will be contacted to provide transportation for students dismissed by school authorities.

TARDY TO SCHOOL

Students are expected to be in their classrooms at 8:00 A.M. Students arriving after that time will be considered tardy and must sign in at the office. Parents/caregivers **DO NOT** need to sign their child in. Throughout the day, students are expected to arrive at each class on time. Students consistently late to class without an acceptable excuse may be subjected to disciplinary action. Parents/caregivers will be notified if tardiness to class or school is excessive.

TRAVEL DURING SCHOOL TIME

While recognizing and appreciating that vacation experiences may offer a student valuable learning opportunities, the staff believes that classroom instruction, class discussions, and class activities cannot be replicated. A student's grades may be affected by their absence from school. When a student leaves for a vacation not scheduled during a school vacation week, it is our expectation that the student will obtain their missed assignments upon returning to school. ***Prior to any planned travel which will result in a student's absence for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, a parent/caregiver must: (a) un-enroll their child from school; and (b) either complete a Homeschool Application, or identify the school in which they will enroll their child during said absence.***

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5114](#) – School Year-School Calendar

Observance of a religious holiday shall be viewed as a valid justification for a 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.

HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION

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

The homebound instruction program is designed for students who cannot attend school for a variety of medical or emotional factors as substantiated by a healthcare provider. The program may be of short or long-term duration. The program designed for each student 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 instruction teacher. The goals of the program are to:

- Provide instructional support for students assigned to the Homebound Instruction Program.
- Provide the schools and the classroom teacher(s) with periodic reports of student progress.
- Implement the designed educational plan with the intent of returning to the regular school program at the earliest possible time.

TRANSITION MEETING

After extended absence due to suspension or hospitalization, parent/caregiver and student will meet with school administration, guidance counselor, and other appropriate school personnel to create a plan for the student's re-entry.

PARENT/CAREGIVER AND SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ATTENDANCE

Parent/caregivers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child under their control attends school daily. When, due to unexcused absences, a student has missed five (5) or more school days in the school year, the parent/caregiver 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 parent/caregiver and pupil absence meetings with parent/caregiver will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 76, §1B. Each Principal or designee will notify a student's parent/caregiver within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/caregiver has not informed the school of the absence.

Under M.G.L. c. 119, § 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.

An Application for a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) may also be filed in the Juvenile Court:

THE FIVE TYPES OF CRA CASES, as defined in M.G.L. c. 119, § 21:

1. "Runaway": A child between the ages of 6 and 18 who "repeatedly runs away from the home of a parent [caregiver], legal guardian or custodian having custody of the child," each of whom may apply to the court for assistance. M.G.L. c. 119, § 39E.

2. “Stubborn Child”: A child between 6 and 18 who repeatedly fails to obey reasonable home rules, thereby interfering with the parent’s ability to care for the child. A parent [caregiver]/guardian/custodian may apply to the court for assistance. M.G.L. c. 119, § 39E.

3. “Habitual School Offender”: A child between the ages of 6 and 18 who repeatedly fails to obey school rules. A school district may file an application but must state the specific steps that the school district has taken to improve the child’s conduct. M.G.L. c.119, § 39E. A school-filed matter must be dismissed when the student turns 16. M.G.L. c. 119, § 39G.

4. “Habitual Truant”: A child between 6 and 18, who, without excuse, willfully fails to attend school for more than 8 days in a quarter. The school applicant must state whether or not the child and the child's family have participated in a truancy prevention program. M.G.L. c. 119, § 39E. Under M.G. L. c. 119, § 39G, dismissal must occur when the child turns 16. (Note the contradiction regarding age limits in these statutory provisions.)

5. “Sexually Exploited Child”: Any person under 18 who has been subjected to sexual exploitation. This includes anyone who: is the victim of sexual servitude or sex trafficking; engages in sexual conduct for a fee or in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, education or care; is the victim of the crime of inducing a minor into prostitution; or engages in common night walking/street walking. M.G.L. c. 119, § 21. A parent [parent/caregiver] or a police officer may file an application. M.G.L. c. 119, § 39L.

In accordance with M.G.L. c.76, §18, students with ten (10) consecutive school day absences, that are often indicative of an intent to permanently withdraw from school, WPS will attempt to convene an Exit Interview meeting within ten (10) calendar days to provide information about the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school, the benefits of earning a high school diploma, and alternative education programs and services that may be available. Dates for the meeting will be offered in writing and if the student/parent/caregiver is unwilling to participate in an Exit Interview and the date passes, the student will be administratively dis-enrolled from WPS. However, even in the event of an administrative disenrollment, a student may have the right to reenroll at WPS in the future to continue their education while they remain of school age.

STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT CONDUCT

Learning occurs everywhere and at all times. Because many children and adults spend multiple hours together in the school, rules ensure that everyone can be free of distraction, fear, or discomfort so that learning can take place. We believe that every student and every teacher has the following rights in school:

- To work in pleasant, safe and orderly surroundings
- To be free from insulting or abusive treatment from others
- To have an atmosphere that encourages learning

Students are expected to give the maximum in courtesy and respect to all school personnel, other students and school policies. Rules and expectations for conduct apply not only to the school day, but also the school bus and school-sponsored events and activities.

The District’s Code of Conduct prohibits knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process.

Problems are to be solved through discussion rather than physical contact. While it is not possible to list everything which might be considered misconduct, the following may result in disciplinary action:

- Any act that disrupts the educational process.
- Insubordination: It is expected that the directions of a teacher or administrator will be followed immediately.
- Profanity.
- Continuous violations of dress code (See **STUDENT DRESS**)
- Disrespect to school personnel or other students.
- Damage/disrespect to school property or the property of any other person, i.e. vandalism.
- Loitering in hallways and/or bathrooms.
- Bullying/Harassment. (See **BULLYING/HARASSMENT**)
- Excessive tardies. (See **STUDENT ATTENDANCE**)
- Possession of any of the following prohibited items:
 - Gum chewing
 - Bats or hard balls unless distributed and supervised by staff
 - Knives
 - Laser pointers
 - Toys which resemble weapons
 - Any other objects which may be considered a safety concern
 - Item(s) for sale or exchange
 - Electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, CBD oil, or other tobacco products
 - Alcohol

STUDENT DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHY

We realize students will make mistakes and believe in progressive discipline and logical consequences. The principal will decide each student's situation on its own merit, act accordingly and make every effort to resolve problems informally. District's code of conduct prohibits knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process.

If rules are disregarded, appropriate action will result through parent/caregiver, teacher and/or principal involvement. The following actions are considered when school rules have been violated at each grade level. Any or all of the following may result:

- Discussion involving the school principal, child, teacher, and/or parent/caregiver
- Quiet time-out area (office, guidance area, separate class)
- Teacher detention
- Office detention
- Loss of privileges
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension

SELLING/DISTRIBUTION OF GOODS

Students are not allowed to sell or distribute goods such as candy or gum to fellow students. The only exception is school-sponsored fundraising before and after school hours.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell phones and other electronic devices may be confiscated by school staff if used in school without the permission of a teacher or administrator. A parent/caregiver may be asked to retrieve the device. Students will keep their device(s) in the assigned Yondr pouch during school hours.

ELECTRONIC CONDUCT/HARASSMENT

All restrictions against inappropriate language, conduct, and/or harassment apply to public messages, private messages, and material posted on social media/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.

ACCEPTABLE INTERNET USE

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

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. To encourage that joint commitment of responsible behavior, the district schools will include the following paragraphs of this Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in all the student handbooks for grades 6-12.

School Support for the Safe and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies

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.

Copyright Law: Users shall observe copyright law in using material obtained from network sources; including the citing of sources and also by refraining from using pictures or other images without permission from the owner.

Etiquette: 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.

Online Safety: 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.

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

Publishing: 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. There is no restriction at the high school level.

TOBACCO USE/POSSESSION

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5306](#) – Smoke-Free Environment

According to Federal Regulation, Massachusetts General Laws, and Town of Westford By-Laws use/possession of any tobacco products (School use: electronic and smokeless cigarettes) within the school buildings, the school facilities, on school grounds or school buses, by any individual, including school personnel, is strictly prohibited. Tobacco products will be confiscated.

Each violation will result in the following fine in addition to disciplinary actions detailed:

- First offense: \$100.00 fine (Board of Health), parent/caregiver notification and additional disciplinary consequences.
- Second offense: \$200.00 fine, in-school suspension and parent/caregiver notification.
- Third offense: \$300.00 fine, in-school suspension and meeting between Superintendent or designee, student and parent/caregiver.
- Fourth offense: \$300.00 fine, in-school suspension for insubordination and meeting between student, parent/caregiver and the School Committee along with a recommendation for expulsion.

ALCOHOL USE/POSSESSION

According to law use/possession of alcohol within the school buildings, the school facilities, on school grounds or school buses, by any individual, including school personnel, is strictly prohibited.

STUDENT SUSPENSION AND EXCLUSION

Suspension from school involves the denial of a student's privilege to attend school and its activities. All students should understand that an out of school suspension means that the suspended student may not be in school or on school grounds for any reason, attend any classes, take part in any athletic or other activity until after midnight of the last school day of the suspension without the express permission of the Principal.

Offenses for which a student will be suspended or excluded include, but are not limited to:

1. Truancy and leaving the school building/grounds without permission. or alcohol, or possession of drug paraphernalia.
2. Use, possession, or distribution to other students of tobacco, vapor/E-cigarettes, CBD oil, drugs or alcohol, or possession of drug paraphernalia. Offense may result in suspension of up to 5 days out of school. A student suspended for drug and/or alcohol use may be required to obtain a doctor's physical examination report before returning to school. A student suspended for drug/alcohol use may be required to enter an approved substance abuse program that may also include parent/caregiver involvement.
3. Possession of items that are considered to be drug paraphernalia. A student suspended for drug and/or alcohol use may be required to obtain a doctor's physical examination report before returning to school. A student suspended for drug/alcohol use may be required to enter an approved substance abuse program that may also include parent/caregiver involvement.
4. Offenses involving assault of a student/teacher, or possession of drugs or weapons may result in expulsion by the Principal. (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H½)
5. Felony charge or conviction. (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H½)
6. Disrespectful speech or actions toward teachers, secretaries, custodial staff, cafeteria personnel, administrators or other students.
7. Use/possession of tobacco products, including vapor/E-cigarettes on school grounds.
8. Hazing. (M.G.L. c. 269)

Offenses for which a student may be suspended with the length of suspension at the discretion of administration, include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated or multiple cutting of classes.
- Stealing; including but not limited to school stores, cafeterias and locker rooms.
- Defacing or willfully damaging school property.
- Fighting/harassment/bullying other forms of violence directed at another person. Such actions may include police involvement.
- Forgery.
- Snowballs are not to be thrown on school property. Making snowballs is interpreted as throwing them.
- Setting off false alarms. Students will also be referred to the police and fire chief.
- Serious acts of insubordination.
- Cutting office detention.
- Other extreme acts which infringe on the rights of others or detract from the learning atmosphere.
- Violation of the Computing Environment Policy and/or Acceptable Use Policy.
- Present in an “unauthorized area”. Students are expected to follow their schedule and be in their appropriate classes during scheduled times. Stairwells, unsupervised locker rooms /classrooms or offices are examples of unauthorized areas.
- Continuous violation of school rules.
- Inappropriate behavior.
- Possession of prescription medicine without authorization from the school nurse.

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.

Suspension from school involves the denial of a student’s privilege to attend school and its activities. An out of school suspension means that the suspended student may not be in school or on school grounds for any reason, attend any classes, take part in any athletic or other activity until after midnight of the last school day of the suspension without the express permission of the Principal. This action is taken when it is the determination of the Principal (or their designee) that no other action is suitable or likely to result in the correction of a student’s unacceptable behavior. *If the suspension is the result of a student’s behavior at a school-sponsored activity, continued participation and/or attendance in that activity may be suspended for 30 days.* A parent/caregiver-student-counselor-administrator conference is necessary before a suspended student will be allowed to return to school. Suspensions vary in length from one (1) day in-school suspension up to and including long term suspension or exclusion for the balance of the school year and beyond. All students will be provided with due process when subject to suspension in-school, out-of-school or 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 M.G.L c. 76, §21. 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 its schools or provide educational services to the student under an education service plan, under M.G.L c. 76, §21.

DISCIPLINARY DUE PROCESS

Suspensions and expulsions of students shall be imposed in compliance with constitutional, statutory, and regulatory requirements, including M.G.L. c. 76, §17; M.G.L. c. 76, §21; M.G.L. c. 71, §37H; M.G.L. c. 71, §37H 1/2; and M.G.L. c. 71, §37H 3/4.

Prior to the imposition of discipline, a student will be given an opportunity to receive notice of, and respond to, the allegations or charges against them (except in cases of extreme emergency). Before suspending a student from school, depending on the alleged conduct, the administrator will apply the appropriate level of disciplinary due process consistent with Massachusetts and federal law as described below.

M.G.L c. 71, §37H ¾: Suspension or expulsion on grounds other than those set forth in § 37H or § 37H½

Out of School Suspensions under M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾: 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.

Definitions:

Expulsion: the removal of a student from the school premises, regular classroom activities, and school activities for more than ninety (90) consecutive school days.

In-School Suspension: the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises, for no more than (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions during the school year. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days.

Short-Term Suspension: the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive school days or less. A principal may, at their discretion, allow a student to serve a short-term suspension in school. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days.

Long-Term Suspension: 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. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days. Except for students who are charged with a disciplinary offense in subsections (a) or (b) of M.G.L. c. 71, §37H or 37H ½, no student may be placed on long-term suspension for one or more disciplinary offenses for more than ninety (90) school days in a school year beginning with the first day that the student is removed from school. No long-term suspension shall extend beyond the end of the school year in which such suspension is imposed.

Written Notice: Written correspondence sent by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, or email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent.

Principal: The primary administrator of the school or the Principal's designee for disciplinary purposes.

In-School Suspension, M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ¾

Due Process for In-School Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H¾:

Prior to the imposition of an In-School Suspension, the student will be informed of the disciplinary offense and provided with an opportunity to respond. If the principal determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal will provide oral notice to the student and to parent/caregiver of the length of the In-School Suspension and will make reasonable efforts to meet with the parent/caregiver.

Principal's Decision – In-School Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H¾:

On or before the day of suspension, the principal shall send written notice to the student and parent/caregiver about the In-School Suspension, including the reason and the length of the In-School Suspension, and inviting the parent/caregiver to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth in 603 CMR 53.10(4), if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal shall 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/caregiver for school communications, or by another method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent/caregiver. Students have the right to appeal an In-School Suspension that will result in their In-School Suspension for more than ten (10) school days in a school year.

Short-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾

Due Process for Short-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H¾:

In the case of disciplinary offenses not involving: a) possession of a dangerous weapon; b) possession of a controlled substance; c) assault on a member of the educational staff; or d) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, the student and parent/caregiver will be given oral and written notice of the disciplinary offense with which the student is charged and the opportunity to participate in a hearing prior to the imposition of an out-of-school suspension.

Notice – Short-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H¾:

Except as provided in cases of In-School Suspension or Emergency Removal, a principal may not impose a suspension as a consequence for a disciplinary offense without first providing the student and the parent/caregiver oral and written notice, and providing the student an opportunity for a hearing on the charge and the parent/caregiver an opportunity to participate in such hearing.

The principal shall provide oral and written notice to the student and the parent/caregiver in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. The notice shall set forth in plain language: 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 principal 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/caregiver 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; if the student may be placed on long-term suspension following the hearing with the principal; the rights set forth in 603 CMR 53.08 (3)(b); and the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent.

The principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/caregiver orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. To conduct a hearing without the parent/caregiver present, the principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/caregiver. The principal is presumed to have made reasonable efforts if the principal 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.

Principal's Hearing – Short-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H¾:

At the Principal's hearing, the student and parent/caregiver (if participating) may dispute the charge(s) against the student and present information, including mitigating facts, for the principal's consideration in determining consequences for the student.

Principal's Decision – Short-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H¾:

The principal shall notify the student and parent/caregiver of the determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of the suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal, as provided in M.G.L. c. 76, 21. The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice. If the student is in a public preschool program or in grades K through 3, the principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

Long-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾

Due Process for Long-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾:

In the case of disciplinary offenses not involving: a) possession of a dangerous weapon; b) possession of a controlled substance; c) assault on a member of the educational staff; or d) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, the student and parent/caregiver will be given oral and written notice of the disciplinary offense with which the student is charged and the opportunity to participate in a hearing prior to the imposition of an out-of-school suspension.

Notice - Long-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾:

Written notice of the date and time for the hearing will be provided in English and in the primary language of the Student's home and will identify the disciplinary offense with which the student has been charged, the basis for the charge, the potential length of the student's suspension, and inform the parent/caregiver and student of the right to interpreter services if necessary to participate in the hearing.

Where a student may be subject to a Long-Term Suspension, the Principal will also notify the student and parent/caregiver of the following rights: (1) in advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not; (2) the right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's parent's/caregiver's expense; (3) 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; (4) the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district; and (5) the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal, and to receive a copy of the audio recording upon request. If the student or parent/caregiver requests an audio recording, the principal shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made and a copy will be provided to the student and parent/caregiver upon request.

Principal's Hearing - Long-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H¾:

The student will have the rights identified in the written notice and the principal shall provide the parent/caregiver, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.

Principal's Decision – Long-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H¾:

Based on the evidence, the principal shall determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension, what remedy or consequence will be imposed, in place of or in addition to a Long-Term Suspension. The principal shall 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/caregiver for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent/caregiver. If the principal decides to suspend the student, the written determination shall: (1) identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing; (2) set out the key facts and conclusions reached by the principal; (3) identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school; (4) include notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school as provided in M.G.L. c.76, § 21; (5) *inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or designee, but only if the principal has imposed a long-term suspension.*

Notice of the right of appeal shall be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate, and shall include the following information stated in plain language: (a) the process for appealing the decision, including that the student or parent/caregiver 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/caregiver 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 (b) the Long-Term Suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the principal's determination on appeal.

Superintendent Appeals – Long-Term Suspension, M.G.L c. 71, §37H ¾:

A student who is placed on Long-Term Suspension under M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾ following a hearing with the principal shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent. The student or parent/caregiver shall file a 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/caregiver may request and receive from the superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar. If the appeal is not timely filed, the superintendent may deny the appeal, or may allow the appeal in their discretion, for good cause.

Superintendent Appeal Hearing, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾:

The superintendent shall 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, in which case the superintendent shall grant the extension. The superintendent shall make a good faith effort to include the parent/caregiver in the hearing. The superintendent shall 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 shall send written notice to the parent/caregiver of the date, time, and location of the hearing.

The superintendent shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and if so, what the consequence shall be. The superintendent shall arrange for an audio recording of the hearing, a copy of which shall be provided to the student or parent/caregiver upon request. The superintendent shall 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 shall have all the rights afforded the student at the principal's hearing for long-term suspension as identified above.

Superintendent's Decision, M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ¾:

The superintendent shall issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing which: (1) identifies the disciplinary offense and the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing; (2) sets out the key facts and conclusions reached by the Superintendent; (3) identifies the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school; (4) includes notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school

as provided in M.G.L. c. 76, § 21; and (5) notice of the right of appeal shall be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

If the superintendent determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the principal, but shall not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the principal's decision. The decision of the superintendent shall be the final decision of the school district, with regard to the suspension.

M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H ½ (Dangerous Weapons, Drugs, Assaults on Staff and Felony Matters)

Short-Term Suspension, M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H ½:

For disciplinary offenses involving a) possession of a dangerous weapon; b) possession of a controlled substance; c) assault on a member of the educational staff; or d) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, the student will be given oral notice of the violation with which the student is charged and an opportunity to respond thereto, prior to the Principal's imposition of a short-term suspension or an interim suspension of less than ten (10) consecutive days pending formal proceedings. Upon imposition of a short term or interim suspension of ten (10) consecutive days or less pending further disciplinary proceedings, the student and parent/caregiver will be provided with written notice of the suspension and the date and time of the formal disciplinary hearing.

Long-Term Exclusion/Expulsion, M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H½:

Unlike M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H 3/4, for offenses that fall within M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H 1/2, a principal may long-term suspend a student for more than ninety (90) days or permanently expel a student for means the removal of a student from the school premises, regular classroom activities, and school activities for (1) possession of a dangerous weapon; (2) possession of a controlled substance; (3) assault on a member of the educational staff; or (4) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, or adjudication or admission of guilt with respect to such felony, if a principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school, as provided in G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H½. The Principal's Hearing and appeals process identified below apply to suspensions under M.G.L. c. §§ 37H and 37H 1/2 in cases of suspension for more than ten (10) consecutive days.

Dangerous Weapons, Drugs or Assaults on Staff, M.G.L. c. 71,§37H:

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, teacher's aide, or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the Principal.

Principal's Hearing, Long-Term Exclusion, M.G.L. c. 71, 37H:

Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraphs 1 or 2 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 a said hearing before the Principal. After said hearing, the Principal may, in their discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the Principal to have violated either paragraphs 1 or 2 above.

Appeal to the Superintendent, Long-Term Exclusion, M.G.L. c. 71, 37H:

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. Building Principals or designees are required to report to the police department the presence of any weapon on school premises.

M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ½ (Felony Complaints)

Issuance of a Felony Criminal Complaint

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 headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal or headmaster if said principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantially detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Notice of Principal's Hearing – Long-Term Exclusion - M.G.L. c. 71, 37H ½:

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.

Appeal to the Superintendent – Long-Term Exclusion - M.G.L. c. 71, 37H ½:

The student shall have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent in writing of their request for an appeal no later than five (5) calendar days following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent/caregiver within three (3) 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 be represented by counsel at the student's own expense. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing. Such a decision shall be the final decision with regard to the suspension.

Adjudication of Delinquency, Admission of Guilt or Conviction:

Upon a student being convicted of a felony or upon adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantially detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Notice of Principal's Hearing – Long-Term Exclusion - M.G.L. c. 71, 37H ½:

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 the process for appealing such expulsion; provided, however, that the expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

Superintendent's Appeal, Long-Term Exclusion - M.G.L. c. 71, 37H ½

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 (5) calendar days following the effective date of the expulsion. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's

parent/caregiver within three (3) 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 be represented by counsel at the student's own expense. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing. Such a decision shall be the final decision with regard to the expulsion.

Opportunity to Make Academic Progress:

Westford Public Schools will continue to provide educational services to any student who is suspended or expelled pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, §37H or 37H1/2, and 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 its schools or provide educational services to the student in an education service plan under M.G.L.c. 76, § 21.

Any student who is suspended for ten (10) or less consecutive days, whether in or out of school, shall have the opportunity to make academic progress during the period of suspension, to make up assignments and earn credits missed, including but not limited to homework, quizzes, exams, papers, and other school work.

Any student who is expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, in accordance with the school's education service plan.

EMERGENCY REMOVAL

M.G.L c. 71, § 37H ³/₄ (Offense other than Dangerous Weapons, Narcotics, Assaults on Staff or Felony Matters)

A principal may remove a student from school temporarily when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and 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 principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. In such a case, the principal shall immediately notify the superintendent in writing of the removal and the reason for it, and describe the danger presented by the student.

The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time the principal shall: (1) make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's parent/caregiver of the emergency removal, (2) the reason for the need for emergency removal; (3) the disciplinary offense; (4) the basis for the charge; (5) the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension; (6) the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal 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/caregiver to attend the hearing; (7) the date, time, and location of the hearing; and (8) the right of the student and the student's parent/caregiver to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate.

Before the expiration of the two (2) school days, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and parent/caregiver, the Principal must provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the principal that complies with either the short-term due process or long-term due process set forth below, as applicable, and the parent/caregiver an opportunity to attend the hearing.

Additionally, the Principal is required to render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day, which meets the requirements of notice of the decision for short-term suspension or long-term suspension at set forth below, whichever is applicable. A Principal 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.

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:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. If a student with a disability possesses or uses illegal drugs, sells or solicits a controlled substance, possesses a weapon, or causes serious bodily injury to another on school grounds (including transportation) or at a school function, the District may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to forty-five (45) school days. A court or BSEA Hearing Officer may also order the placement of a student who presents a substantial likelihood of injury to self or others in an appropriate interim setting for up to forty-five (45) school days.

BULLYING

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5304](#) – Bullying

Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more students or by a 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 of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Examples of bullying include physical aggression, verbal aggression, malicious rumors/gossip; social exclusions and/or threats of harm or exclusion.

Bullying that happens outside of school can lead to disciplinary action at school if a target feels unsafe at school or if school is disrupted as a result of the bullying behaviors.

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

The Westford Public Schools (WPS) created the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (the Plan) required under M.G.L. c.71, §37O in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, and parent/caregiver. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is posted on the district website <https://www.westfordk12.us/about/student-rights-protections>.

The Westford Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("the Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying. 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, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The principal or their 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 cyberbullying. 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 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) one 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 or guardian involvement.

Definitions:

Several of the following definitions below are copied directly from M.G.L. c.71, §37O, as noted.

Bullying - as defined in M.G.L. c.71, §37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a 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 of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- I. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- II. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their property;
- III. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- IV. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- V. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying - is bullying through the use of technology (social media) or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c.71, §37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Hostile environment - as defined in M.G.L. c.71, §37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

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, cyberbullying, 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:

- (i) 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
- (ii) 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, §37O, 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 associate/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 printed from the district's website. *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 associate/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 and shall notify the parent/caregiver of the target of the availability of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Program Resolution System if the target or the target's parents are dissatisfied with the bullying investigation.

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, gender identity, homelessness, sexual orientation, or age. 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 or 37H½, 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

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5303](#) – Student Harassment

The School Committee is committed to maintaining a work and educational environment free from all forms of harassing conduct. Harassment including but not limited to, race, color, religion, age, homelessness, national origin, gender, sex, gender identity, 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:

1. 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.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting the individual.
3. 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:

1. Verbal, physical or written harassment or abuse
2. Unsolicited remarks or remarks of a demeaning nature
3. Gestures or physical contact
4. Displays or circulation of written materials or pictures derogatory to either gender or derogatory to racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation or disability groups.
5. Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievement, or other school matters.
6. Demeaning jokes, stories, or activities directed at an individual.

Gender Harassment (Sexual Harassment) includes, but is not limited to:

1. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature as listed below:
2. Submission is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's participation in school programs or activities.
3. Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for work or educational decisions affecting such individuals.
4. 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 ensuring 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:

1. 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.
2. Notification of parent/caregiver when disciplinary action is not required may vary depending on the school level.
3. Students may be disciplined.

At any stage in the complaint process, the complainant has the right to file formal complaints with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 135 Santilli Highway, Everett, MA 02149 (781) 338-3700, or with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, One Ashburton Place, Sixth Floor, Room 601, Boston, MA 02108, (617) 727-3990.

For complaints of discrimination on the basis of disability the complainant may also file a complaint with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148, (617) 338-3300 or may file a Request for Hearing with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Bureau of Special Education Appeals, 14 Summer Street, 4th Floor, Malden, MA 02148; (617) 626-7200. Complaints of discrimination in employment practices may also be filed with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203-0506, (617) 565-3200. 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.

HAZING

In accordance with Westford Public Schools Policy [P5305](#).

Hazing is strictly prohibited in the Westford Public Schools. Pursuant to school committee policy and MGL Chapter 269 sections 17, 18 and 19, hazing shall include any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Anyone associated with the Westford Public Schools who knows that another person is the victim of hazing as described above and is at the scene of such conduct shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such conduct to an appropriate law enforcement official and the office of the Superintendent of Schools, as soon as reasonably practicable.

Every Westford School which has been designated or approved as a secondary school shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of M.G.L. Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18 and 19.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of M.G.L. Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18 and 19 to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the principal of the school an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of M.G.L. Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18 and 19, that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of M.G.L. Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18 and 19, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions M.G.L. Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18 and 19.

Each Westford secondary school shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of. M.G.L. Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18 and 19.

The Principal of each institution of each Westford Secondary School shall file, at least annually, on or before October 1 of each year, a report with the Bureau of Student Services of the Board of Education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18 and 19 and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution's policies to its students and containing such further information as may be required.

The text of M.G.L. Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18 and 19 is as follows:

17. Hazing, organizing or participating; hazing defined - Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one (1) year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term "hazing" as used in this section and in sections eighteen (18) and nineteen (19), shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

18. Failure to report hazing - Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

19. Copy of secs 17-19; issuance to students and student groups, teams and organizations; report: Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of postsecondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen (17) and eighteen (18); provided, however, that an institution's compliance with this section's requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen (17) and eighteen (18) to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen (17) and eighteen (18) to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen (17) and eighteen (18), that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen (17) and eighteen (18).

Each such institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of postsecondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen (17) and eighteen (18)

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of postsecondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the board of higher education and in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen (17) and eighteen (18) and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution's policies to its students. The board of higher education and, in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.

SCHOOL SAFETY

VISITORS

Access to the building is restricted to staff and authorized visitors. All visitors must enter through the main entrance and will be asked to provide identification before entering the building. All visitors must report directly to the main office to register and receive a visitor badge.

All guests must wear school or district identification or a temporary ID badge issued by the main office. This includes parents/caregivers, volunteers, substitute teachers, and contractors visiting the facility for maintenance purposes. All guests must sign out at the end of their visit.

Authorized visitors who have not been fingerprinted and CORI verified by the district must be accompanied by a staff member at all times.

MANDATORY REPORTING

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

CRISIS INTERVENTION

In the event of imminent moral harm or extreme emergencies, school personnel will take any and all steps to ensure the safety of the student and the school community. If, in the opinion of Administration, counseling personnel, or safety team, 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 will be asked to pick up their student from school.
3. The student will not be admitted to school until the Principal has received a written statement from an outside licensed mental health professional indicating that they have evaluated the student and found that the student is safe to return to school.
4. Upon their return, school personnel will continue to monitor and work with the student.

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

PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

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.

PROTOCOL FOR SECURITY CAMERAS AND VISUALLY RECORDED DATA

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5326](#) - Protocol for Security Cameras and Visually Recorded Data

The School Committee works to maintain a safe and secure environment for students, staff, and visitors. This also includes the protection of our facilities and school property from theft and vandalism. Security cameras have been installed and may be used at any time. Persons identified on security cameras in violation of School Committee policies or WPS handbook rules may be subject to disciplinary actions.

Only authorized personnel or their designee, including the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, school building administration and law enforcement, will have privileges involving viewing, disclosure, retention, disposal, and security of video recordings or photographs from security cameras in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. A video recording used for security purposes in school district buildings and/or on school property shall be the sole property of the school district. All video recordings will be stored in their original format and secured to avoid tampering and to ensure confidentiality in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Law enforcement and emergency response officials shall be granted access to video recordings or the security system by the School Superintendent/designee in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with the Westford Police Department. Reviewing a stored recording will occur only when a suspected crime or WPS Student Handbook violation is committed inside or outside the building (e.g. vandalism, graffiti, etc.), or there is a claim of an injury or an incident that raises safety or security concerns. All such recordings shall be treated as confidential and shall not be released to individuals or agencies outside of the District except through subpoena or other court order requiring such release.

Parents/caregivers may request a viewing through their legal representative. To ensure the privacy and legally ensured rights of staff and students, neither parent/caregiver nor members of the public at large may request a viewing without appropriate cause.

Still photos, or “screenshots,” from the feed may at times be shared with a parent/caregiver or legal representative outside the proscribed legal process to provide evidence for or against a disciplinary dispute that does not rise to the level of police involvement. *Such an event will require a request in writing by the parent/caregiver or legal representative to the district, and will be recorded in the log.*

FIRE DRILLS

Several times during the year a fire drill will be conducted. Please adhere to these guidelines. Failure to comply is considered a serious disciplinary offense.

1. Follow the directions posted in the classroom or from the teacher in charge.
2. Be absolutely silent and exit the building in an orderly manner.
3. Stand with the members of your class in the assigned area away from the building.
4. Re-enter the building silently and only when instructed to do so.

POLICE QUESTIONING

Westford Public Schools Policy [P1401](#) – Police Authorities

Schools have the responsibility to parents/caregivers for the welfare of students while they are in school. If the police department needs to question a student, school officials will attempt to notify the student's parent/caregiver regarding the questioning. The presence of the student's parent/caregiver at the time of the questioning is desirable to safeguard the self-incrimination rights of the student. Whenever possible, the questioning should be conducted away from the school to avoid any display of law enforcement activities which can lead to unfortunate misunderstandings on the part of other students and members of the faculty.

LOCKERS

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5310](#) – Searches of Student Lockers

Lockers are assigned to each student in August. Students are responsible for keeping their assigned lockers neat and clean at all times. Lockers are school property and may be searched by school administration at any time for any reason. Students do not have an expectation of privacy in their school lockers. The parent/caregiver of any student involved in an individual locker search will be informed of the locker search.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

Students have a legitimate right to privacy; however, this right must be balanced against the State's right to maintain a school environment that is conducive to learning. School officials are not required to obtain a warrant before searching a student under their authority. *Provided there is reasonable suspicion* that the student has violated or is violating the rules of the school, the administration of WPS reserves the right to search students, students' possessions, and/or students' automobiles on school property for articles of contraband. Any illegal articles found will be confiscated and law enforcement officials notified. In addition, parent/caregiver will be contacted and students will be suspended in accordance with the school discipline code. At various times throughout the school year the WPS Administration reserves the right to conduct unannounced dog searches in cooperation with the Westford Police Department or other state or federal agencies.

All measures adopted in conducting searches of students, their possessions, their vehicles on school property, while under school supervision or in attendance at a school function will be limited in scope by the objectives of the search in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction being investigated. Search of a student may extend to articles of clothing which may include and not limited to pockets; and to the removal and search of outer garments such as hats, caps, headgear, jackets, coats, sweaters, sweatshirts, or shoes; and to items such as pocketbooks, lunch bags, book bags, athletic bags, or backpacks.

When reasonably possible, search of a student's belongings will be conducted in the presence of a second school official. *Use of canines on the exterior of vehicles or other items to detect odors do not constitute a search.*

Should a student refuse to voluntarily comply with a request for a search, the student will remain under adult supervision until parent/caregiver, and, if necessary, police, can arrive at the school to assist, as appropriate, in the investigation.

Students are hereby given notice that student lockers are accessible to school officials and may be subject to search at the discretion of school officials. Students have no expectation of privacy in their school lockers.

As a condition of entry into any school event, for student safety, all belongings and vehicles are subject to search for contraband. Contraband seized as a result of routine locker inspection will be turned over to the police if the material seized is of an illegal or dangerous nature. Parents/caregiver will be notified of the seizure as soon as possible after the seizure. Vehicles parked on school grounds or at school functions are subject to search.

Search of a student or their belongings in accordance with the above policy may take place at school or at any school sponsored event on or off school property or during the transportation to such event.

STUDENT DRESS

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 the 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 parent/caregiver 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*
- 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 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
- Extracurricular activities and clubs
- Athletics
- Science labs
- Recess

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5319](#)-School Bus: Responsibilities while riding

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. In the event a bus change is needed in an emergency, parent/caregiver are to contact Dee Bus for approval at 978-392-8639.

UNANTICIPATED BUS ROUTE INTERRUPTIONS

Westford Public School Policy [P5327](#)

Morning Unanticipated Route Interruption (For all grades)

- Driver will radio dispatch and inform them of the road that is inaccessible and the stop(s) that will be missed.
- Upon receipt of notification, dispatch will inform the school(s), providing details of the route interruption, including the bus number and bus stop(s) affected. It is the responsibility of the school to notify parents with students on that route or upon arrival of the students to the school, contact only affected families.

Afternoon Unanticipated Route Interruptions (Grades 6 - 12)

The bus driver will speak to the Police Officer/person in charge at the closure to gather pertinent information, noting the name of the contact for future reference. (If no contact is available, decision making will be the responsibility of the bus driver and dispatch.) Using the details provided and the age of the affected student(s), a determination will be made regarding the safest closest alternate drop off location, if one exists. Driver will radio dispatch and inform them of the road that is inaccessible, the stop(s) which will be missed, and the plan for student drop off. If it is determined that no alternate safe location is available, the students will be returned to the school upon completion of the route.

OBTAINING A BUS PASS

All students who plan to ride the bus will need to register for a bus pass. Parent/caregivers must register all children 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 <https://www.westfordk12.us/district-departments/transportation> for information on obtaining a Westford Public School bus pass.

BUS STOP SAFETY REVIEW / CHANGES TO BUS STOP

The Director of School Finance is responsible for establishing proper standards of safety in the operation of buses and shall ensure their enforcement by the bus contractor. The Director of School Finance is responsible for establishing bus schedules, routes, and stops in cooperation with the bus contractor. Authorized bus stops shall be located in places where pupils may be loaded and unloaded, cross streets and roads, and safely await the arrival of the buses. Evaluation of bus-stop safety is done by the Director of School Finance, safety officers from the police and fire departments, and the bus company.

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

The following safety review criteria is used to evaluate the safety of a bus stop:

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

LATE BUS

A late bus is available for students staying after school for extra help or school activities other than athletics. The late bus operates on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and departs at 3:25 pm. The late bus does not stop at each student's designated bus stop. Due to the limited number of late buses, each bus travels to a designated side of town and stops in the general vicinity of the late bus riders' regular bus stops.

CONDUCT ON THE SCHOOL BUS

The following rules of bus conduct are essential to the safe transportation of all students:

- Talking between the driver and any passenger will be kept to a minimum.
- Smoking, including the use of vapes and E-cigarettes, the use of alcohol or drugs, or lighting of matches on a school bus is prohibited.
- Consumption of food on a school bus to and from school is prohibited.
- The bus will not wait for students who are not ready to board it when it stops for them in the morning.
- "Missing the bus" is not an acceptable excuse for tardiness or absence from school. If a student misses the bus, other arrangements for transportation to school should be made.
- Students will board and leave the bus in an orderly manner. *Students who cross streets must pass in front of the bus while flashing lights are on.*
- Excessive noise, fighting, profanity, or other behavior distracting to the bus driver or endangering the safety or morals of students on the bus will not be tolerated.
- Students will stand clear of the bus after leaving it, or will cross the street in front of the bus where the driver can observe them.
- Students who damage private property or act to endanger the safety of classmates risk loss of privilege to ride the bus.
- The rear door of a school bus is an emergency door and will be used as such. When it is used for something other than an emergency, the bus driver will directly supervise it.
- Students will stay behind the white lines in front of the building while waiting for buses.
- Students will not throw any objects on or from the bus.
- Students will not put any part of their body out of the bus window.
- Students will observe the rule of courteous, considerate behavior on the bus at all times.
- It must be borne in mind that bus transportation for all pupils eligible because of distance from school is a privilege, which is extended only while proper bus conduct is observed.
- No standing or moving from seat to seat.
- *Suggested seating for students on the bus is as follows: 6th at the front, 7th in the middle and 8th in the back.*

Any student on a bus who creates a problem will be reported to the Assistant Principal for disciplinary action, which may include suspension of the privileges of riding the bus. Parents/caregivers will be notified of the problems that students cause on the bus.

BUS DISCIPLINE

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5320](#) – School Bus Discipline

- A first 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.
- A **second** referral may result in bus suspension of up to **three days**.
- A **third** referral may result in a bus suspension of at least **five days**.
- 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.

BICYCLES

Riding a bike is a privilege that has a responsibility for your safety and the safety of others. Please be aware of the following safety rules:

- All students must wear a helmet.
- Walk your bicycle in the schoolyard coming to school and going home. *Our school road is too busy for riding your bicycle.*
- Park your bicycle in the rack as soon as you get to school.
- Lock your bicycle. We are not responsible for any bikes that are damaged or lost.
- *Students with bicycles are dismissed only with the walkers.*
- Follow safe bicycle rules at all times.

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. School lunch menus are published on the [Westford Public Schools website](#). 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. Funds may be added to an account online at [myschoolbucks.com](#) or cash or a check made out to Westford School Lunch Program may be sent to school with your child.

All meals served must meet patterns established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. However, if a child has been determined by a doctor to have a disability that would prevent the child from eating the regular school meal, each school will make any substitutions prescribed by the doctor at no extra charge. In the operation of the Child Feeding Programs, in accordance with federal law, no family or student will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, disability, religious creed, or political beliefs. Please call 978-692-5560 x2109 or x2110 with any questions about the Food Service program.

FREE AND REDUCED MEALS

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. 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. Applications for Free and Reduced Meals are sent home with every student the first week of school and should be returned immediately to the school office. The application is also 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. *Completed applications are automatically approved for foster children and households receiving Food Stamps or AFDC support for children.* Applications are approved as determined by income eligibility and number of persons in the household. Eligibility may be checked at any time during the school year, and school officials may ask for verification of information reported on individual applications. 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.

BREAKFAST

The school cafeteria offers a limited menu of breakfast items each morning. Breakfast continues to be free for all students. Students may pick up breakfast items upon arrival to school before Advisory and bring them to Advisory to eat.

SCHOOL HEALTH

HEALTH SERVICES

School nurses collaborate with physicians and the Westford Board of Health to provide confidential and prompt first aid, illness assessment, nursing care, referrals and health teaching. For your privacy protection, Westford Public Schools will not disclose health information to outside sources, including the school transportation service; therefore it is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to inform the transportation service of any serious medical condition.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PROTOCOL AUTHORIZATION

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5517](#)

The Westford Public Schools is committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of all our students and staff. In the event of a health emergency, it may be necessary for specific precautions to be taken. Those precautions may include, but are not limited to social distancing, cleaning protocols, mask wearing, testing/screening, and contact tracing with notifications.

The Superintendent is authorized and charged with determining if such protocols are necessary, in consultation with the local department of health, district medical staff and advisors, and in response to a thorough review of determined metrics and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidance; and, as set forth below, the Superintendent shall seek authorization of the Committee prior to implementation of the protocols.

Authorization shall be given by a majority vote of the committee, and the vote may be called for by either the Committee or the Superintendent. The Superintendent will hold that authority for the timeframe determined by the Committee upon authorization.

The Superintendent shall communicate the specific measures being put in place to the community, and shall provide regular updates on the status of both the health emergency and the measures being required, as well as what metrics are being used to determine the need for such measure. Individual accommodations may be made based on a student or staff member's disability, medical necessity, or religion in a manner consistent with the state and federal law.

The Committee will review the data presented by the Superintendent, and, based on a review of the updated metrics and federal, state, and local guidance, may rescind or extend the authorization by a vote of the Committee.

In the event of an urgent situation, the Superintendent, in consultation with local health and emergency authorities, as well as with the relevant building administration, may institute immediate, temporary safety measures. The Superintendent shall notify affected caregivers and staff, as well as the Chair, as soon as possible. At the next School Committee meeting, the Superintendent may recommend that the temporary measures continue, subject to a vote by the Committee, as described in this Policy. The Chair and the Superintendent will decide if an emergency School Committee meeting is warranted, or if such a vote can occur at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

M.G.L. 76:15 - Vaccination and Immunization

M.G.L. - Contagious Diseases; School Attendance Regulated

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Emergency cards are distributed to all students on the first day of school. Complete information is necessary to ensure your child's health and safety while at school. All information is kept confidential on file at the clinic and must be updated with any changes over the course of the school year as needed.

MEDICATION INFORMATION

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

The school nurse is the only person allowed to administer medication to students in the Westford Public Schools. A [Medication Administration Plan](#) should be developed with the nurse, including plans for class trips. For field trips/short term events, the school nurse may delegate the administration of medication to unlicensed personnel. For an allergy requiring an EpiPen, parent/caregiver should contact the school nurse to develop an Emergency Health Care Plan.

The parent/caregiver must complete the [Medication Administration Orders and Consent Form](#) available on the WPS website or at the school nurse office. Alternately, the parent/caregiver may send written authorization to the nurse which contains: the parent's/caregiver's printed name, signature and emergency phone number; list of medications the student is currently receiving; approval to have the school nurse administer the medication and names of persons to be notified in case of a medication emergency.

The licensed prescriber must complete the [Medication Administration Orders and Consent Form](#) (available on the WPS website or at the school nurse's office) or send to the school nurse a medication order which contains: the student's name; name and signature of the licensed prescriber including telephone number; name of medication; the route and dosage of medication; the frequency and time of medication administration; date of the order and discontinuation date; diagnosis and other medical condition(s) and specific directions for administration. If appropriate, please have the licensed prescriber also provide the following information: any special side effects, contraindication and/or adverse reactions to be observed; any other medications being taken by the student and the date of the next scheduled visit to the physician, if known. *Medications are kept in the school clinic. Parent/caregiver should retrieve medications at the end of the school year or they will be properly disposed of.*

Please also contact the nurse regarding special medication situations: a student's self-administration of medications; short-term medications; over the counter medications; investigational new drugs. It is also recommended that parent/caregiver inform the school nurse if their child takes regular medication outside of school

MEDICATION FOUND ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

If a student finds a prescribed or over-the-counter medication on school property, the following protocol will be followed:

- Students should NOT touch the medication.
- Students will immediately notify the principal and school nurse.
- Custodian will retrieve medication and deliver it to the school nurse.
- School nurse will interview and check the student who found the medication for any signs of skin contact or ingestion.
- School nurse will notify the parents/caregivers of the child.
- School principal may contact the Westford Police Department.
- School principal may notify all parents/caregivers of students via email and/or memo sent home with students.

PHYSICALS AND IMMUNIZATION

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5504](#) – Student Physical [Regulations]

Westford Public School regulations require that school children have up to date physical examinations in the seventh grade. School nurses can provide forms for physical examinations, but all health care provider forms are accepted.

According to MIAA rules, any student participating in school sports must provide documentation of an up-to-date physical examination before tryouts – a physical examination done no more than 13 months prior to the completion of the designated sports season by a licensed healthcare provider. Documentation of the physical (including height, weight and blood pressure) should be given/mailed to the school nurse.

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5505](#) – Inoculations of Students

Students will be required to present a physician's certificate attesting to immunization against diphtheria, whooping cough, poliomyelitis, tetanus, measles, and such other communicable diseases as may be specified from time to time by the Department of Public Health. The only exception to these requirements will be made on receipt of a written statement from a doctor that immunization would not be in the best interests of the child; or from the student's parent/caregiver stating that vaccination or immunization is contrary to the religious beliefs of the student or parent/caregiver.

If parent/caregiver do not adhere to Massachusetts General Law requiring these inoculations for their children, then the administration may take appropriate steps to prohibit students from attending school until the parent/caregiver can provide evidence that the student has had the required inoculations.

MANDATED SCREENINGS

School Health Services staff conduct vision and hearing screenings for students in grade seven. Height and weight and postural screenings are conducted on all students in grades six, seven, and eight. Parent/caregiver will be notified of screening results by letter or telephone only if a student has failed a screening exam or requires further care from their healthcare provider. Findings of these referrals for follow-up should be returned to school to update a student's health record.

EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL

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

1. Temperature over 100 F (oral temperature).
2. Disruptive cough with fever
3. Suspected infection of eye, ears, nose, throat, skin or scalp
4. Severe abdominal pain or headache
5. Suspected communicable disease
6. Suspected pediculosis (head lice)
7. Suspected fractures or any severe or disabling injury
8. Questionable need for sutures
9. Vomiting or diarrhea
10. Head injury
11. Immunizations which are not up-to-date

INJURIES

Any injury or illness should be reported to the school nurse immediately. If the nurse is not on duty, the problem should be reported to the school office. If the injury occurs in Physical Education, it should be reported immediately to the Physical Education teacher. An accident form must be filled out for every injury.

STUDENT RIGHTS

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/caregiver or other person or group who believes that these regulations have been or are being violated, may notify the Principal, Superintendent of Schools, and Chapter 622/Title IX Coordinator. The School Department will respond promptly, but no later than (30) thirty 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
23 Depot Street, Westford, MA 01886
978-692-5560 cmoran@westfordk12.us

TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENT

Westford Public Schools Policy [P5325](#) – Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student

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.

SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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, or placement in special classrooms. Parents/caregivers or teachers may refer students they are concerned about to the Pupil Services Office. Within five (5) school days of such a referral, a consent form authorizing an evaluation of the student will be forwarded to the parent/caregiver(s). Upon receipt of the parent/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. If the student is found eligible for special education services, the Team will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) identifying the necessary services.

[Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#) ("Section 504") is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. Section 504 provides: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of their disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance"

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ([Title II](#)) is a federal law that applies to public entities, including the conforming amendment to Section 504 that affects the meaning of a disability under Section 504. The Section 504 regulations require a school district to provide a "free appropriate public education" ([FAPE](#)) to each qualified student with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Under Section 504, a FAPE consists of the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met.

Individuals who have complaints regarding the District's compliance with Section 504 can bring suit in federal district court against the District or persons in their individual capacity. Parents/caregivers and employees can also file complaints with the:

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
135 Santilli Highway
Everett, MA 02149
(781) 338-3700

In regard to concerns related to the identification, evaluation, and placement of students with disabilities, parent/caregiver can make a hearing request with the:

Massachusetts Bureau of Special Education Appeals
14 Summer Street, 4th Floor
Malden, MA 02148
781-397-4750

Employees can also file a complaint with the:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
John F. Kennedy Federal Building
475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203
1-800-669-4000

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:

1. ***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 parents; or income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.
2. ***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.
3. ***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's/caregiver's 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:

U.S. Department of Education
Student Privacy Policy Office
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20202-8520
FERPA.complaints@ed.gov
PPRA.complaints@ed.gov