

WEST ESSEX MIDDLE SCHOOL
Home of the Knights

STUDENT HANDBOOK
2026-2027



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Mrs. Lauren Sommer, Assistant Principal

WE C.A.R.E.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome to West Essex Middle School

West Essex Middle School welcomes and celebrates all children, and aims to unite our four sending districts of Essex Fells, Fairfield, North Caldwell and Roseland into one West Essex community. If you are new to our district, welcome to the family!

West Essex Middle School (WEMS) maintains a tradition of excellence. We provide our students with the life skills, knowledge, and tools they need to achieve success in high school and beyond. To complement our rigorous core academics, we proudly offer elective cycle courses that promote science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) exploration.

WEMS believes in educating the whole child, which is a concept that focuses on the health and safety of our students as well as their academic growth and achievement. To accomplish this goal, we utilize the Team Model to create a “school within a school” mentality and structure of support for our students. Additionally, we believe in the value of learning beyond the classroom and therefore encourage participation in a variety of extracurricular activities, including athletics, music ensembles, and clubs. At WEMS, there certainly is something for everyone!

The WE Middle School Team values the importance of building trusting relationships with our families and community members. Together, we can make it a successful year for all!

Go Knights!

Mission Statement

The West Essex Regional School District, located in North Caldwell, New Jersey, proudly serves the communities of Essex Fells, Fairfield, North Caldwell, and Roseland through two outstanding schools: West Essex Middle School (grades 7–8) and West Essex High School (grades 9–12). United by the spirit of the West Essex Knights, our district is committed to providing an exceptional educational experience that prepares students for success in college, careers, and life.

Guided by our district mission statement and motto — WE Engage. WE Empower. WE Aspire. — we foster a welcoming and inclusive learning environment where students are challenged academically, encouraged to explore their passions, and inspired to become thoughtful, responsible leaders. Through innovative instruction, diverse extracurricular opportunities, and a wesstrong partnership with our families and community, West Essex empowers every student to reach their full potential.

Our Values

As an educational community we believe:

1. It is essential that we provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment that fosters learning for ALL.
2. We make decisions based upon the academic, social, and emotional needs of ALL of our students today

and tomorrow.

3. A rigorous curriculum must balance relevant life, career, and academic skills that appropriately challenge ALL of our students.
4. High expectations and continuous, data-driven reflection are essential to ensure we meet the needs of our dynamic and diverse school community.
5. Collaborative decision making, including input from all stakeholders, is critical in maintaining a positive learning environment.
6. Effective lines of communication with our community, families, staff, and students are essential.
7. Students and educators should be encouraged to take intellectual risks, pursue their passions, and inspire one another.
8. Students should have a voice in their education.
9. Effective educational leaders are responsive, accountable, transparent, trustworthy, and immersed in the learning process.
10. Finances should be allocated in a fiscally responsible and prudent manner with the goal of creating a safe and equitable learning environment.
11. Our community deserves schools that they can be proud of.

WE C.A.R.E.

West Essex Middle School is dedicated to educating the whole child, nurturing their academic, social, and emotional growth. As part of our ongoing Culture and Climate initiative, West Essex Middle School students and staff identified core values during the 2022-2023 school year.

Our core value acronym, "WE C.A.R.E.," embodies the essence of our school community. "WE" stands for West Essex, representing our united spirit and shared commitment to excellence. "CARE" signifies the pillars of Collaboration, Awareness, Resilience, and Empathy.

We believe in the power of Collaboration to foster an environment where students, parents, and staff work together to support each child's individual learning and growth. Through Awareness, we promote a culture of compassion and respect for ourselves as well as for those in our community. Resilience empowers students to embrace challenges, learn from setbacks, and develop the determination to achieve their goals. Empathy values the unique experiences and perspectives of each individual, and creates a supportive environment where all students feel seen, heard, and valued. Together, as a West Essex community, we uphold the values of WE C.A.R.E.

Board of Education

Name	Town	Office
John Toth	Essex Fells	
Laila Cristobal	Fairfield	
Debra Holinstat	North Caldwell	
Ruth DiGiovanni	Roseland	
Deborah Sacco-Calderone	Roseland	
Jonathan Schaer	Fairfield	

Raphael Stampone	Fairfield	Vice President
Philippe Andre	North Caldwell	
Maryadele Wojtowicz	North Caldwell	President

Administrators

Name	Title
Mr. Damion Macioci	Superintendent
Ms. Melissa Kida	Business Administrator/ Board Secretary
Mr. Caesar Diliberto	Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Ms. Alicia Angione	Principal
Mrs. Lauren Sommer	Assistant Principal
Mr. Scott Burrows	Director of Technology
Mr. Timothy Walsh	Director of Athletics, Supervisor of Health and Physical Education
Dr. Elizabeth McQuaid	Director of Special Services
Ms. Lisa Hulse	Director of Guidance and Student Services Personnel
Mr. Greg Aschoff	Instructional Supervisor of Mathematics and Business
Ms. Syrena LoRe	Instructional Supervisor of English, Reading, and Libraries
Ms. Laura Drago	Instructional Supervisor of World Languages and Social Studies
Ms. Lisa Swanick	Instructional Supervisor of Fine, Performing, Practical Arts
Ms. Lisa Swanick	Instructional Supervisor of Science and Environmental Safety (Interim)

Emergency Closing/Early Dismissal

Certain weather conditions may dictate a delayed opening, early dismissal or school closure. An automated phone message will be sent to all parents via the district's communication system. Residents may check the school website or call the school at 973-228-1200. Radio stations WOR 710 AM and WINS 1010 AM will announce closings or delayed openings. Please do not call the police concerning school closings.

Bell Schedules

West Essex Middle School Regular School Day						
<i>Block</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>A Day</i>	<i>B Day</i>	<i>C Day</i>	<i>D Day</i>
1	8:00	8:56	1	4	3	2
2	9:00	9:54	2	1	4	3
3	9:58	10:52	3	2	1	4
LUNCH	10:52	11:39	L	L	L	L
4	11:43	12:37	5	8	7	6
5	12:41	1:35	6	5	8	7
6	1:39	2:35	7	6	5	8

WERSD Single Session School Day		
<i>Block</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>
1	8:00	8:40
2	8:44	9:24
3	9:28	10:08
4	10:12	10:52
5	10:56	11:36
6	11:40	12:20

WERSD 90 Minute Delayed Opening		
<i>Block</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>
1	9:30	10:11
2	10:15	10:56
3	11:00	11:41
LUNCH	11:41	12:20
4	12:24	1:05
5	1:09	1:50
6	1:54	2:35

WERSD All Classes Meet School Day		
<i>Block</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>
1	8:00	8:40
2	8:44	9:24
3	9:28	10:08
4	10:12	10:52
LUNCH	10:52	11:39
5	11:43	12:23
6	12:27	1:07
7	1:11	1:51
8	1:55	2:35

Calendar (District)

2026–2027 School Calendar

August 2026

- Thursday, August 27 – Staff Reports
- Friday, August 28 – Staff Reports
- Monday, August 31 – First Day of School for Students

September 2026

- Friday, September 4 – Labor Day Weekend (Schools Closed)
- Monday, September 7 – Labor Day (Schools Closed)
- Friday, September 11 – Single Session Day (12:20 PM Dismissal)
- Monday, September 21 – Yom Kippur (Schools Closed)

October 2026

- Monday, October 12 – Professional Development Day (No School for Students)

November 2026

- Thursday, November 5 – NJEA Convention (Schools Closed)
- Friday, November 6 – NJEA Convention (Schools Closed)
- Wednesday, November 25 – Single Session Day (12:20 PM Dismissal)
- Thursday, November 26 – Thanksgiving (Schools Closed)
- Friday, November 27 – Thanksgiving Recess (Schools Closed)

December 2026

- Monday, December 7 – 90 Minute Delayed Opening for Students (Professional Development)
- Wednesday, December 23 – Single Session Day (12:20 PM Dismissal)
- Thursday, December 24 – Thursday, December 31 – Winter Recess (Schools Closed)

January 2027

- Friday, January 1 – New Year's Day (Schools Closed)
- Monday, January 11 – 90 Minute Delayed Opening for Students (Professional Development)
- Monday, January 18 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Schools Closed)
- Thursday, January 21 – Single Session Day (HS Midterms)
- Friday, January 22 – Single Session Day (HS Midterms)
- Monday, January 25 – Single Session Day (HS Midterms)
- Tuesday, January 26 – Single Session Day (HS Midterms)

February 2027

- Friday, February 12 – Single Session Day (12:20 PM Dismissal)
- Monday, February 15 – Presidents' Day (Schools Closed)
- Tuesday, February 16 – Professional Development Day (No School for Students)

March 2027

- Wednesday, March 17 – 90 Minute Delayed Opening for Students (Professional Development)
- Friday, March 26 – Good Friday (Schools Closed)
- Monday, March 29 – Wednesday, March 31 – Spring Break (Schools Closed)

April 2027

- Thursday, April 1 – Friday, April 2 – Spring Break Continues (Schools Closed)

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May 2027

- Friday, May 28 – Single Session Day (12:20 PM Dismissal)
- Monday, May 31 – Memorial Day (Schools Closed)

June 2027

- Friday, June 11 – Single Session Day (Final Exams)
- Monday, June 14 – Single Session Day (Final Exams)
- Tuesday, June 15 – Single Session Day (Final Exams)
- Wednesday, June 16 – Single Session Day (Final Exams)
- Thursday, June 17 – Last Day of School (Single Session Day, 12:20 PM Dismissal)
- Thursday, June 17 – West Essex High School Graduation (2:00 PM)

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

An academically successful West Essex Middle School student is one who:

- Brings all required materials to class
- Sets goals for consistent progress
- Is present and is an active participant in class
- Takes notes and reviews them regularly
- Asks questions and seeks out extra help when necessary
- Exercises time management skills in and out of school
- Prepares for all assessments
- Demonstrates organizational skills
- Applies the information that is taught during class
- Gives full effort in and out of the classroom

Academic Integrity *(Board Policy #5701)*

The West Essex Regional School District values high standards of intellectual honesty and conduct as the foundation of our Academic Integrity Policy. In order to create an ethical learning environment, students must recognize that they are responsible for their choices. Their actions are a direct reflection of themselves, as well as the school community.

Pupils are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. This means that they will not engage in any of the following acts:

- **Cheating** on assessments, including but not limited to, the non-authorized use of books or notes, the use of crib sheets, copying from other pupils' papers, exchanging information with other pupils orally, in writing, or by signals, obtaining copies of the assessment illegally, non-authorized and/or unethical use of AI resources, and/or any other similar activities.
- **Plagiarism** on term papers, themes, essays, reports, images, take home assessments, and other academic work. Plagiarism is defined as stealing or use without acknowledgment of the ideas, words, formulas, textual materials, online services, computer programs, etc. that are not original to the student.

Examples of Unacceptable Behavior / Academic Conduct *(include but are not limited to)*:

- Any use of or access to an electronic device during an assessment
- Any unauthorized use of or access to notes or “cheat sheets” during an assessment
- Copying any class assignment and submitting it as your own
- Unauthorized collaboration (including, but not limited to sharing Google documents)
- Submitting any work that is not your own (such as obtained work, purchased work, and/or work created by generative AI tools without explicit teacher authorization)
- Using language, words, ideas, or images without citing properly
- Altering answers on a scored exam
- Obtaining any unauthorized information on an exam prior to the administration
- Falsification of signature
- Using a word translator in World Language classes

Procedures and consequences for violations of academic integrity:

- The teacher will investigate the suspected violation
- If founded, a zero will be assigned as a grade on the assignment
- Parents and/or guardian will be contacted
- The principal, instructional supervisor, assistant principal(s), and the guidance counselor will be notified. The incident will be recorded in the student's disciplinary record
- The student may be excluded from the National Honor Society
- Disciplinary action will be taken for multiple infractions

Danger of Failing

Students' academic progress is continuously monitored by our faculty and staff. At the conclusion of each marking period, the grade level guidance counselor will review student grades and identify students with grades placing them in danger of failing academic subjects. Based upon this information, a letter will be sent home expressing the concern of the school and outlining a plan of action to improve the student's academic performance. The action plan will recommend appropriate actions the student must implement in order to improve his/her current grade.

Should the student continue to remain in danger of failure, a meeting may be scheduled for each identified student and will include the student, the parents or guardians, the guidance counselor, the case manager (if applicable) and the building principal.

Students may fail a course when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- The final course average is a 59% or below, which equates to an 'F'
- A failing grade is earned in 3 of 4 marking periods
- A failing grade is earned in both Marking Periods 3 and 4

Students who fail one or more core academic courses for the current school year will be required to enroll in our Summer Improvement Program (SIP). Students who fail more than two subjects may be retained and not advance to the next grade level. Additionally, students who fail a core course and do not attend our SIP will not advance to the next grade level.

Gifted & Talented

West Essex Middle School provides students with opportunities to engage in self-selected, research-based, interdisciplinary enrichment experiences built into their regularly scheduled classes. A dedicated Gifted and Talented teacher will begin the school year by co-teaching primarily in Reading Cycles courses and working alongside the classroom teacher to provide students with unique opportunities to engage in hands-on authentic learning activities. These lessons are an extension of the curriculum and will focus on interdisciplinary connections including STEAM, environmentalism, and multiculturalism. As the school year progresses, students identified for enrichment support will continue to work with our Gifted and Talented teacher both within their classes and on independent projects.

Additionally, Club ROGATE (Resources Offered for Gifted and Talented Education) is offered to serve those who ask unique questions, tend to research and make interdisciplinary connections

without prompting, and demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge. Acceptance is considered through a combination of teacher recommendations, interview, marking period grades, standardized assessments and student interest. Through monthly meetings, ROGATE provides students the opportunity to think critically while completing challenging logic puzzles and self-directed research projects and portfolios.

Homework Policy *(Board Policy #2330)*

Administration and staff at West Essex Middle School recognize that homework contributes toward building student responsibility, self-discipline, and lifelong learning habits. Time spent on homework directly influences students' abilities to meet the district's rigorous academic standards. Students, parents/guardians, and staff members are expected to view homework as an important part of their educational experience. Homework will be assigned on a regular basis to:

- practice and reinforce skills
- prepare for new topics before a class discussion or demonstration
- encourage creative learning by emphasizing student initiative and research
- develop independent study skills and self-discipline

Homework may be used as part of the student's overall evaluation and to identify difficulties in a student's progress. Homework will be assigned in accordance with the needs and abilities of individual students and in support of the particular curricular area. Teachers will communicate homework assignments verbally during class, and post in writing to the classroom board and/or through electronic communication (Google Classroom). In establishing homework assignments, consideration will be given to school events as well as other subject area requirements.

Homework Responsibilities

To maximize homework completion, students are expected to:

- record and understand the homework assignment before leaving class
- set aside a regular time for studying
- ensure that homework is completed independently and submitted on time
- ask for assistance and extra help from their teachers when needed
- effectively manage time on long-term projects
- identify work that is missing due to an absence from class
- reference Google Classroom when absent or unclear of an assignment

Parents can also assist with homework by adhering to the following guidelines:

- establish a specific time and quiet location
- eliminate distractions, such as social media use
- monitor organization and assist in prioritizing assignments
- verify daily assignments, utilizing Google Classroom
- provide guidance, not answers
- provide 20 minute increments with short breaks of 5-10 minutes, as needed for students

Homework Per Night

The average 7th grade student should account for 1-2 hours of homework per night. The average 8th grade student should expect 2 hours of homework per night. If a student is consistently

spending more than the time allotted on homework, parents should contact the appropriate classroom teacher.

Tests Per Day

Students should not be expected to complete more than two major tests per day. Students may contact their teachers directly or notify their counselor of any concerns.

Weekends & Holidays

Homework may be given over the weekend. Homework assignments will not be assigned immediately before school vacations with a due date immediately after vacations; however, assignments may be given over a long period of time, which may encompass a vacation. Tests will not be given on the first day back from a vacation.

Honor Roll

The recognition of student achievement through the publishing of an honor roll is a time-honored tradition at West Essex. *High Honor Roll* is awarded to any student who maintains grades at or above an A- for each of the first three marking periods of the school year. *Honor Roll* is awarded to any student who maintains grades at or above a B- for each of the first three marking periods of the school year.

Level Placement

If a middle school student wishes to appeal a mathematics level placement for the following school year, he or she must first review the Program of Studies Placement Criteria posted on our website. If appropriate, the student may appeal with the Departmental Supervisor within a specific window of time. Appeals will not be considered after the deadline.

Library & Media Center

The West Essex Middle School Library and Media Center is staffed by a certified School Librarian and Library Aide to help students navigate an information and technology rich world. The library is located opposite the main entrance to the school. Students can visit the library before school, during lunch study, and after school on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays until 3:35 p.m. The library offers a wide variety of creative programming during the Lunch Study period to provide students a change of pace during the school day. Students can look for library materials, check their library accounts and place books on hold. In the library, students have access to computers, reading areas, printers and a photocopier, free of charge. Students are limited to 10 copies and/or 10 printed pages per day. Students also visit the library frequently with classroom teachers to conduct research and inquiry in collaboration with the Librarian.

The WEMS library has over 13,000 fiction and nonfiction print books, eBooks, audiobooks, and magazines available for check out, with new materials arriving every month. Books may be checked out for 4 weeks. Students are asked to return library materials promptly to allow others an opportunity to use the materials. The charge for a lost book will be equal to its replacement cost. A fine shall be paid for any damage to a book other than ordinary wear and tear. Students must clear outstanding balances to access the Genesis gradebook.

The Library website is the portal to all library materials and activities - the Destiny online catalog, the Sora App (to access ebooks and audiobooks from our school's digital collection), all of the subscription databases, research guides for individual projects, summer reading lists, library activities and upcoming events. The website and online catalog are available 24/7 from any internet-connected device. Students use their West Essex Middle School username (westex) and password (westex) to login.

National Junior Honor Society

National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) is reserved for eighth grade students who achieve an unweighted grade point average of 3.5 or higher during the first six marking periods of middle school. Eligible students must demonstrate outstanding leadership, service, and character within West Essex Middle School as well as within the community. Students with egregious and/or excessive Code of Conduct or HIB violations may not be considered a student in good standing and, as a result, may be disqualified from membership in the National Junior Honor Society.

Report Cards

Report Cards can be accessed via the Genesis Parent Portal four times a year. Similarly, Mid-Period Progress Reports, which are also posted to the Genesis portal, give parents an opportunity to check on their child's progress and avoid a failing grade at the end of the quarter. Progress reports may be sent at other times during the marking period at the discretion of the teacher. Commendation forms are used to inform the student and parent of notable improvement or outstanding achievement.

Marking Period Dates

The following table identifies the marking period and progress report dates:

West Essex Regional School District <u>Marking Period Dates 26-27</u>					
	Start Date:	End Date:	Grading Portal Opens:	Grading Portal Closes 3pm	Parent Portal Opens: 3pm
1st MP	August 31 Monday	November 4 Wednesday	November 2 Monday	November 12 Thursday	November 13 Friday
2nd MP	November 5 Thursday	January 26 Tuesday	January 18 Monday	January 28 Thursday	January 29 Friday
3rd MP	January 27 Wednesday	April 8 Thursday	April 6 Tuesday	April 15 Thursday	April 16 Friday
4th MP	April 9 Friday	June 10 Thursday	June 8 Tuesday	6/16/2027 Wednesday	June 17 Thursday

Grading System

Grade	Numerical Equivalent	Quality
A+	98 - 100	Superior
A	93 - 97	Superior
A-	90 - 92	Superior
B+	87 - 89	Above Average
B	83 - 86	Above Average
B-	80 - 82	Above Average
C+	77 - 79	Average
C	73 - 76	Average
C-	70 - 72	Average
D+	67 - 69	Below Average
D	63 - 66	Below Average
D-	60 - 62	Below Average
F	59 or below	Failure
I	*Incomplete	Incomplete

* Students have 10 school days to complete missing assignments before the incomplete grade is overturned to a failure. Parents should contact the teacher to discuss marking period grades.

Standardized Assessments

Please note the following tentative dates for our standardized assessments:

- NJSLA Standardized Assessment, Grades 7-8 (May 3-7, 2026)
 - NJSLA Science Assessment, Grade 8 only (May 11-12, 2026)
-

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance by all students in the public schools of the State of New Jersey is a well established, long standing state policy (NJSA 18A-38: 25, 26) that has been repeatedly upheld by the courts of the state as well as by the Supreme Court of the United States. The school cannot teach students who are not present. The entire process of education requires regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences, and study in order to reach the goal of maximum educational benefits for each individual student.

Absence for all students is recorded on a block-by-period basis. When a student is absent for the entire day, each of his/her courses is charged with one absence. A disciplinary removal from class counts as an absence from that period. Should a student check into school late, each course, which has been missed for more than half the period (27 minutes), will be charged with an absence. The same holds true for students who check out of school prior to the end of the school day. The student should bring in a note from a doctor verifying an appointment during the period of check-in or checkout, to keep in their attendance file for future reference. In addition, students will not be assessed a class absence if he/she is at the nurse, SAC,

guidance/attendance/special services/main office, and it is documented by the appropriate staff member.

The number of unexcused absences in each full-year course may not exceed 18 days. Unexcused absences include sick days, medical and dental appointments, and family obligations. Days in excess of 18 may result in a loss of credit, mandatory attendance at our summer improvement program, and/or retention. A loss of credit in any core academic course that is not recovered during the summer will result in retention.

Per New Jersey guidelines, the following absences are excused absences that do not count toward the allowable 18 absences:

- School-sponsored activities, including suspension
- Religious holidays pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14 thru 16.
- Bring Your Child to Work Day
- Student's required attendance in court
- Family illness or death
- Participation in observance of Veterans Day, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-33
- Attendance at a civic event
- Closure of a busing school district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school
- where appropriate, when consistent with Individualized Education Programs, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C. §§ 794 and 705(20), and individualized healthcare plans pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3

Worth noting, family vacations are not waived from the attendance policy and any days absent are recorded as chargeable absences.

Absence Procedures

Parents should notify the Attendance Office no later than the morning of a student's absence using the Genesis Parent Portal steps as outlined below.

1. Go to www.westex.org. Select "parent portal" from the "parents and community" menu.
2. Click the "Notify the Attendance Office" link on the summary screen
3. Enter the date of absence/tardy
4. Student(s) that will be absent/tardy
5. Type the reason for the absence/tardy

The Attendance Office will process the attendance notifications each morning. ONLY if you are unable to enter the student absence in the Genesis Parent Portal should you call the attendance office at (973) 228-1200, x.3332. Parents will be notified via a voice-activated phone call if their child is absent from their homeroom/block 1 class. Students must provide a note to the attendance secretary no later than the day of the return to school.

Excused Absences

Absences, late arrivals or early departures from school are permitted for the following reasons:

1. Designated religious holidays as approved by the NJ State Board of Education
2. Death in the immediate family
3. Three college visits during junior year and three college visits during senior year (must submit a signed College Visit form to the Attendance Office)
4. The student's required attendance in Court (must provide documentation to the Attendance Office)
5. School sponsored activities
6. Bring Your Child to Work Day. Must submit to the Attendance Office documentation on letterhead from the parent's place of business.
7. Suspension from school
8. Participation in the observance of Veterans Day, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-13.2
9. Participation in the observance of election membership activities, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-33
10. One day for attendance at a civic event(s), pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-33.2

These are the only excused absences. All other absences are unexcused.

Students will have one day for every one day absent to complete work assigned during an absence. Work assigned prior to absence(s) will be due on the first day a student returns unless other arrangements have been made in advance with the teacher and student/parent. Students should check teacher websites and/or Google Classroom for missed work and handouts.

Consecutive Unexcused Absences

Upon the fifth (5th) consecutive unexcused absence, the Assistant Principal shall:

1. notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
2. conduct an investigation of the cause of each unexcused absence, including contact with the pupil's parent or legal guardian;
3. proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potentially missing or abused child abuse situation is detected; and
4. cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

Upon the 9th consecutive unexcused absence, the Assistant Principal shall:

1. notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
2. conduct a follow-up investigation, including contact with the pupil's parent or legal guardian, to determine the cause of each unexcused absence;
3. evaluate the appropriateness of the action plan developed pursuant to #3 above;
4. support the pupil's return to school and regular attendance using any of the following:
 - a. Refer or consult with the building's Intervention and Referral Services Team, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8;

- b. Conduct testing, assessments, or evaluations of the pupil's academic, behavioral, and health needs;
- c. Consider an alternate educational placement;
- d. Make a referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
- e. Refer to the court program designated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts; and proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, for a potentially missing or abuse situation is detected;
- f. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

Upon the 10th consecutive unexcused absence, students are considered truant pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27. The Building Principal or designee shall:

1. make a mandatory referral to the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
2. attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of the mandatory referral;
3. continue to consult with the parent or legal guardian and the involved agencies to support the pupil's return to school and regular attendance;
4. cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate; and
5. proceed in accordance with compulsory education law N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31 and file truancy charges with the local authorities.

STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM	
LEVELS	Thresholds & Required Response Actions
LEVEL 1:	5 Unexcused Daily Absences — Initial Alert Notification ● Endeavor to contact the student's parents regarding each unexcused absence before the next school day begins; make a reasonable effort to identify the reason behind the absence.
LEVEL 2:	7 to 9 Unexcused Daily Absences — Secondary Alert & Direct Parental Outreach ● The Assistant Principal coordinates a collaborative meeting involving all necessary personnel.
LEVEL 3:	10 to 15 Unexcused Daily Absences — Formal Communications (Days 10 and 17) ● The Assistant Principal schedules an intervention conference with the parent, student, counselor, and relevant Attendance Committee stakeholders. ● Initiate an I&RS Referral ○ Formulate focused intervention strategies ○ Implement and monitor I&RS protocols ○ Establish an Attendance Action Plan
LEVEL 4	15th Unexcused Absence Milestone ● Mandatory parent conference with subsequent follow-up communication
18+ DAYS	18 or More Unexcused Absences — Official Notice with Retention Review and Required Summer School ● Consideration for grade retention ● Initiation of truancy filings

Cutting Class

Students who are present in school but do not attend class must be accounted for by an adult. Students are permitted to obtain a hall pass to visit the nurse or guidance office. Students who miss class for more than 20 minutes without staff permission are considered cutting. Disciplinary consequences for a first offense is a Saturday Detention.

Early Dismissal

A student who wishes to leave school early must present a note to the Attendance Office prior to homeroom on the day the student anticipates leaving early. The note must include the date, time, reason, and parent signature. Parents who are picking up their child from school must follow the visitor guidelines, which include providing a valid picture ID.

Students who leave school early due to illness must be evaluated by the School Nurse prior to dismissal. The School Nurse must be given the professional courtesy to evaluate students; therefore students should avoid texting their parents to pick them up. Parents and students are expected to respect the medical evaluation of the School Nurse and follow recommendations accordingly.

Extracurricular Attendance

All students must be in school for at least 4 hours and 35 minutes to participate in school-related activities that day. Students must arrive no later than 10:00 a.m. Students who are dismissed early from school, after fulfilling the 4 hour and 35 minute obligation, are allowed to participate in after school activities if the reason for the early dismissal is excused. Bereavement, documented appointments with a physician/dentist, and legal proceedings are all excused reasons for an early dismissal and allow a child to participate in after school extra-curricular events. Students dismissed early from the nurse may not participate in an after school activity or event.

Tardiness *(Board Policy #5240)*

The Board of Education believes that promptness is an important element of school attendance. Pupils who are late to school or class miss essential portions of the instructional program. A tardy student is one who is not inside his/her homeroom and seated before the 8:00 am tardy bell rings. A warning bell will ring at 7:55 a.m. Tardy students should sign-in at the Attendance Office prior to reporting to their Block 1 class. Tardy notes must be clearly written and include the date, reason, and parent signature. A student will be allowed four (4) late arrivals to school without cause. Disciplinary consequences are as follows:

Tardy to School	Consequence
Late to School (5 Days)	Verbal Warning
Late to School (10 Days)	General Detention
Late to School (20 Days)	E-Dash
Late to School (30 Days)	Saturday Detention
Late to School (31+ Days)	Administrative Discretion

Tardy to Class

Students who are tardy to class (Blocks 2-6) are subject to classroom rules and teacher detentions for the first four incidents of tardiness. If the teacher detention does not eliminate the student's tardiness, the Assistant Principal may invoke incremental disciplinary action.

CODE OF CONDUCT *(Board Policy #5600)*

To ensure a safe learning environment, all students are expected to adhere to the code of conduct. All encounters in West Essex Middle School should be based on mutual respect, courtesy, and cooperation. When students make a poor choice, disciplinary consequences may be used as a form of education whereby students can learn from their mistakes. Code of Conduct violations include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors:

Key Chart:

LD	Lunch Detention	PS	Progressive Suspension
GD	General Detention	SP	Social Probation
E-D	E Dash	ISS	In School Suspension
SD	Saturday Detention	OSS	Out of school Suspension
TD	Teacher Detention	Regulation 5600	*This guide is to serve as a reference and admin discretion is permitted in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A 18A:37-2 & N.J.A.C. 6A*

Each disciplinary matter or incident will be treated individually. Disciplinary sanctions are given at the discretion of the Building Administrator or designee. All discipline is progressive. Repeated offenses yield increasing consequences.

**North Caldwell Police Department will be notified at the administration's discretion.*

Infraction	Consequence
Tardiness to school	1st Offense-5x (warning) 2nd Offense-10-15x (GD/Lunch) 3rd Offense-20x (E-D) 4th Offense-25x (E-D) >30 SD *SP Admin discretion
Cutting Class	E-D, SD, ISS/OSS *SP Admin discretion
Unauthorized Departure from campus/Misconduct in an unauthorized area	ISS, OSS, PS *SP Admin discretion <i>Contact North Caldwell Police Department</i>
ID/procedures (no ID/alterd ID) <i>ID must be worn and visible at all times throughout the day</i>	Warning, LD/GD, E-D, SD, ISS, OSS *SP Admin discretion <i>*Fine can be assigned to student to replace ID</i>
Misuse of Pass (digital pass system)	LD/GD, SD
Academic Integrity (breach of academic integrity) Board Policy 5701	1st-Zero on assignment, parent contact, counselor/admin notified 2nd-Zero on assignment, LD/GD, notation in record 3rd-SUS, continued on record, impact on honors 4th-PS and/or loss of privileges
Insubordination	TD,LD/GD, E-D, SD, ISS, OSS *SP Admin discretion
Devices (unauthorized device use, refusal to surrender)	Warning, LD/GD, E-D, SD, ISS, OSS *SP Admin discretion
Devices/Media (improper electronic communication, inappropriate social media, unauthorized recording/posting as defined by Board Policy #3283)	LD/GD, ISS, OSS *SP Admin discretion Possible Board referral (egregious/ongoing behavior)
Disrespectful behavior (toward all staff and students)	LD/GD, ISS, OSS

Unauthorized use of electronic devices in school including not adhering to the school rule of placing student's phone in the classroom phone holder (as defined by Policy #5516)	1st Offense: Verbal Warning and/or General Detention 2nd Offense: General Detention and/or E-DASH 3rd Offense: Social Probation, Saturday Detention and/or Suspension 4th Offense: Social Probation, Suspension, and/or any other consequence deemed appropriate by administration
Inappropriate Behavior, not limited to: Any type of prank, calls to 911, creating false public alarms.	LD/GD, ISS, OSS
Physical Contact (inappropriate/unwanted physical contact)	LD/GD, ISS, OSS
Physical Contact-pantsing	LD/GD, E-D, ISS, OSS
Disruptive behavior (during school hours or out of school related activities and/or drills)	LD/GD- ISS, OSS
Fighting/physical aggression	3-5 Day OSS parent pick up SP North Caldwell police notified Meeting with AP Progressive increase in suspension
Threats to students/staff (verbal, written, electronic, physical)	ISS, OSS Contact North Caldwell Police Department Increased/Extended Suspension–board referral *SP Admin discretion
Violent/dangerous behavior (assault, weapon, battery, possession of weapon)	1st-ISS/OSS/police report-Contact North Caldwell Police Department 2nd-Up to 10 day OSS, possible board hearing 3rd-Extended Suspension, Board action *SP Admin discretion
Bias/Language (derogatory or inflammatory comments/actions—including bias-based)	1st LD/GD, ISS, OSS 2nd ISS, OSS 3rd Extended ISS, OSS *SP Admin discretion <i>Notify North Caldwell Police Department</i>

Vandalism/Destruction of property	1st SD/restitution/possible police report 2nd ISS, OSS/restitution/police report 3rd Extended ISS, OSS *SP Admin discretion
Theft	1st ISS, OSS, police report and notify <i>North Caldwell Police Department</i> 2nd Increased ISS, OSS 3rd Extended ISS, OSS possible board referral
Possession of Contraband (including but not limited to lighters, laser pointers, noise makers, etc and other items deemed prohibited by administration)	LD/GD, E-D, SD, ISS, OSS
Possession of illegal substance or Paraphernalia (use of any illegal substance, or tampering with a mandated chemical screening-which will be treated as a positive test result are all prohibited) Board Policy #5530	See consequences in the student handbook under Substance Abuse Consequences.
Failure to comply with a mandated search backpack and/or person	Long term suspension (suspension in excess of 10 school days) and Board of Education hearing Contact North Caldwell Police Department
Gambling	ISS, OSS
Vaping, tobacco, nicotine	1st-3 day suspension and immediate substance screening 2nd-4 day suspension and immediate screening 3rd-5 day suspension and screening/SP and additional admin consequences
Alcohol, drugs, including tampering with screening	1st-mandatory nurse/medical eval, lab test, 7-10 suspension (per offense and policy), <i>Contact North Caldwell Police Department</i> 2nd-Increased suspension length, continued 3rd-Extended suspension, possible Board hearing and change of placement *SP Admin discretion

Consequences

West Essex Middle School offers a range of disciplinary consequences. The severity of the infraction as well as the student's cumulative discipline record are considered in determining appropriate disciplinary measures. Lack of knowledge of the school rules will not be accepted as an excuse for breaking the school rules. Possible consequences include detentions, suspensions, social probation, and loss of privileges such as bus privilege. More detailed descriptions are listed below:

Teacher Detention

Students may be assigned teacher detention for classroom infractions. Students and parents will be given a minimum of 24 hours notice of any assigned detention. Students who fail to attend a teacher assigned detention will automatically receive a general detention from the Assistant Principal.

General Detention

General Detentions, which are assigned by the Assistant Principal, occur on an assigned Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday from 2:45-3:45 pm. Failure to report carries a penalty of two detentions or one extended detention.

Extended Detention

Extended Detentions, also known as an e-dash, are assigned by the Assistant Principal. An e-dash occurs from 2:45-5:00 pm. Students are encouraged to bring homework and/or school related reading materials. When dismissed, students are to report to the Assistant Principal's office until the parents or legal guardians arrive to transport students home. Failure to report will result in a one day Out of School Suspension (OSS).

Saturday Detention

The administration may assign a Saturday Detention for more serious infractions, or for excessive referrals or detentions. Saturday Detentions occur from 8:00 am until 11:00 am at WEHS. Students are encouraged to bring homework and/or school related reading materials. When dismissed, students are to report to the Assistant Principal's office until the parents or legal guardians arrive to transport students home. Failure to report will result in a one day Out of School Suspension (OSS).

Suspension, In-School (ISS)

Severe disciplinary infractions may result in an In-School Suspension (ISS). Under the supervision of a staff member, students will complete coursework in a designated ISS room. During the day(s) ISS is being served, students are not permitted to ride the school bus or participate in extracurricular activities. Any students who are insubordinate during the day may receive additional consequences and/or social probation.

Suspension, Out of School (OSS)

Severe disciplinary consequences may result in an out of school suspension (OSS) ranging from 1-10 school days. Parents should expect to pick their child up from school within one hour of being notified. During the suspension, students are not permitted on school grounds for academics, sports or extracurricular activities. A conference with the student, parent, counselor, and administrator is required prior to re-entry into the building.

Social Probation

Social probation prohibits a student from attending extracurricular, athletic, and/or school related activities such as field trips. A student that is suspended from school, exhibits defiant behaviors, an extended disciplinary record, or excessive absences may receive social probation. The co-curricular functions that are affected by the policy are overnight field trips, day field trips, and school sponsored functions such as dances. A student placed on Social Probation a second time may be placed on that status permanently at the discretion of the Principal. Students who are denied participation in co-curricular functions may appeal through a written request to the Principal.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Guidance Services

Every student is assigned a counselor based. The counselor remains with the child throughout both of their middle school years. Services include assistance in educational planning, interpretation of test scores, provision of occupational information, study aids, assistance with school-related challenges and home and/or social concerns. Sign-up sheets are available in the Guidance Office for students who wish to confer with their guidance counselor. Parents may request a parent/teacher conference by contacting the guidance counselor.

Student Assistance Counselor

The Student Assistance Counselor (SAC) is a Licensed Certified Counselor trained to help students with a host of adolescent and family issues including but not limited to attention issues, and mental health concerns including anxiety, depression, and substance use. The SAC also facilitates peer groups, allowing students the opportunity to congregate with others who may be encountering similar challenges.

Intervention and Referral Services *(Board Policy # 2417)*

The Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) Committee provides tiered levels of support for general education students. Referrals to this committee can be made by counselors, parents, or any other staff member with concerns about a specific student. For more information, please contact your child's grade-level counselor.

504 Committee *(Board Policy # 2418)*

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, section 504 is a Federal Civil Rights statute which protects the rights of persons with disabilities. Section 504 prohibits discrimination against handicapped persons, including both students and staff members, by school districts receiving federal financial assistance. The West Essex Middle School Student Assistance Counselor, who also serves as the 504 Coordinator, can be reached at (973-228-1200, x.3364). Included in the U.S. Department of Education regulations for Section 504 is the requirement that handicapped students receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE).

MEDICAL

West Essex Middle School's health program is designed to appraise, protect, and promote optimum health among all students and school personnel. Your cooperation is necessary to achieve our goal. To comply with NJAC 6A:16, students are required to have a medical examination upon enrollment to school, prior to participation in interscholastic or intramural sports (grades 6-12), when applying for working papers, or for the purposes of a comprehensive child study team evaluation. All forms may be downloaded from our website.

Accidents

In case of an injury, accident, or serious illness, the nurse will give emergency first aid treatment and the parent will be notified. If the parent cannot be contacted or if immediate medical treatment is necessary, the school physician or emergency transport will be contacted and necessary measures will be taken.

Crutches/Casts/Immobilizers/Stitches

Students with crutches, walkers, canes and immobilizers will not be admitted to school without a physician's written authorization that they are required to use them in school and have been instructed in their use. Documentation must include that the student has been instructed in using crutches on the stairs. When the student no longer needs the crutches, we do request that a note be submitted to the school nurse. The school nurse may authorize the use of the elevator key. The student is responsible to return the elevator key when its use is no longer needed. Students that have casts, splints or stitches/staples are not allowed to participate in gym. A doctor's note is required for re-entry into physical education after the cast or stitches/staples are removed or if medical excuse from physical education is extensive. Please contact the school nurse with any further questions prior to re-entry into school.

Health Screenings

Health Screenings that are done by the school nurse include vision, hearing, height, weight, blood pressure and scoliosis screenings. These screenings will be done at appropriate grade levels as per state guidelines and district policies. Parents must submit a written note to the nurse by September 15th of the school year to exempt their child from biannual scoliosis screenings and submit MD documentation with the result of the MD examination. Parents will be notified if a problem is detected with a referral to their private health care provider.

Illness

If your child will be absent from school, please call the Attendance Office in the morning at 973-228-1200, x.3332. If a contagious illness such as pink eye, flu, or strep throat is suspected or your child has a rash, please have the child examined by the doctor before sending them to school and submit a doctor's note to school upon their return. Also, if your child is vomiting or has a fever (over 100), they should be kept home for a full 24 hours after this subsides. This is done to promote a healthy school environment, but can only be done with the cooperation of the parents/guardians.

Students who become ill during the school day must report to their classroom teacher and obtain a medical pass to visit the nurse. The nurse will assess the student and contact the parent/guardian as needed. If the nurse ascertains that the student should not remain in school, the parent/guardian/emergency contacts will be notified and asked to provide the necessary transportation for the child.

Medical Conditions

Students may have medical conditions such as Diabetes, Asthma, Epilepsy, or Severe Allergic Reaction. The parents/guardians of these students are requested to contact the school nurse regarding special information and forms that need to be completed to better care for the student in the school setting. Parents of these students are required to have their pediatrician complete special plans of care as well as medication forms for any medication that may need to be administered in the school. Parents/guardians are requested to arrange a meeting with the school nurse prior to the first day of school and bring the required forms listed below, as well as any supplies or medications:

1. Medication Form (as discussed under “medication” section above)
2. Parent Release of Information Authorization
3. Appropriate Action Plan

Medical Emergency Information

Parents are required to complete the Medical/Emergency Forms via the Genesis Parent Portal on an annual basis by the first day of the school year.

Medication *(Board Policy #5530)*

Medication, which includes prescriptive and over-the-counter (non-prescriptive) medicine, may only be administered in school by the school physician, a certified or non-certified school nurse, a substitute school nurse employed by the district, or a parent/guardian. Children in need of medication during the school day must present the following information to the school nurse:

1. Physician’s order noting medication, purpose, route, dosage, frequency and time to be administered.
2. Parent/guardian authorization

Upon approval, all medications must be brought to school in their original container with the pharmacy label. Self-administration of medication by the student is only permitted for life threatening illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, or severe allergic reaction. Parents should speak with our school nurse regarding special medications, such as epipens.

Physical Education Excuse

Students may be excused from Physical Education up to three days by presenting a written note from the parent/guardian. Injuries or illness requiring more than three days out of physical education require a note from a physician to be presented to the school nurse. Please contact the school nurse for a form to be completed if the student’s exclusion from gym will comprise the whole school year. Students may not participate in physical education with stitches/staples, splints or casts etc.

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Activity Fee *(Board Policy #2430)*

West Essex Regional School District students who participate in extra and co-curricular activities including all sports, clubs and after school activities are required to pay an annual activity fee. All co-curricular activities will be included in the activity fee. Students eligible for free or reduced lunch are exempt from this fee, and families experiencing financial hardships may request consideration in writing through the building Principal. The deadline for receiving student activity fee payment will be prior to the start of practice for sport seasons and prior to the start of participation in other co-curricular activities in September. The Student Activity Fee Form can be found on the school website on the Middle School home page, under “Quicklinks.” Please send your activity fee and forms to West Essex Middle School and mark the outside of the envelope “Activity Fee.”

Affirmative Action Policy *(Board Policy # 2260)*

United States Title IX and New Jersey Statutes 6:4 prohibit discrimination against students and employees in public schools K-12. Whereas Title IX prohibits discrimination based on sex, Title 6:4 goes further and prohibits it on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, or social or economic status. Both titles require that all policies, procedures and practices of the school district be non-discriminatory, and that there be no sex segregation in courses, educational programs, or extracurricular activities. No course, including but not limited to, physical education, health, industrial arts, business education, vocational courses, home economics, and music, shall be offered separately. If a student or member of the staff alleges a violation of such regulations, he or she may submit a grievance. The process begins by verbally notifying the Title IX Affirmative Action Officer, Juliann Hoebee, at (973) 228-1200 x. 1201, of the alleged violation within ten (10) days of its occurrence. A detailed description of the grievance procedure is available in each district school and in the Superintendent's Office. The Affirmative Action Officer is available to answer any questions from the public concerning Title IX or Title 6:4 regulations.

Anonymous Reporting

West Essex Middle School uses the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System (SS-ARS). Anonymous tips can be made by calling the tip line (1-844-5-SAYNOW), using the app on mobile devices, or through their website at www.saysomething.net. If using a West Essex issued Chromebook, students may access the website through their Google Chrome bookmarks. All calls and tips are sent to a multilingual crisis center and the tip is then sent to WEMS officials and law enforcement as needed. School officials will intervene and help the individual.

Assembly Etiquette

Proper behavior during assembly programs should include:

- Being seated prior to the start of the assembly program
- Remaining quiet and attentive during the assembly performance
- Keeping feet on floor not on chair backs
- Applauding only at the appropriate time during the assembly presentation
- Not calling out, heckling, whistling, or waving to friends prior to or during the presentation

Athletics

West Essex Middle School offers the following athletic programs for students:

Fall

Soccer
Field Hockey
Football

Winter

Basketball
Wrestling
Cheer

Spring

Baseball
Softball
Spring Track

The school nurse handles all athletic paperwork. To register for an athletic program, students must [Register Online](#) and submit required [Athletic Forms](#) (either Health History Update Form or Athletic Pre-Participation Physical Examination Forms A&B). A physical exam must be within the past 365 days and on file in the Nurse's office at West Essex Middle School. The required medical forms for participation must be submitted in hard copy only. This includes the New Jersey Department of Education Forms A and B and/or the Health History Update Form. The Health History Update Form is the only medical form required if your child's physical is current and on file with the school nurse. All forms are available on the Athletic Forms for Participation Link: [Athletic/Health Forms](#).

Backpacks

Due to space and safety issues, students will not be permitted to carry large backpacks during the school day. All students will deposit their backpacks in their locker upon arrival to school, utilizing the West Essex cinch bag or small to medium sized backpack to hold small personal items such as Chromebooks and supplies. Backpacks purchased outside of the school store must not exceed 17x12x5 or 1200 cubic volume. Students will visit their lockers at appropriate times throughout the school day to collect larger learning materials for their classes such as textbooks, binders, and individual reading books. All coats, jackets, hats, and lunch bags must be stored in a locker before reporting to Block 1.

Dress Code

West Essex Middle School encourages students to dress in such a way as to demonstrate pride both in themselves and their school, however attire that disrupts learning is not permitted. Dress or grooming that jeopardizes the health or safety of the student or of other students will not be permitted. The dress code prohibits:

- Shorts, skirts, or dresses that end above mid-thigh (around fingertip length) or clothing that exposes undergarments.
- Clothing that exposes the midriff, chest, or back, including see-through materials, or fishnet styles.
- Strapless tops, halter tops, tube tops, as well as any tops that do not provide adequate coverage.
- Apparel promoting or displaying references to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or containing sexual content, profanity, or offensive/inappropriate language or imagery.
- Footwear that poses a safety hazard, slippers, cleats, or being barefoot.

- Hats, hoods, visors, sunglasses, or bandanas are not to be worn inside school buildings during the school day, unless required for religious, cultural, or medical reasons.
- Clothing or accessories displaying symbols, words, or imagery that may reasonably be considered discriminatory, hateful, or offensive to any race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, or ethnic group.
- Chains, spiked accessories, or items such as studded collars or choke-style necklaces or bracelets that may pose a safety risk or be considered disruptive.
- Clothing or accessories that imply gang affiliation or promote gang activity. Local law enforcement may provide guidance to the district as needed.
- Clothing or accessories displaying images of violence, weapons, or acts of harm (including guns, knives, or other dangerous imagery) are not permitted.
- Noise-canceling headphones, over-ear headsets, or earbuds may not be worn unless explicitly authorized by a teacher for educational purposes or as part of an approved accommodation or medical reason. These devices are only permitted during study hall or lunch periods, when they do not interfere with school operations or student responsibilities.
- In courses where specific attire is necessary for safety (ex. science labs, physical education, visual/industrial arts, or technology classes), additional dress guidelines may be provided to protect students from injury.
- Costumes, themed dress, or other novelty attire (including masks, face paint, or costume accessories) are not permitted unless approved by school administration for a specific event or spirit day.

Pupils are encouraged to use sound judgement and reflect respect for themselves and others in dress and grooming. Students who do not abide by the dress code policy may be asked to wear school issued clothing and/or change their clothing. Repeat offenders are subject to disciplinary consequences.

Electronic Communication *(Board Policy #3283)*

Electronic communications can facilitate conversations between students and staff members regarding academics and extracurricular activities. To safely and effectively communicate with staff members electronically, students should use their school issued email account. Students should only contact teachers via their staff email address (jdoe@westex.org). Students should not utilize a staff member's personal phone number, email, or social media account.

Electronic Surveillance *(Board Policy #7441)*

In order to enhance a safe and secure environment, the Board authorizes electronic surveillance devices to be used on district property and on school grounds.

Elevator Use

Students needing an elevator key must present a physician's note to the school nurse prior to 7:40 am. All elevator keys must be returned at the expiration of the physician's note. Lost or unreturned keys will be subject to a \$5.00 fine and/or a hold on their Genesis account.

Email Accounts

All WERSD students are issued a district email account. WERSD email allows students to safely and effectively communicate and collaborate with teachers and classmates. Students should only contact teachers via their staff email address (jdoe@westex.org). Students should not contact teachers on their cell phones or via social media. When using school email, students must adhere to the Code of Conduct and:

- avoid sharing personal information over email, including telephone numbers, home addresses or passwords
- avoid sending chain letters, viruses, hoaxes or forward social or non-school related email to other students or staff
- refrain from signing-up for non school related accounts
- avoid inappropriate picture IDs that may be deemed offensive or inappropriate
- report any unusual activities such as "spam" communications, obscene email, or attempts by adults to lure them into dangerous behaviors to a teacher or guidance counselor

Student email is district property. WERSD reserves the right to archive, monitor and/or review all use of its email system. Users should not have any expectation of privacy in any electronic message created, sent or received using the district's email system.

Grievances *(Board Policy # 9130)*

Official avenues for the expression and correction of parent/guardian concerns are available in this school district. Whenever a student or parent/guardian has a complaint relating to the school district, the complainant should first attempt to resolve the dissatisfaction directly with the staff member. If the complainant is not satisfied, the complainant should attempt to resolve the dissatisfaction informally with the staff member's Supervisor/Director and then the building Principal. Any complainant who is dissatisfied with the determination of the Supervisor, and then of the Principal, has the right to appeal in writing to the Superintendent.

Hallway Etiquette/Bathroom Digital Passes

Students are required to use the Securly Digital Pass system and comply with all established procedures and expectations when requesting and using a bathroom pass.

To provide a safe, orderly environment students should:

- obtain a hall pass from their classroom teacher
- be quiet and considerate when passing rooms where classes are in session
- not run, push or shout
- not loiter in the corridors or in any areas of the building
- avoid inappropriate displays of affection
- always stay to the right when in the halls
- should leave the building promptly at dismissal

Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying *(Board Policy #5512)*

Harassment, intimidation or bullying (HIB) means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental, physical or sensory disability, or any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds as provided by Section 16 of the Anti-Bullying Rights Act which substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or rights of other students and that:

1. A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property;
2. Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
3. Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

Incidents of violence or vulgarity will have an immediate consequence ranging from a detention to out-of-school suspension. In addition to Code of Conduct investigations that are completed by the Assistant Principal, HIB allegations will be investigated by the Anti-Bullying Specialist (ABS). Confirmed HIB cases become part of the student's permanent file and are subject to further discipline. Consequences and remedial measures may include our RESET class, counseling, detentions, suspension, social probation, or removal of bus privileges. Repeat offenders will receive stronger, escalated consequences. The North Caldwell Police Department will be notified when a possible crime has been committed. Additionally, parents who demonstrate willful or wanton disregard in the exercise of supervision and control over the conduct of a minor adjudicated to be delinquent of cyber harassment (a fourth degree crime) may be liable in a civil action.

RESET Remedial Measure

As part of our ongoing Climate and Culture Initiative, and in alignment with New Jersey's Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) laws, WEMS has implemented a remedial educational program called RESET (Reflect, Evaluate, Speak, Engage, and Think). This course is designed for students who, following an HIB investigation, are found to have a confirmed Code of Conduct violation (e.g., inappropriate language or behavior). Additional details are as follows:

- Instruction draws on the WE C.A.R.E. core values and incorporates lessons from the Character Counts! Curriculum (charactercounts.org) to build ethical decision-making and respectful behaviors.
- Students will attend one week of classes (3 sessions) during the lunch block.

- Classes will be led by the Anti-Bullying Specialist (ABS) and/or members of the Counseling Team.
- Students will engage in guided self-reflection exercises, discussions, and skill-building activities. Some assignments may be required outside of class time.
- Attendance and completion of all required activities are mandatory. Students who refuse to attend or fail to complete assignments may face additional disciplinary consequences, including social probation.

The RESET program provides students with the tools and strategies to reflect on their actions, develop stronger interpersonal skills, and positively contribute to our school community.

Home Instruction *(Board Policy #2412)*

Home Instruction may be available for students who are confined to home for extended periods of time. To apply for this service, a parent should notify the child's guidance counselor and include a physician's note explaining the nature of the medical condition and the approximate time necessary for recuperation. The school physician must approve home instruction.

Lockers

Each student will be assigned a gym locker and a hall locker. The hall locker is assigned by the Assistant Principal and is equipped with a built-in combination lock. A student is required to memorize the combination of his/her assigned locker. Combination information and lockers must not be shared with other students. Students should not share their locker combination with any other students.

Each student will be responsible for keeping a neat and orderly locker. The locker must be locked when not in use. Students assume full responsibility for lost or stolen articles removed from lockers. Under no circumstances should students stand in or hide within a locker, as the door will automatically lock resulting in a dangerous situation. Students playing in lockers will face severe disciplinary consequences including a possible suspension. Any malfunction of the locker must be reported to the Office of the Assistant Principal. Lockers are school property and may be inspected at any time by school authorities with or without a student's presence or consent.

Lost and Found

The school is not responsible for lost personal items, however we do our best to assist students in finding lost items. Items such as books and clothing can be found in the Cafeteria. Articles of value, such as jewelry and cell phones are stored in the Main Office where they may be claimed upon identification. If something is lost, report this immediately to your teacher or the Assistant Principal's Office. Unclaimed articles will be disposed of quarterly. Students are encouraged to place their name on items whenever possible.

Lunch

Lunch will be served during regular days and delayed openings:

- **10:52–11:12** – 7th Grade Lunch / 8th Grade Recess
- **11:12–11:14** – Passing Time
- **11:14–11:39** – 8th Grade Lunch / 7th Grade Recess

During this time, students will have the opportunity to participate in supervised indoor and outdoor activities, including access to the gym and, weather permitting, the track.

This pilot is designed to:

- Promote student wellness and movement
- Provide structured, supervised time during lunch
- Support a positive and engaging school environment

All students eat at lunch tables. Lunch may be brought from home, or purchased from either the cafeteria or kiosks. Pre-ordering lunch is available prior to 9:00 am each school day. A menu is posted each day listing the hot lunch selection, the cold lunch selection, snacks, and beverages. To ensure availability, pre-ordering sandwiches and salads is strongly encouraged.

During lunch, students are required to:

- walk to a place in line and avoid cutting line
- pay via cash or electronically using their Student ID Number
- avoid eating anywhere other than in the cafeteria, small gym, or large gym
- clear their tables and place garbage and recyclable items in the proper receptacles
- be polite to the cafeteria staff
- receive permission to leave the lunch room and visit the nurse, bathroom, or main office

Physical Contact

Students are expected to keep their hands to themselves at all times. Unwanted or inappropriate physical contact includes but is not limited to pushing, kicking, hitting, choking, tripping, pantsing, or fighting. Consequences will be assigned. Violent or dangerous behaviors, such as assault, are reported to the North Caldwell Police Department.

Pupil Records *(Board Policy # 2260)*

Parents, legal guardians and adult pupils are informed that the district maintains records on all students. A parent, legal guardian or adult pupil has the right to inspect and question the contents of these records. Should a parent, legal guardian or adult pupil request, they have the right to prohibit the release of directory information. Copies of applicable federal and state laws, Board policy, and administrative regulations governing pupil records are available to the parent or legal guardians and adult pupils on request.

When the language of the parent, legal guardian or adult pupil is not English or the parent, legal guardian or adult pupil is auditory-impaired, the Superintendent shall, whenever possible, provide interpretation in the dominant language or assist in securing the services of an interpreter.

If the consent to release pupil record information is refused by a parent or legal guardian, the district shall institute due process hearing procedures as indicated by Board Regulation 8330.

Mandated records include the pupil's personal descriptive data, daily attendance records, report card, and physical health records; records required for educationally disabled pupils; and all other records required by the State Board of Education. All information in pupil records must be educationally relevant, objective, and based on the first-hand observation or personal knowledge of the originator. No record may be made or kept of a pupil's religious or political affiliation or any indication of a pupil's illegitimacy.

Rapport

Students are expected to establish and maintain kind and respectful relationships with teachers, students, and staff members. Students who are disrespectful and/or insubordinate will be subject to disciplinary consequences ranging from a teacher detention to a suspension. Cursing and use of inappropriate language directed toward an adult will result in an automatic suspension. Similarly, comments based upon race, creed, color, religion, ethnicity, sex, or handicap will result in an automatic suspension and a possible HIB investigation.

School ID Lanyards

For safety and security reasons, all students are expected to wear their school-issued West Essex ID Lanyard at all times during the school day. Students may obtain a loaner ID from the main office. Upon receiving a loaner ID, students will be assigned a general detention; however, the detention will be waived when the student returns the ID at the end of the school day. Failure to wear the appropriate West Essex ID Lanyard, tampering with the identification lanyard, or misuse of the lanyard will result in disciplinary consequences ranging from a verbal warning to a Saturday Detention. Unannounced ID checks will occur and violators will be assigned incremental consequences beginning with a general detention. Replacement ID cards and lanyards may be purchased from the main office. Students who request a loaner ID more than two days in a row will be required to purchase a new ID and/or lanyard.

Sexual Harassment *(Board Policy # 3362)*

Sexual harassment is conduct of a sexual nature that makes someone, male or female, uncomfortable or embarrassed. The conduct may include female to male, male to female, female to female, and male to male. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defines sexual harassment as sexual attention that is (a) unwelcome and unwarranted, (b) harmful to a person's health and ability to perform one's job, and (c) illegal according to federal, state, county, and local laws. Students who feel they are the object of sexual harassment should contact the Principal and/or Assistant Principal.

Students' Rights & Responsibilities

As students, you have a fundamental right to a free public education. Along with this right is the corresponding responsibility to join with other members of the school community in respecting one another. You also have the right and responsibility to live by the rules of law and to equal protection under the law. It is your obligation to obey school regulations and the school authorities who enforce them. This responsibility relates to your conduct on school buses and field trips, as well as in the building itself.

Substance Abuse *(Board Policy # 5530)*

The Board of Education recognizes that a student's use of harmful substances impedes that student's education and threatens the welfare of the entire school community. The Board is committed to the prevention of substance abuse and rehabilitation of substance abusers by educational means, but will take all necessary and appropriate steps to protect the school community from harm, and from exposure to harmful substances. Accordingly, the Board will establish policies and procedures in operating programs to support the social, emotional, and physical development of students in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-1 et. seq. and N.J.A.C 6A:16-4.1 et seq. The Board of Education will maintain a comprehensive substance abuse intervention, prevention, and treatment referral program in the schools of this district.

1. The Principal and superintendent will be advised; the parent will be contacted; and the student will be examined by the school nurse. If the student is medically stable, they will be directed to the Doctor's Office Urgent Care 556 Passaic Ave., W. Caldwell, NJ 973-808-2273, with I.D. and the appropriate testing forms.
2. The student will be examined by a physician and may return to school the next day pending the test results, provided they have received medical clearance. A sample will be collected (must be within a two hour window) and forwarded to Quest Diagnostics for processing, Doctor's Office Urgent Care telephone number 973-808-2273.
3. The sample will be processed at Quest Diagnostics Laboratories and the results will be sent to a Medical Review Officer who is a physician trained to interpret the results. The customer service contact number for Quest Diagnostics is (800)877-7484 also (913)577-1716.
4. Once the test results are generated by Quest Diagnostics Laboratories, they are forwarded to the Medical Review Officer, for final review, located at 1 West Ridgewood Ave., Paramus NJ 07652, telephone number (201)-444-3060. The results are then released to The Doctor's Office Urgent Care who forwards them to West Essex.
5. The sample provided must be a non-dilute, non-adulterated sample. A dilute screen is a presumptive positive test result. Appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken for a positive test result.

6. The referring staff member shall file with the Principal a report describing the incident. The form shall include all information necessary for a complete, accurate reporting on the Student Safety Data System (SSDS) according to N.J.S.A. 18A:17-46 and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.3.
7. Discipline will be graded to the severity of the offense, and will include suspension or expulsion. In addition, pupils who are officially charged with a substance related crime, while away from school, in the community, may be subject to disciplinary action. The school district reserves the right to impose a suspension, and other disciplinary action, when a disclosure from law enforcement officials, permitted under the Uniform Memorandum of Agreement, is received, that indicates a pupil's behavior poses a risk to the emotional safety, security, and well-being of other students, and substantially, and materially, interferes with the requirements of appropriate discipline, in the orderly, and safe, operation of the school.

Additionally, the Board of Education recognizes the use of tobacco, nicotine, and other smokable products present a health hazard that can have serious implications both for the smoker and the nonsmoker and that smoking habits developed by the young may have lifelong harmful consequences. The Board prohibits the use and/or possession of tobacco products, electronic cigarettes (or components thereof), smokeless tobacco, vapor cigarettes (or components thereof), and nicotine gum/lozenges by pupils at any time in school buildings and on any school grounds, at events sponsored by the Board away from school, and on any transportation vehicle supplied by the Board. Any student caught vaping or in possession of vape paraphernalia will be subject to the following:

1. The Principal and superintendent will be advised; the parent will be contacted; and the student will be examined by the school nurse. If the student is medically stable, they will be directed to the Doctor's Office Urgent Care 556 Passaic Ave., W. Caldwell, NJ 973-808-2273, with I.D. and the appropriate testing forms.
2. The student will be examined by a physician and may return to school the next day pending the test results, provided they have received medical clearance. A sample will be collected (must be within a two hour window) and forwarded to Quest Diagnostics for processing.
3. The sample will be processed at Quest Diagnostics Laboratories and the results will be sent to a Medical Review Officer who is a physician trained to interpret the results. The customer service contact number for Quest Diagnostics is (800)877-7484 also (913)577-1716.
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5. The sample provided must be a non-dilute, non-adulterated sample. A dilute screen is a presumptive positive test result. Appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken for a positive test result.
6. The referring staff member shall file with the Principal a report describing the incident. The form shall include all information necessary for a complete, accurate reporting on the Student Safety Data System (SSDS) according to N.J.S.A. 18A:17-46 and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.3.

Substance Abuse Consequences

Any violation of Board rules prohibiting the use, possession and/or distribution of an illegal substance is a serious offense, and any pupil who violates a substance abuse rule will be disciplined accordingly. Discipline will be graded to the severity of the offense. Any student disciplined under the substance abuse policy will be required to complete a medical examination that indicates the student is able to resume regular school attendance; and will be referred to complete a full chemical dependency evaluation at a state certified facility.

1. Possession and/or smoking of vaping products including but not limited to electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and items containing nicotine require an immediate substance screening by a medical professional. Consequences are as follows:
 - First Offense 3 days out of school suspension
 - Second Offense 4 days out of school suspension
 - Third Offense 5 days out of school suspension
2. Under the influence of an illegal substance while in school, on school grounds, attending a school sanctioned activity or tampering with a mandated chemical screening test requires an immediate substance screening by a medical professional. Consequences are as follows:
 - First Offense
 - Out of school suspension of not less than seven (7) days
 - Social probation at the discretion of the administration
 - Police notified at the discretion of the administration.
 - Second Offense
 - Out of school suspension of not less than ten (10) days
 - Social probation not less than ninety (90) days.
 - Police notified.
 - Third Offense
 - Out of school suspension of not less than ten (10) days
 - Any action deemed necessary to protect the health and safety of the student in question, or the student body as a whole.
 - Possible Board of Education hearing.

3. Possession of an illegal substance or paraphernalia while on school grounds, or while under the supervision of school personnel.

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| ● Possession | ● Out of school suspension of not less than ten (10) days. |
| First Offense | ● Social probation as determined by the administration. |
| | ● Police notified. |
| ● Distribution | ● Out of school suspension of not less than ten (10) days |
| First Offense | ● Social probation as determined by the administration. |
| | ● Police notified. |
| | ● Possible Board of Education hearing. |

Suicide Hotline

The New Jersey Suicide Prevention Hopeline is 1-855-654-6735.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255

24-Hour Crisis Support: Text HOME to 741741

Technology Acceptable Use Policy *(Board Policy #2360-2361)*

The West Essex Regional School District recognizes that computers support learning and enhance instruction. Students must have a signed consent waiver on file declaring that all technology is to be used in a responsible, ethical and legal manner. School issued devices are monitored. Unethical and unacceptable behavior may include using the network or device:

- for illegal, inappropriate, or obscene purposes, or in support of such activities
- to degrade or disrupt equipment or system performance
- for commercial or financial gain or fraud
- to gain unauthorized access to files of others
- to gain unauthorized access to resources or entities
- forge electronic mail messages or invades the privacy of individuals
- to post anonymous messages
- to misrepresent the School District without proper authorization
- to engage in any other activity deemed inappropriate

Devices are equipped with a webcam which offers students an extraordinary opportunity to develop 21st Century communication skills. Webcams are to be used for educational purposes only, under the direction of a teacher or parent/guardian. Students should not record anyone without receiving prior consent. Additionally, the use of social media is only allowed with the permission and supervision of a staff member. Students found utilizing social media may be subject to disciplinary consequences. Violation of the acceptable use policy will result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to a suspension, a loss of network privileges, and legal action.

Smartphones, Smartwatches, Airpods, Etc

Students are not permitted to use smartphones, smartwatches, airpods, or any unauthorized technology during the school day including in the hallway, cafeteria, bathrooms, and classrooms.

Cell phones should be “off” from the 7:55 am warning bell until the 2:35 dismissal bell. A phone that is “on” is considered a violation of the cell phone policy. In the event of an emergency, parents should contact the main office. Parents should not engage in texting with their child during the school day, as this facilitates the violation of our cell phone policy. Consequences for unauthorized electronic devices are found in the code of conduct section of our handbook.

All students receive a district issued Chromebook that is for school use only. Students must abide by the Acceptable Use Policy outlined previously. Students should follow internet safety guidelines and adhere to the following guidelines:

- The device is district property and is monitored daily.
- Students should use the device assigned to them and not lend their device to others.
- Students are responsible for the general care of the school issued device.
- Students are responsible for arriving at school with a fully charged device.
- Students must receive prior permission from a teacher to listen to music, watch videos, and play games from their school issued device.
- Damaged devices must be reported to the school librarian for repair.
- Cords and cables must be inserted carefully into the device to prevent damage.
- Devices must never be left unattended, in extreme temperatures, or near liquids.
- Background images must be school appropriate and adhere to the code of conduct.
- Only labels, decals, stickers approved by WERSD may be applied to the device.
- An annual Chromebook fee is charged and includes one free repair per school year for accidents. Students will be billed the cost of additional repairs or for a replacement device.

Transportation

The school provides bus transportation for students to and from school. Every summer new routes are planned. This information can be found on the school website the week before school opens. Students are not permitted to ride any bus other than the one assigned, unless given prior administrative approval. Since bus transportation is provided for all students, no student may ride to or from school with any person other than the student’s parent/guardian. Bussing is the most reliable way to ensure on-time arrival to school.

Students are expected to conduct themselves on the buses just as they would in school. The bus driver is authorized to handle all situations involving potential danger occurring in or outside the bus. Students should keep hands and heads inside the bus at all times. Remember that loud talking and laughing divert the driver’s attention and make safe driving difficult. Horseplay is not permitted. Any student failing to follow proper procedures will be referred to the Assistant Principal for disciplinary measures ranging from a verbal warning to a suspension. Bus transportation is a privilege and may be revoked at any time.

Visitors *(Board Policy #9150)*

All visitors must call the Main Office (973-228-1200) in advance of visiting the middle school. Visitors who wish to meet with an administrator or staff member must have an appointment.

Requests for a meeting can be made via phone or email. To maintain building security, visitors are required to:

- park only in the assigned visitor parking spots and avoid parking at the curb
- present a valid picture ID (driver's license preferred) in order to obtain a visitor's pass
- retrieve their picture ID from the main office upon departure from the building
- wear the issued visitor lanyard throughout their visit
- avoid loitering on the grounds or in the building
- avoid dropping off items that your child left at home

Drop Off Procedure

Walking To & From School

Students who walk to school must have a waiver on file with the Main Office before they can walk to or from school. Waivers are located on the website.