

# FORT MEADOW EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

35 White Street Westfield, MA 01085  
(413) 572-6422

Preschool Handbook **2023-2024**



“An integrated language-based program  
where preschool children learn through play”

Check out our website at [fm.schoolsofwestfield.org](http://fm.schoolsofwestfield.org)

find us on  
 Facebook @fortmeadow

**WESTFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

<http://www.schoolsofwestfield.org>

**WESTFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Mayor Michael McCabe, Chairperson

Bo Sullivan, Vice Chairperson

Diane Mayhew, Secretary

Kathleen Hillman

Heather Sullivan

Tim O'Connor

Mike Tirrell

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**Fort Meadow Early Childhood Center**

**35 White Street**

**Westfield, MA 01085**

**Phone: 413-572-6422**

**Fax: 413-572-6540**

**Email: [jonathan.scagel@schoolsofwestfield.org](mailto:jonathan.scagel@schoolsofwestfield.org)**

**Jonathan Scagel, Principal**

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Fort Meadow Early Childhood Center Preschool Program. We are happy that you have chosen our program for your child's preschool enrichment. We look forward to providing a year filled with exciting and rewarding experiences to all our preschool friends.

We hope the information provided in this handbook will help you to gain an understanding of the general policies and practices followed in our school. For more precise statements of formal School Committee policies, you should review the Policy Book on file at our school.

The aim of preschool is to provide a basic foundation for your child's education and to make each child's first experience with school a successful and happy one.

Enjoy your year with us! We know we will enjoy the year getting to know all of our friends and families at the Fort Meadow Early Childhood Center.

Sincerely,

Mr. Jonathan Scagel  
Principal

### **Philosophy and Mission**

Fort Meadow Early Childhood Center's philosophy is nurturing the unique abilities of each and every child through play. This is based on the belief that children learn best in an early childhood program that provides developmentally appropriate educational experiences in an integrated setting. Our program is designed to provide a stimulating learning environment that supports the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of every child. In this engaging environment, children learn through appropriate play experiences that encourage active participation in learning. Teachers guide, support, and when needed, directly teach our children developmentally appropriate play and social skills. Our aim is to build a community of learners by providing children with enriching experiences to develop self-confidence, independence and strong cognitive and social skills. We respect the dignity, worth and individuality of each child and are committed to helping children achieve their full potential. Our goal is to help children grow up confident in their own identity and respectful of other people. Fort Meadow Early Childhood Center recognizes the significant relationship among teachers, students, parents, and families and encourages continuous collaboration in a climate of mutual respect, cooperation and shared responsibility.

### **Our Preschool Program**

The Westfield Public School District offers integrated language-based preschool classrooms, serving 3 and 4 year olds. An integrated preschool includes typically developing children as well as children with disabilities. These classrooms offer children the opportunity to work and play with age-appropriate peers as well as children with developmental challenges. Children with disabilities excel in some areas, affording all children the opportunity to be models in some realm. As children work in group activities with their peers, they discover their similarities and develop a better understanding of their differences. Flexible, but consistent, structure and routine are offered, including activities designed to promote language/listening skills, gross and fine motor development, and opportunities for imaginative/dramatic play. Music, sensory activities, and a wide variety of developmentally appropriate materials and activities are employed, all of which support a strong foundation for learning.

### **Entrance Requirements**

The following requirements must be met to enroll a child in school:

1. A birth certificate must be presented. This will be returned to the parent/guardian.
2. A doctor's certificate must be presented certifying that the child has been successfully immunized against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles, polio, rubella, hepatitis B, varicella, hib and mumps, unless exempt for medical or religious reasons.
3. Registration forms must be completed and submitted to the school office.
4. Each child must be examined by a family physician and a current physical examination form, including lead level, must be provided to the school as proof.

5. A screening must be conducted for each child entering the program.
6. Children who attend the preschool program as a Peer Partner will be able to enroll on their 3rd birthday during the 2022-2023 school year.
7. Parents of transfer students must complete a records release form.
8. Changes of address, home phone numbers, and emergency numbers should be reported to the teacher promptly.

### **Tuition**

The fee schedule for peers attending Fort Meadow ECC is as follows:

5-Day Program - \$200 per month
4-Day Program - \$160 per month

Families with more than 1 child in the program receive a 10% discount on tuition.

Tuition payments are due by the 1st day of the month. Any payments received after the 1st of the month are considered late, putting the child at risk of losing his/her placement in the program. A subsidy is available to those who qualify.

### **The Curriculum**

Based on the belief that children learn through play, active manipulation of their environment, life experience and communicating with peers and adults, the curriculum is designed to facilitate children's involvement in their own learning. The curriculum is based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Our program balances active and quiet play. Children work both alone and in small groups where teachers facilitate the children's interactions with each other and their environment. Teachers observe each child's activities in order to tailor and expand curriculum to meet individual needs and interests. Teachers encourage parents to maintain close communication with staff, and work closely with parents to develop strategies for dealing with specific issues.

### **Assessment**

Child assessment is a vital and necessary component of all high-quality early childhood programs. Assessment is important to understand and support young children's development. Each classroom completes screenings and assessments that encompass all areas of development; sensory, language, cognitive, gross-motor, fine-motor, and social-emotional. It is also essential to document and evaluate how effectively programs are meeting young children's educational needs, and to inform on program improvement.

Children do not just grow in size. They develop, evolve, and mature, mastering ever more complex understandings of the people, objects, and challenges in their environment. There is a general pattern or sequence for development that is true of most children. However, the rate, character, and quality of development vary from child to child. Culture influences development in different ways, and the goals for children differ from culture to culture.

Quality assessment looks at not only what is happening within the child, but also to the care that the child requires in order to thrive. For a child to develop and learn in a healthy and normal way, it is important not only to meet the basic needs for protection, food and health care, but also to meet the basic needs for interaction and stimulation, affection, security, and learning through exploration and discovery.

### **Typical Daily Schedule**

Daily activities include a variety of active and quiet individual and group projects. A typical day may consist of the following: morning meeting, free play, art projects, cooking, creative expression, sand and water play, blocks, books, games, puzzles, science exploration and gross motor play.

### **Early Childhood Sessions**

A.M. Session: Monday – Thursday 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

A.M. Session: Monday – Friday 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

P.M. Session: Monday – Thursday 12:30PM – 3:00PM

P.M. Session: Monday – Friday 12:30PM – 3:00PM

### **Highly Qualified Staff**

Each classroom is staffed with a preschool teacher, who is certified in early childhood and/or special education through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and paraprofessionals. Additional staff members include an Autism Consultant/Behavior Analyst, ABA Staff, Speech/Language Pathologists, an Occupational Therapist, a Physical Therapist, a School Adjustment Counselor, a School Psychologist, and a Registered Nurse.

### **Communication with Staff**

Communication between school and home is the foundation of a child's success. Ongoing communication will benefit the child and family in several ways. It will:

- create feelings of acceptance and partnership
- create trust
- build confidence

- foster appreciation of teachers and caregivers
- lay the groundwork for resolving issues

When families are actively engaged in frequent conversations, it's much easier to talk about the ups and downs of a child's development.

Communication can be verbal, in person/virtual, on the telephone and via e-mail. We ask parents to submit their e-mail address to stay informed of important events and issues pertaining to their child(ren). Fort Meadow will periodically send out e-mail reminders and updates to parents. E-mail addresses will be used for informational purposes only and will not be forwarded to third parties.

- Fort Meadow School Office Telephone: (413) 572-6422
- Email

Because families are unique, each will have communication preferences. Please share with your child's teacher your preferred method of communication.

To open communication lines, relationships must be:

- *Respectful*, a process of listening as well as talking
- *Reciprocal*, a give-and-take that includes all family members
- *Inclusive* of all family needs (Spanish, Chinese, written, verbal)
- *Thoughtful*, including detailed information about the child
- *Planned*, so it doesn't get forgotten in our "hurried" world

### **Monthly Newsletters**

Teachers communicate classroom activities and events through monthly newsletters and notices. Please check your child's backpack on a daily basis to ensure you are updated. Please provide a backpack to transport books, notices, and art projects. Many notices and calendar events will be posted on the Fort Meadow website at [fm.schoolsofwestfield.org](http://fm.schoolsofwestfield.org) as well.

### **Conferences and Meetings**

Parent conferences are offered in the fall and spring of each year, on days set by the district.

During the fall conference the teacher will report on the child's social emotional development and the results of baseline assessments. With the teacher's support, the parents will provide expectations for the child's growth over the school year. The spring conference will focus on student growth and learning outcomes. Conferences may be initiated by the parents or the teacher at any time during the year. It is best to talk openly when children are not present. Please arrange for a babysitter for conferences and meetings.



The bus will wait no longer than three minutes and will not "honk" the horn. We have experienced problems with lack of parent/guardian supervision when students are arriving home after the completion of their school program. Van drivers are reluctant to release the child when a responsible individual is not present to meet the van at the drop off point. This delay forces the van to fall behind its scheduled times and, as a result, students begin arriving home later than normal. This creates anxiety for parents who are anticipating their child to be home at a certain time. Your cooperation in assisting us to prevent this type of situation from occurring will be greatly appreciated.

Parents are given an approximate time their child will be arriving home. We require that another adult wait for the child, if a parent cannot be present. Van drivers are instructed to wait approximately one minute for someone to present himself or herself for meeting the child and, upon the completion of that time if this does not happen, the van will continue with the child still on it. The van driver will complete the regularly scheduled route and then return to the student's drop off point one more time, if possible. If there is still no one present to meet the van, the driver has instructions to bring the child to the Early Childhood Center upon completion of the regularly scheduled route or to the Westfield Police Station, 15 Washington Street, if the school is closed. It will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian to provide transportation home for the child.

### **Arrival and Dismissal**

**Arrival:** Teachers will communicate an exact arrival time with families. Your child will enter the building through the side door of your child's classroom, located on the playground. Please line up with your child outside of your child's classroom door at your designated time.

IMPORTANT - Younger siblings of students MUST accompany their parent and cannot remain in their vehicle unless another adult stays with them. The principal and school counselor will be available to help with children who may have a difficult time separating from their families.

**Coming to school on time is important.** Any child who arrives to school more than 5 minutes after their designated arrival time, is a late arrival and will be recorded as absent until his or her parent signs the "Late Arrival Sheet" inside the main entrance way. Please ring the buzzer when you arrive as all school doors are locked throughout the day.

**Dismissal:** Parents are expected to meet their child outside their child's classroom door at the classroom dismissal time. A teacher or paraprofessional will "hand" the child to the parent, who will assume responsibility for their safety at that time. Please head directly out of the playground. ALWAYS hold your child's hand and do NOT let children run loose!

**Children should not be picked up early unless it is absolutely necessary.** Parents who must take their child home early must ring the front door buzzer and inform the office that they are here to dismiss their child early. A staff member will come to the door with the sign out sheet. Once you have notified

When the decision is to have a delayed opening of school, the morning preschool session is cancelled. Students who attend double sessions, as written in their IEP will begin school at 11:00 AM. The afternoon session will remain the same, 12:30pm-3:00pm. Team meetings scheduled on mornings prior to the start of school will also be canceled.

### **Attendance**

Regular and prompt attendance from the very first day of preschool is important to your child. School attendance is critical to student success.

- Exposure to Language: School exposes children to language-rich environments they may not have at home.
- Time on Task: Students who miss too much school fall behind and have a hard time catching up.
- Persistence: Good attendance builds habits essential for success in school and life.

If your child is going to be absent for in-school learning, please notify both transportation (413) 572-9999 and the school (413) 572-6422. To ensure the safety of our students, Fort Meadow uses an absentee call back system. Daily calls will go out to parents of students whose absence was not called into the school.

If your child contracts a contagious illness, a doctor's note is required to return to school. It is very important for parents to keep the school informed of any changes to phone numbers (work, home, cell phones and emergency contacts), address, day care schedules, etc. During an emergency situation, time is crucial so current data is essential to make sure your child arrives home safely.

### **Bus Transportation**

The Westfield Public Schools provides free bus transportation for students with special needs, in accordance with applicable laws. Children must be picked up and dropped by the bus at the same location. The authority of the school begins and ends at the bus stops, both in the morning and in the afternoon. Parents are responsible for supervising their child until such time as the child boards the bus in the morning and after the child leaves the bus at the end of the day.

1. Upon recommendation of the team, a monitor will be provided for student assistance.
2. Bus evacuation drills will be a standard safety practice.
3. All children are required to wear seat belts at all times.
4. Children are to refrain from consuming food and/or beverages on buses.
5. Parents are required to call the transportation office (572-9999) if their child will not require transportation on a particular day.
6. Children should be ready for pick-up and a parent or designated person should be at the drop-off point each day.
7. A change in transportation takes a minimum of 3 days before it can be implemented.

The bus will wait no longer than three minutes and will not "honk" the horn. We have experienced problems with lack of parent/guardian supervision when students are arriving home after the completion of their school program. Van drivers are reluctant to release the child when a responsible individual is not present to meet the van at the drop off point. This delay forces the van to fall behind its scheduled times and, as a result, students begin arriving home later than normal. This creates anxiety for parents who are anticipating their child to be home at a certain time. Your cooperation in assisting us to prevent this type of situation from occurring will be greatly appreciated.

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**Children should not be picked up early unless it is absolutely necessary.** Parents who must take their child home early must ring the front door buzzer and inform the office that they are here to dismiss their child early. A staff member will come to the door with the sign out sheet. Once you have notified

the front office and signed your child out, you may proceed to the playground gate, on the side of your child's classroom, where a staff member will meet you with your child. PLEASE NOTE: Parents are not allowed on the playground during school hours.

### **Parking at School**

In order to maintain a safe and orderly environment, parents are asked to adhere to the following parking rules.

- Parking is allowed ONLY in the front parking lot (in spaces that are not reserved) and on the side of the street except for the school drop off zone. Spaces are available on a first come, first serve basis.
- Parking on school property is at your own risk.
- Handicapped spaces are only for vehicles that display a disabled parking placard or plate.
- DO NOT block handicapped spaces or crosswalks.
- Children need to be transported to school in an appropriate car seat.

We ask that every effort be made to be prompt at designated arrival and dismissal times as a courtesy to all children and teachers.

### **Backpack**

Your child should have a backpack to transport books, notices and art projects. The backpack should be user friendly and big enough to hold a school folder. Please check your child's backpack daily since we will be communicating with you through notices.

### **Clothing**

Children should come to school comfortably dressed in play clothes (paint, glue, outdoor play, etc. may stain clothing). We encourage self-help skills in dressing, and therefore, appreciate your cooperation in sending your child dressed in clothing that is manageable for a young child's coordination. This year, classrooms will be spending even more time outdoors. Please dress your child in clothes for outdoor play (warmer clothing/cooler clothing including warm jacket, mittens, leggings, and a hat) as the weather changes.

Please mark **all** clothing and other belongings with your child's name. We would like to encourage closed toe shoes with a rubber sole for safe playground access and participation in active gross motor play. Please avoid flip flops, sandals, high heels or shoes without a back on them. Winter boots should be large enough for children to avoid struggling when putting them on.

Please send in an extra set of clothing, including underwear and socks to be kept at school. If your child wears diapers, please send a labeled package of diapers and a package of wipes. For children who wear cloth diapers, the diaper must have an absorbent inner lining, with an outer covering that is made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. We will let you know when these items will need to be replenished.

### **Nutrition**

This year preschool classrooms will not be having snack time. Students who attend double session as per their IEP, must bring a cold lunch and snack foods to eat at school. All parents are still required to inform the nurse of any allergies or other medical conditions a child may have in accordance with the Westfield Public School Committee policy File: JLCEA-R *Implementation of the Life Threatening Allergy Policy*. As always, any parties and celebrations during the school day will be food-free.

### **Field Trips**

Throughout the school year a number of field trips are planned for early childhood students. Attendance is not automatic and eligibility to attend will be determined by the principal with recommendations from faculty and staff members. Permission slips are required for all field trips. We believe that these activities are worthwhile experiences giving students and teachers an opportunity to interact in non-school situations.

### **Playgrounds**

Playgrounds are not available for use by the families or other community members during school hours of 9:00am – 3:00pm. Thank you for your cooperation!

### **School Conduct**

In all respects, we try to be clear and realistic in our expectations of the children. Each child is unique and we realize that they might be at a different step in their development. We try to use techniques that help them grow and that make them feel good about themselves. Setting reasonable, consistent limits is very important to children. Limits let children know what is expected of them and this gives them a sense of safety and security. They let children know what behavior is all right and what behavior is not all right. The limits will vary from child to child and will vary for the same child over a period of time. The staff at Fort Meadow always tries to be positive and encouraging to the children. Whenever possible, we use do's instead of don'ts. Using do's instead of don'ts shows children acceptable ways to act... for example... Don'ts: Don't run! Do's: Do use "walking feet." We also try to involve children in working through situations such as taking turns, sharing, working within limits, etc. Accentuating positive behavior usually gets better results and makes children feel better about themselves than dwelling on less desirable behaviors. In the event that the behavioral strategies have been exhausted without a positive change, a new plan involving parents and the school would be formulated.

### **School Health**

The major goal of our school health program is to protect and promote the health of children within the preschool environment. School health records provide a confidential record of each child's health status.

The information that we gather about your child's health status enables us to identify children with special health care needs and to develop a health care plan that anticipates possible emergency situations.

The following information will be part of a student's Health Record:

- Current information about any health insurance coverage required for treatment in an emergency.
- Results of health examination, showing up-to-date immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow-up required for abnormal results. Each physical must be current (within 1 year).
- Current emergency contact information for each child that is kept up to date.
- Names of individuals authorized by the family to have access to health information about the child.
- Instructions for any of the child's special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness (e.g., asthma, hearing or vision impairments, feeding needs, neuromuscular conditions, urinary or other ongoing health problems, seizures, diabetes);
- Individual emergency care plans for children with known medical or developmental problems or other conditions that might require special care in an emergency (allergy, asthma, seizures, diabetes, orthopedic or sensory problems, and other chronic conditions; conditions that require regular medication or technology support). The school nurse in cooperation with the family and documents from the child's physician will complete a healthcare plan regarding the child's specific issue and ways to treat it. Individual healthcare plans will be reviewed on a regular basis or at least annually by the school nurse and the child's parent/guardian. The original care plan will be kept in the nurse's office.
- Supporting evidence for cases in which a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family's religious beliefs. Staff implements a plan to exclude the child promptly if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program.

### **Student Illness and Exclusion from School**

Upon arrival at school, each child is observed by teaching staff for signs of illness or injury that could affect the child's ability to participate comfortably in the daily activities. Children will be excluded when a child is not able to participate comfortably; if the illness requires more care than staff are able to provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group; or if keeping the child at school poses an increased risk to the child, to other children or adults with whom the child will come in contact.

When a child develops signs of an illness during their day at preschool, parents, legal guardians, or another person authorized by the parent/guardian will be notified immediately to pick up the child. For this reason, please be sure that we have current, accurate phone numbers for you and your authorized emergency contact person. In the meantime, we will provide the child a place to rest until the parent,

legal guardian or designated person arrives under the supervision of someone familiar with the child. If the child is suspected of having a contagious disease, he/she will be held, until dismissed, where new individuals will not be exposed.

Based on School Committee Policy the following exclusion practices will be followed:

- A fever of 100 degrees or higher. Child should be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school and not taking any fever reducing medications.
- Diarrhea OR vomiting in the previous 24 hours.
- Bad cold or flu when there is excessive nose drainage or constant coughing.
- Rash that could be contagious; please have any rashes checked by your pediatrician. Child cannot return to school without an MD note of skin diagnosis.
- Diagnosed strep throat, impetigo or pink eye. Students must stay home from school until they have been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours.
- If your child is diagnosed with scabies, he/she may return to school after 24 hours of treatment. A physician's written confirmation of treatment and non-infectious status is required.
- If you suspect your child has lice – yellowish-gray, oval-shaped eggs that are “glued” to the hair shaft. Your child must be checked by the school nurse upon return to school after treatment.

### **School Insurance**

A reasonably priced accident insurance policy is available for all children. Early in the school year, you will receive literature which describes the various options that are available. Children who have entered school after the beginning of the year are eligible to apply for the insurance by obtaining an application form from the school office. You should remember that the School Department's only function in this matter is one of service. All matters relating to claims are the responsibility of the family and the insurance company.

### **Abuse/Neglect Reporting**

Public school staff members are mandated by law to report any signs of possible child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

### **Behavior Management Plan**

The goal of discipline is to assist and guide the children in the development of self-control. Teachers will discipline in a consistent way, based on an understanding of varying developmental levels. Simple and understandable rules will be established so that expectations and limitations will be clearly defined. Discipline will be constructive in nature, including such methods as diversion, separating the child from the situation, encouragement and reinforcements for appropriate behavior and effort.

### **Building Utilization**

A floor plan of the building is available upon request at the office.

### **Unusual Circumstances**

If there are any unusual circumstances at home, such as illness or death, parents' vacations, or changes in childcare arrangements (such as a new nanny or babysitter), please notify the teachers so that they can help your child adjust more easily to the situation.

**Translation Statement: If you need assistance understanding this information, please contact your building principal to arrange translation services.**

**:ARABIC** : اذا تحتاج مساعدة لفهم هذه المعلومات, الرجاء الاتصال بمدير المدرسة لتقديم خدمات الترجمة

**NEPALI:** यो जानकारी बुझ्न सहयोग चाहिएमा कृपया तपाइको प्रधानाध्यापकलाई अनुबाद सुविधाको लागि सम्पर्क राख्नुहोस.

**RUSSIAN:** Если Вы нуждаетесь в переводе, пожалуйста, сообщите директору школы, и школа обеспечит вас переводчиком.

**SPANISH:** Si Ud. necesita ayuda para entender esta información, favor de comunicarse con el Principal para los servicios de traducción.

**SWAHILI:** Kama unahitaji usaidizi katika kuelewa taarifa hii, tafadhali wasiliana na kinara wako wa jengo ili akupangilie huduma za tafsiri.

**TAMIL:** இந்தத் தகவலைப் புரிந்துகொள்வதற்கு உங்களுக்கு உதவி தேவையானால், மொழி பெயர்ப்பு சேவைகளை ஏற்பாடு செய்வதற்கு தயவு செய்து உங்களுடைய கட்டிட முதல்வரைத் தொடர்புகொள்ளவும்.

**TWI:** S1 wo hi a boaf04 a 4te as1m yi ase1 me pawoky1w fr1 wo panyin a 4tete wo na mo nhyeh1 nkyer1 ase1 som

**UKRAINIAN:** Якщо Вам необхідний переклад даної інформації, будь ласка, повідомте директору школи, і школа забезпечить вас перекладачем.



## **SECTION II - DISTRICT POLICIES**

The District Section is composed of district-wide policies. If any provisions of Section 1 are in conflict with Section 2, district policy shall prevail. To view the complete School Committee Policy manual visit our website: <https://www.schoolsofwestfield.org/page/policy-manual>

### **Section A: Foundations and Basic Commitments**

Provides a repository statements related to the district's legal role in providing public education and the underlying principles on which the district.

### **Section B: School Board Governance & Operations**

Provides a repository for statements about the school board—how it is elected, organized; how it conducts its meetings and operates. This section includes bylaws and policies establishing the board's internal operating procedures.

### **Section C: General School Administration**

Provides a repository for statements about the school district management, the administrative structure, and school building and department administration. It also is the location for personnel policies that pertain to one individual – the superintendent.

### **Section D: Fiscal Management**

Provides a repository for statements concerning fiscal affairs and the management of district funds. Statements relating to the financing of school construction, however, are filed in the F Section: Facilities Development Section.

### **Section E: Support Services**

Provides a repository for statement on non-instructional services and programs, including most of those that fall in the area of business management such as safety, buildings and their management (not construction), transportation, and food services.

### **Section F: Facilities Development**

Provides a repository for statements on school construction, remodeling and modernizing, temporary facilities, and facilities retirement plans.

### **Section G: Personnel**

Section G provides a repository for personnel policies. This section has three main subdivisions: subsection GB presents policy topics that pertain to professional personnel, including administrators, who must hold educational certification by the state to serve in their positions; subsection GD is for policies pertaining to all other personnel.

### **Section H: Negotiations**

Section H provides a repository for statements pertaining to the process of negotiating with staff units recognized by the school committee.

### **Section I: Instruction**

Section I provides a repository for statements on the instructional programs: basic programs, special programs, activities programs, instructional resources, and academic achievement.

### **Section J: Student**

Section J provides a repository for statements concerning students - admissions, attendance, rights and responsibilities, conduct, discipline, health and welfare services. However, all policies pertaining to the curriculum, instruction of students and extracurricular programs are filed in the I (Instruction) Section.

### **Section K: School - Community Relations**

Section provides a repository for statements on relations with the general public and with other community and public agencies except other educational agencies or groups.

### **Section L: Education Agency Relations**

Provides a repository for statements which concern the district's relationship with other education agencies – other school districts, regional or service districts, private schools, colleges and universities, educational research organizations, and state and national education agencies.

## Summary of Westfield Public Schools Safety Policies

Criminal Offender Registration (CORI): The Human Resources Office processes all CORI checks. The CORI will be utilized only for employment purposes and not disseminated to any other party.

Emergency Procedures: Advance planning for emergencies and disasters is essential to provide for the safety of students and staff. Schools must be prepared to respond immediately and responsibly to any combination of events which threaten to result in an emergency and/or disaster.

Fire Safety: Building principals will meet all requirements for conducting fire drills to give students practice in moving with orderly dispatch to designated areas under emergency conditions.

Identification of Students and Staff: A picture identification system enhances the control and management of the school system.

Injury Reports: All injuries must be reported to the classroom teacher/school nurse as soon as possible. The injury report form must be completed.

Inspections (Playgrounds, Buildings, Buses, Etc.): Regular inspection of buildings, grounds, facilities, equipment and buses to uncover hazards and/or dangerous conditions in an ongoing effort to address any safety concerns.

Westfield Police Department: The Westfield Police Department and the Westfield Public Schools are committed to safe schools. The parties agree to meet to collaborate and establish lines of communication to support a safe, secure school and community.

Reporting requirements to the Department of Children & Families: Any school official or employee shall report any suspected child abuse or neglect as required by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 119, Section 51A. (File: JL)

Student Interrogations, Searches, and Arrests: The School Committee recognizes the right of students to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures. Nevertheless, it is the duty of the School Committee and school officials to maintain order and discipline in the schools, thereby ensuring a positive educational environment. In furtherance of these duties, inspections and searches for prohibited and/or illegal substances or items may be conducted. (File: JIH)

Reporting Requirements to Law Enforcement: It is the policy of the Westfield Public Schools to cooperate with law enforcement and social service agencies in the interest of the larger welfare of all citizens. At the same time, Westfield Public Schools have a responsibility to parents/guardians for the welfare of the students while they are in the care of the school.

### Emergency Evacuation Procedures

The Westfield Fire Department requires a standard evacuation procedure for all Westfield Public Schools. This procedure allows students to learn the evacuation procedure when they first enter the school and follow the same instructions until they leave the Westfield Public Schools.

### Visitors and Parking

**VISITORS:** Our policy is to accept visitors who have legitimate business at school. Visitors and guests must register in the school office immediately upon entering the building. All visitors and guests must display, at all times, an appropriate identification badge assigned by the school office. Upon completion of their business all visitors and guests must sign out in the school office, return their badge and promptly leave the building.

Parking Regulations: Parents/guardians, students, and visitors should familiarize themselves with the parking regulations of the school and park in a legal parking space only. Violators will be subject to fines or towing of their vehicles. This applies to morning drop-off and after school pick-up as well as evening programs, workshops and conferences.

### Summer Reading

The Westfield Public Schools remain committed to the improvement of reading, a primary component of the learning process. The goals of summer reading are to reinforce the habit of reading **to gain knowledge, to exercise the brain, and to provide entertainment.** ~~for pleasure, enrichment and gathering information.~~ Research indicates that the more students read or listen to books, **the more they will develop as readers.** ~~the better they will read.~~ ~~Research also indicates that~~ Students who do not read regularly throughout the summer lose reading skills that must be rebuilt once school begins again. Our expectation is that every student will read over the summer. ~~Please refer to the Westfield Public School district webpage at [under Students](#) for detailed information about summer reading.~~ **If you have specific questions about summer reading, please contact your child's school.**

### Teacher Mailboxes

Teacher mailboxes are private and under no circumstances are students or visitors to REMOVE OR PUT ANYTHING in a teacher's mailbox.

### Cancellation of School

There will be days when the Westfield Public Schools will be closed or have a delayed opening due to inclement weather, hazardous traveling conditions and/or other emergencies. We have a telephone notification system that will place calls to parents notifying them of closings, delays, or an early release. Please be sure that your student's contact information is up-to-date. The decision to close or not close school is made as early as possible to cancel all school transportation and lunch programs and to notify the media, traffic, and school personnel. On occasion, it may be wiser to have a two-hour delayed opening of school instead of closing for the full day. There may also be weather conditions that would necessitate the closing of school during normal school hours. Every child should know what to do and where to go in case of an early dismissal. If there is school during bad weather, the final decision concerning school attendance must rest with the individual parent.

### Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) - Model Notice for Directory Information

The *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Westfield Public Schools with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, Westfield Public Schools may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised your student's building principal to the contrary in accordance with Westfield Public School procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the Westfield Public Schools to include information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent. [Note: These laws are Section 9528 of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. § 7908) and 10 U.S.C. § 503(c).]

If you do not want the Westfield Public Schools to disclose any or all of the types of information designated below as directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify your child's school principal in writing by **September 14, 2023**. The Westfield Public Schools has designated the following information as directory information.

- **Student's name, address, telephone listing, electronic mail address**
- **Photograph**
- **Date and place of birth**
- **Major field of study**
- **Dates of attendance**
- **Grade level**
- **Participation in officially recognized activities and sports**
- **Weight and height of members of athletic teams**
- **Degrees, honors, and awards received**
- **The most recent educational agency or institution attended**
- Student ID number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN, password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user
- A student ID number or other unique personal identifier that is displayed on a student ID badge, but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN, password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user.

## SCHOOL CALENDAR FOR 2023-2024

August 25	New Teacher Orientation Day
August 28 & 29	Staff Development Days
August 30	Schools open for grades 1-12
September 4	Labor Day Holiday/No School
September 6	First Day of Kindergarten & Fort Meadow Early Childhood Center Preschool
October 9	Columbus Day Holiday/No School
October 25	Early Release Day for Elementary Students Full Day for Secondary Students
Elementary Parent Teacher Conferences	
November 7	Staff Development Day/No School for Students
November 10	for November 11 Veterans Day/No School
November 22,23,24	Thanksgiving Recess/No School
December 25-29	Holiday Recess/No School (schools reopen January 2, 2024)
January 15	Martin Luther King Day Holiday/No School
February 7	Early Release Day for Elementary Students Full Day for Secondary Students Elementary Parent-Teacher Conferences
February 19-23	Winter Vacation/No School
March 8	Staff Development Day/No School
March 29	Good Friday/No School
April 15-19	Spring Vacation/No School
May 27	Memorial Day Holiday/No School
June 6	Westfield Technical Academy graduation ceremony
June 7	Westfield High School graduation ceremony
June 21	Last Day of School - early release for students

\*Includes 5 emergency closing days.

A day will be deducted from calendar for every emergency closing day not used

\*\*Last day will be June 13 (if no emergency closing days are used)

## Support Resources and Hotlines

### **Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

Dilmira Liquori, Police Department: 562-5411 extension 5

YWCA ARCH Program: 733-7100 (hotline) Shelter, counseling and information for battered women and their children, sexual assault services

New Beginnings: 562-5739 counseling and information

Safe Link 24-hours 877-785-2020

### **Psychiatric Services**

Westfield Crisis Intervention Program: 568-6386 24-hour service for psychiatric crisis and suicidal behavior

Individual, group and family counseling for youth and families:

The Carson Center: 572-4132

James Levine and Association: 534-7400

MSPCC, Holyoke: 532-9466

Child and Family Services, West Springfield: 737-4718

Agawam Counseling Center: 786-6410

### **Substance Abuse Services**

MASS Substance Abuse Information Helpline: 800-327-5050

Providence Hospital, Holyoke

Clinical Assessment Center for outpatient services: 539-2973

Clinical Assessment Center for inpatient services: 539-2981

Baystate Medical Center, Central Intake for inpatient and outpatient services: 794-5555

Alcoholics Anonymous meeting schedule: [www.westernmassaa.org](http://www.westernmassaa.org) or listed in your local paper

Al-Anon and Alateen: 782-3406/ 888-425-2666

### **Hotlines and Other Support Services**

United Way: 737-2691

AIDS information and support: 800-235-2331

Missing children: 800-843-5678

National Runaway Switchboard (24 hours): 800-RUNAWAY

Department of Children and Families, Holyoke Office: 493-2600

Parental Stress Line: 800-632-8188

Western Mass Legal Services (Legal Aid): 781-7814