

Worcester Public Schools

Student Handbook



2025 –2026

By attending Worcester Public Schools, students and caregivers acknowledge and agree to abide by the policies and procedures outlined in the Student Handbook.

Caregivers must electronically sign the form through our WPS platform or sign the form on the back of this Handbook and return it to the students' school.

www.worcesterschools.org/handbook

Worcester Public Schools Calendar 2025-2026

AUGUST 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

NOVEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

FEBRUARY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

MAY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SEPTEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

DECEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

MARCH 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JUNE 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

OCTOBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

JANUARY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

APRIL 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

JULY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

No School Days			Dates to Remember		
September 1:	Labor Day		August 21 – 22:	Teacher / Staff Reporting	
October 13:	Indigenous People's Day / Columbus Day		August 25:	First Day of School	
November 4:	Staff Development Day		August 28:	First Day for PreK & K	
November 11:	Veterans' Day		October 31:	End of Quarter 1	
November 26 – 28:	Thanksgiving		January 16:	End of Quarter 2	
December 24 – 31:	Holiday Vacation		April 2:	End of Quarter 3	
January 1:	New Year's Day		May 26:	Last day of School for Seniors	
January 2:	Non-School Day		June 3:	Pre-School and Kindergarten Open House	
January 19:	Martin Luther King Day		*June 12:	End of Quarter 4/Last day of School	
January 26:	Staff Development Day				
February 16:	Presidents' Day				
February 17 – 20:	Winter Vacation				
March 9:	Staff Development Day				
April 3:	Non-School Day				
April 20:	Patriots' Day				
April 21 – 24:	Spring Vacation				
May 25:	Memorial Day				
June 19:	Juneteenth Day				
July 4:	Independence Day				

Other Major Religious & Cultural Days					
September 22:	Rosh Hashanah Begins		January 6:	Three Kings Day	
October 1:	Yom Kippur Begins		February 17:	Lunar New Year	
November 12:	Diwali Begins		February 18:	Ramadan Begins	
December 14:	Hanukkah Begins		February 18:	Ash Wednesday	
December 26:	Kwanzaa Begins		March 19:	Eid al-Fitr Begins	
April 1:	Passover				
April 3:	Good Friday				
April 5:	Easter				
April 13:	Orthodox Easter				
May 7:	Eid al-Adha Begins				

■ = DAYS WHEN SCHOOL IS NOT IN SESSION FOR STUDENTS

**Last day of school may change in response to the number of snow days used during the school year
There will be no school for Pre-School or Kindergarten on Wednesday, June 3, 2026 (due to the Pre-School and Kindergarten Open House).
Major Religious & Cultural Days: Be cognizant of the variety religious holidays when planning events*

The Worcester Public Schools is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer/Educational Institution and does not discriminate regardless of race, color, gender, gender identity, age, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness. The Worcester Public Schools provides equal access to employment and the full range of general, occupational, and vocational education programs. For more information relating to Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action contact Human Resource Manager, 20 Irving Street, Worcester, MA 01609, 508-799-3020. Revised: June 2025

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Mayor Joseph M. Petty - Chair

Jermaine L. Johnson - Vice-Chair

Vanessa Alvarez

Dianna Biancheria

Maureen Binienda

Alex Guardiola

Susan Coghlin Mailman

Molly O. McCullough

Kathleen Roy

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

The Worcester Public Schools (WPS) is proud to provide the 2025-2026 Student Handbook, offering students and caregivers essential information on the policies and procedures in place within our school system.

Caregivers are encouraged to review this handbook with their student and reference it as needed during the school year. Revisions have been made to some policies and procedures from the previous year, and particular attention to these updates is appreciated.

Best wishes for a successful 2025-2026 school year.

Brian E .Allen

WPS Statement of Our Commitment:

The Worcester Public School District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying, harassment, discrimination and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Enrollment	1
Dr. James L. Garvey Parent Information Center	1
Opt-Out Policy for English Learners	2
School Immunization Requirements	4
Voluntary Controlled Transfer Policy	5
Policy for Non-resident Foreign Students holding J-1 Visas	5
School Choice	6
Student Dress Code Policy	7
Career Vocational Technical Education Programs: Shop and Uniform Policy	7
Voluntary School Uniform Policy	8
Policy Regarding Televised Broadcasts	8
Pledge of Allegiance and "Moment of Silence" Policy	8
Safety and Behavior	8
Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy	8
Internet Safety	9
Inappropriate Network Usage	10
Penalties	10
Electronic Messaging Guidelines	10
AI and Future Technologies Guidelines	11
Social Media	11
Adoption	11
Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)	11
Science Laboratory Safety	12
Security Measures	12
Crisis Prevention/De-escalation/Physical Restraint	12
Security Cameras in Schools	13
Emergency Plans	13
Student Lockers	14
Access to Students During School Hours	14
Visitors in the Schools	15
Use of Motor Vehicles	15
Code of Conduct	16
School-Imposed Discipline	17
Disruptive Conduct	19
Legal	27
Due Process	27
Nondiscrimination	35
Sexual Harassment	36
Anti-hazing Law	42
Child Abuse	43
Drug-Free School Zones	43
Gun-Free School Zones	43
Education of Homeless Children	44
Policy on Caregivers Notification Relative to Sexuality Education	44
Annual Notice to Caregivers on the Protection of Pupil Rights	45
Selective Service	46
Student Records	47
Every Student Succeeds Act	53
Bullying and Harassment	54
Athletes and Participants in School-Related Activities	56
Head Injuries and Concussions in Extracurricular Activities	57
Discipline of Students under Section 504 and ADA	59
Students with Disabilities and/or Suspected Disabilities Receiving	59
Special Education Services	61
Resolving School-Related Problems	61
Health Services for Students	62
Wellness Policy	62

Overview of School Health/Nursing Services	62
School Health Advisory Council	63
School Nutrition Program Charge Policy	63
Charges and Balances	63
Payments	63
Refunds	64
Delinquent Accounts/Collections	64
Policy Communications	64
Access for Pregnant Students	65
Transportation	65
Transportation Program	65
Busing Privileges	66
Transportation for Transfer & Homeless Students	66
Two Mile Limit	66
Bus Stops and Routing	66
School Bus Rules & Safety	66
Student Services	67
Section 504 - Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act	67
Special Education	69
Employment Information and Procedures	70
Home Hospital Education Services 603 (CMR 28.03(3))©	70
Employment Information and Procedures	70
Occupation Restrictions	70
Home Hospital Educational Services 603 (CMR 28.03(3) ©	70
Homeschooling	71
Homework Policy	72
What is Homework	72
Purposes of Homework	72
Considerations:	73
Attendance Policy	75
Student Absence Notification Program	77
Field Trip Policy	80
Honor Roll Policy	80
Standardized Testing	81
High School Graduation Requirements	81
Graduation Course Requirements	82
Massachusetts State College and University Minimum Required Courses for Admission	85
Advanced Placement Exams	86
Class Rank Grade Point Average	86
Dual Enrollment-College Courses for High School Students Early College Worcester (ECW)	86
Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy	87
General School Guidance	88
Delayed School Opening/Early Dismissal/School Cancellation Policy	88
Policy Statement and Procedural Guidelines for Recess	88
Caregivers and Community	89
Parent Advisory Councils	89
Opportunities for Caregiver Support	91
Volunteer Staff Regulations	91
Worcester Public School District Media Policy	92
Telephone Directory	93
Massachusetts Parental Notice for One Time Consent to Allow the School District To Access MassHealth (Medicaid) Benefits	95
Notification Concerning Privacy of Student Directory Inform Sign Off	97
Worcester Public School District Media Policy Sign Off	99
Policy Handbook Sign Off	Back Cover

Calendar.....Inside Front Cover
School Committee Members i
Superintendent's Message..... ii

Enrollment

The Online Registration form is required for enrollment in grades preschool - Grade 12.

The form is accessible to all families through the Worcester Public Schools website at :

worcesterschools.org/page/enrollment.

To enroll a student in Worcester Public Schools, the following documents must be submitted and verified:

1. Child's original birth certificate, I-94 form, or passport
2. Child's up-to-date immunization record
3. Child's up-to-date physical exam record (within the last year)
4. Caregiver's photo identification
5. Records from previous school, if available
6. Two proofs of Worcester residency from the list below. Items cannot be from the same bulleted category
7. One additional proof of Worcester residency from the list below:
 - A Utility Bill (not water or cell phone) dated within the past 60 days
 - A Deed or Mortgage Payment dated within the past 60 days, or a Property Tax Bill dated within the last year
 - A W2 form dated within the year, or a Payroll Stub dated within the past 60 days
 - A Bank or Credit Card Statement dated within the past 60 days
 - A Letter from an Approved Government Agency** dated within the past 60 days. Approved Government Agencies: Department of Revenue (DOR), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), Department of Youth Services (DYS) or Social Security.
 - A current lease, Section 8 Agreement, or notarized Landlord Affidavit dated within a year.

Parent Information Center

Caregivers can access support through the Dr. James L. Garvey Parent Information Center, located at 778 Main Street in Worcester, MA 01609.

The staff at the Garvey Center provide guidance on the student assignment policy, help families choose the educational setting that best fits their child's needs, and assist with the initial registration process—including required documentation such as birth certificates, immunization records, Home Language Survey Forms, and Medicaid eligibility.

Pre-School - Grade 8

Families enrolling, applying for, or transferring a student in grades preschool through grade 8 into or within Worcester Public Schools can complete the process at the Parent Information Center, located at 768 Main Street, or by using the WPS Online Registration form available on the district website.

Students in Worcester Public Schools are assigned to schools based on neighborhood district boundaries.

However, they may also be eligible to attend one of the three citywide magnet schools—Chandler Magnet School, Jacob Hiatt Magnet School, and Worcester Arts Magnet School—depending on space availability. Interested families must submit an application for consideration. Additionally, under the Voluntary Controlled Transfer Policy, students may apply to transfer to any school within the district, provided there is available space. Application timelines are detailed on the WPS website.

Grades 9-12

Families with students registering in grades 9-12 at South High, North High, Burncoat High, and Doherty High will register at the school according to their neighborhood boundary.

Families with students attending Claremont Academy, UPCS, or WTHS should follow the specific enrollment guidelines and policies outlined on the Worcester Public Schools website.

Attendance at Ch. 74 is based upon an application and selection process approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Additionally, under the Voluntary Controlled Transfer Policy, students may apply, according to district timelines, to transfer to any school within the district, provided there is available space.

Please note: Acceptance at UPCS is based upon students' address eligibility, application, and successful lottery selection.

Home Language

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations require that *all* schools determine the language(s) spoken in each student's home in order to identify their specific language needs. This information is essential in order for schools to provide meaningful instruction for all students. If a language other than English is spoken in the home, the District is required to do further assessment of your child.

Opt-Out Policy for English Learners (ELs)

The Worcester Public Schools is committed to comply in good faith with all federal, state and local laws, rules and guidelines in the area of education for English Learners. Federal civil rights laws, namely, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), require schools to take appropriate steps to address the language barriers that prevent ELs from meaningfully participating in their education. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71A and supporting regulations provide the state framework for the education of English learners in Massachusetts.

Caregivers of ELs may notify the district of their choice to have their child “opt-out” of English learner education programs. The decision to opt-out must be made by the caregivers (or students over 18 years of age) and must be **voluntary** and **informed**.

In opt-out cases, the district must inform the caregivers of the services the child would receive in the district's English learner education programs, as well as the type of support that would be provided to the student if the caregivers decide to "opt-out" of English learner services.

A caregiver's choice to opt-out means their child will not receive separate English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction focused on language development, but the district will provide the necessary support and actively monitor the student's progress to ensure that the student's English language and academic needs resulting from lack of English proficiency are met.

In order to comply with the laws, the following procedures shall be followed in every school building:

1. Caregivers who contact the school to request that their child opt-out of ESL services will be invited to attend a meeting at the school to include a school administrator and an ESL teacher. If the caregivers have identified in the Home Language Survey that they prefer an interpreter at meetings, the district shall provide an interpreter at the meeting.
2. No school personnel shall influence or encourage caregivers to request that their child opt-out of ESL services.
3. At the meeting, the district shall inform the caregivers of the services the child would receive in the district's English learner education programs, as well as the type of support that would be provided to the students if the caregivers decide to opt-out.
4. If the caregivers are unable or unwilling to attend a meeting in person at the school, the school can offer an alternative means of meeting by telephone or otherwise.
5. The school shall provide the caregivers with the Opt-Out Form in the caregiver's native language if the caregivers have indicated in the Home Language Survey that they seek written information in their native language.
6. The school shall retain a copy of the Opt-Out Form in the student's cumulative file.
7. If the caregivers decide to opt-out of an English learner program, the school should place the student in an English language mainstream classroom with an SEI-endorsed teacher. The school may also provide support from a reading specialist or other specialist as appropriate in order to ensure that the student has access to the curriculum and is provided the same opportunities to master the same academic standards and curriculum framework as their native English-speaking peers.
8. The student will continue to be classified as an "EL" on district reports, and will continue to be assessed annually in their language proficiency with the state-mandated English language proficiency test, ACCESS for ELs 2.0. The caregivers will be notified of their child's participation in such assessments, as well as assessment results.
9. The initial opt-out of a student remains active for one school year. According to new guidelines from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), caregivers are now required to complete a form **annually** requesting their child remain opted out of ESL services. The Annual Parent Choice Form also allows families who have previously made the decision to opt-out of ESL, an opportunity to reconsider ESL instruction for their child.

Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements for School Year 2025-26

	Child Care/ Pre-K	Kindergarten	Grades 1-6	Grades 7-12
Hepatitis B	3 doses	3 doses	3 doses	3 doses
DTaP/DTP/ Td/Tdap	>/=4 doses DTap/DTP	5 doses DTap/ DTP	>/=4 doses DTap/DTP or >/=3 dosesTD	>/=4 doses DTap/DTP or >/=3 doses TD,plus 1 dose Tdap
Polio	>/=3 doses	4 doses	>/=3 doses	>/=3 doses
Hib	1 to 4 doses	N/A	N/A	N/A
MMR	1 dose	2 doses	2 doses	2 doses
Varicela	1 dose	2 doses	2 doses	2 doses
Meningococcal	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 dose grade 7 entry 1 dose on or after 16 years of age or grade 11 entry

Students lacking proper documentation of required immunizations shall be excluded until proof of such immunization is provided (102 CMR 7.07 and 105 CMR 220.00). If a child cannot be immunized due to medical reasons, (requires physician documentation yearly) or if a caregiver refuses to have a child immunized because of religious beliefs (requires a caregiver-signed letter yearly), the non-immunized student will be excluded from school during outbreaks of diseases for which the student is not immunized (MGL c. 111, § 3, 6, 7, 109, 110, 112 and 105 CMR 300.00).

- **Lead Screening documentation is required of all students prior to entering Pre-K and/or kindergarten (105 CMR 460).**
- **Physical Examination documentation is required of all students entering grades K, 4, 7 and 9, and yearly for all student athletes.**

Records of student vaccines are entered into the Massachusetts Immunization Information System. An **immunization clinic** is available for students at the Dr. James L. Garvey Parent Information Center (PIC). All state-required immunizations are provided by an RN at no cost. Please refer to the WPS website for hours of operation or call the Parent Information Center at 508-799-3194.

The WPS will provide first aid and emergency care and/or contact emergency responders (including 911) in an emergency.

Voluntary Controlled Transfer Policy

I. Conditions for Out-of-District Transfers

It is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools that students shall attend schools based upon neighborhood district lines. Exceptions to this policy are allowed under the "Voluntary Controlled Transfer Policy" which permits transfers to other elementary, middle and high schools or to citywide magnet schools under the following conditions:

1. There must be space available in the receiving school.
2. Voluntary transfer requests will be considered for properly documented medical disabilities and other unique circumstances.
3. Spanish Bilingual, Structured English and Special Education Programs are offered in certain schools. Any student requiring these services will be enrolled in the school that will meet their assessed needs.
4. When a student changes residence and would enter grade 6, 8, or 12, they may finish the year in that school provided that they are a resident of Worcester and have received the principal's permission to remain in that school unless it is a magnet program or Worcester Technical High School; those students must complete the year in the school. Transportation is not provided.
5. Students who are accepted for voluntary transfer shall only receive transportation to the school if the student receives specialized transportation as a related service under an IEP or a 504.

II. Procedures for Applying for a "Voluntary Transfer"

1. Applications and a policy statement are available on the WPS's website.
*Applications for Worcester Technical High School may be obtained in all secondary guidance offices or at the Technical School Admissions Office.
2. The application must be filled out and returned to the appropriate office. Parent Information Center or the Office for Instruction and School Leadership.
3. A written approval or denial will be sent to the home of the caregiver and copies will be forwarded to the principals of both the sending and receiving schools.
4. A copy of the application and the approval or denial letter will be kept on file in the Office for Instruction and School Leadership.

III. Hardship Appeals Process

A maximum of two weeks will be allowed to appeal the decision in writing to the Director of Compliance at the Durkin Administration Building before June 30, 2026.

A copy of the decision will be sent to the caregiver and the Office for Instruction and School Leadership. Proceedings will be recorded and maintained by personnel in the Office for Instruction and School Leadership.

Policy for Non-resident Foreign Students holding J-1 Visas

Admission:

- By the first week in January each Worcester Public School high school principal will determine how many spaces are available (no fewer than three) in their school to accommodate the admission of non-resident foreign students whose host family resides in their district (or who otherwise obtain special permission from the Managers for Instruction and School Leadership on a space available basis) **for the following school year**. No high school principal

will enroll more than three non-resident foreign students until this determination is made and forwarded to the Executive Directors for the WPS.

- No high school principal will enroll more than three non-resident foreign students until this determination is made and forwarded to the Executive Director.

Criteria for Attendance:

- Foreign exchange students must provide certified proof of prior academic performance from the high school(s) in their native country.
- Transcripts from intermediary or sponsoring agencies will not be accepted as appropriate documentation for determining past academic performance unless they bear the seal of the school and/or are presented in a sealed envelope from the school.
- Acceptance to the Worcester Public Schools will be on a one (1) year basis with the sponsoring organization or guardian required to reapply annually for continued study.
- Once admitted, the foreign student will be subject to all rules, policies, regulations and procedures as they relate to all students in the system.
- The system will provide an academic record of the foreign student's participation while a member of the system to the sponsoring organization or the caregiver, as required.
- Foreign students holding J-1 visas participating in this program are exempt from paying tuition.
- The system will award appropriate city (general) diplomas and/or school diplomas if students can demonstrate through appropriate documentation and verification that they have met the prerequisite requirements of the Worcester Public Schools.

School Choice

The Worcester Public Schools participates in the Massachusetts School Choice program. The School Choice program allows caregivers to send their children to schools in communities other than the city or town in which they reside. For the 2025-2026 school year, the School Committee has approved the following:

1. Student enrollment in the Inter-District School Choice program is based on availability and limited preference will be given to siblings, if the space is available.
2. Caregiver is responsible for transportation to the district school.
3. All K to Grade 12 schools participate in the program with the following exceptions:
 - a. Chapter 74 approved programs in the comprehensive high schools
 - b. Chapter 74 approved programs in the comprehensive high schools for students entering school choice in grades 9-12
 - c. Alternative Pathways Programs
 - d. Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) Pathway Programs
 - e. Dual Language program
 - f. Preschool program
4. Students accepted into the Inter-District School Choice program may apply for schools on the same basis as resident students, but the Intra-District Choice

Plan (Voluntary Transfer) may give preference to resident students in assigning students to schools.

To obtain information regarding the Inter-District School Choice program, please contact the **Parent Information Center** at 508-799-3194 or the **Office for Instruction and School Leadership** at 508-799-3499.

5. All Pre-K to Grade 12 schools participate in the program with the following exceptions: a. Chapter 74 approved programs in the comprehensive high schools for students entering school choice in grades 9-12 b. Chapter 74 approved programs in the Worcester Technical High School for students entering school choice in grades 9-12.

STUDENT DRESS CODE POLICY

It is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools that the student and their caregiver hold the primary responsibility in determining the student's clothing choice and/or hairstyle, headcoverings, jewelry, and personal items (ie. backpacks, bookbags). Schools are responsible to ensure that clothing, hairstyle, head coverings, jewelry, and personal items do not interfere with the health and safety of others or interfere with each student's right to attend a positive, inclusive learning environment.

All students should feel welcome and comfortable in school, yet must come to school with appropriate clothing:

Top (short, sweater, sweatshirt, tank top, etc.)

Bottom (pants, shorts, dress, skirt, etc.)

Footwear (sneakers, boots, sandals, etc.)

- Clothing should provide appropriate body coverage, no backless shirts.
- Clothing should cover undergarments
- Student clothing and accessories should be free of graphic language and/or pictures that are pornographic, threatening, racist, sexist, express violent conduct (use of weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco) and express gang affiliation
- Race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, and other discriminatory protected groups should be respected and clothing should not demonstrate hate group association and/ or language.
- Students are allowed to wear hooded sweatshirts without the hood up.
- Head coverings such as scarves, durags, hair wraps, cultural and religious headwear are permissible as long as they don't obstruct the view of the face (unless for medical/religious reasons). Hats and bandanas are not permissible unless for medical reasons.

Career Vocational Technical Education Programs: Shop and Uniform Policy

All trades require specific uniforms or clothing and adherence to workplace standards of appearance beyond the requirements for school dress. Shop instructors, with the respective trade department heads, identify the necessary dress.

Shop instructors, with the respective department heads, have a responsibility to provide a safe shop environment for all students. The Administration enforces

these requirements.

Voluntary School Uniform Policy

- 1. Voluntary uniform policies must comply with existing School Committee policies on student attire.
- 2. Prior to seeking School Committee approval, a majority of the school council members and the school principal must approve the school's voluntary uniform policy. The principal will forward the request to the Clerk of the School Committee who places it on the agenda for School Committee approval which then allows the school to implement the policy.
- 3. There will be no disciplinary action if a student does not adhere to the voluntary uniform policy.

GUIDANCE REGARDING VIDEOS, PHOTOGRAPHS and TELEVISED BROADCASTS of STUDENTS

Many times, the Worcester Public Schools extracurricular activities and programs are broadcast on Charter Spectrum Channel 191 Worcester Educational Access Television (WEA-TV) and participants may be shown in these broadcasts. Re-broadcasts of all programs may be made throughout the school year at unannounced times.

In addition, there are times when the news media (print or broadcast) may be invited into schools to film, photograph, or conduct interviews for news articles.

Additionally, WPS staff members may take photographs during the school day to share on the district or school social media accounts, websites, or in publications with permission of their supervisor. Photographs of students taken during the school day may only be shared publicly if their caregiver has allowed their child's image to be used for such purposes. Staff shall not share personal information about students that is prohibited by law, such as FERPA.

In regard to after-school sports, WPS is not able to shield students from being photographed during games, which are often covered by local news media and are now live-streamed at certain athletic facilities.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

It is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools that the Pledge of Allegiance be recited and a moment of silence be observed at all levels on a daily basis.

SAFETY AND BEHAVIOR

INTERNET SAFETY AND ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Purpose

The Worcester Public Schools recognize the value of technology to improve student learning and enhance the administration and operation of its schools. The Worcester Public Schools encourages the responsible use of technology in support of the mission and goals of our district. It is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools to: (a) prevent user access over its computer network to transmit inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications; (b) prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity; (c) prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use or dissemination of personal identification information of minors; and (d) comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act

[Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)]. The Worcester Public School system certifies that its schools have adopted and are enforcing Internet safety policies as part of Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act. Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) as amended in the Broadband Data Improvement Act [Pub. L. No. 110.385] to include educating minors about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms and cyber bullying awareness and response. The district has adopted curriculum to remain in compliance with the most recent FCC Report and order FCC 11-125.

Terms of Agreement

In order to use networked and Internet resources, all students and caregivers must sign and return the signature page as contained on the back cover of the Student Handbook, and those under age 18 must obtain the caregivers permission.

Internet Safety

The Worcester Public Schools is in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). The Worcester Public Schools will comply with any additional state and federal regulations that pertain to technology use within the district and through use of the Worcester Public Schools District network infrastructure and servers that is forthcoming from the local, state, and federal regulatory agencies. A third party filtering system is in place that prevents accessing web pages that are 1) obscene, 2) pornographic, or 3) deemed harmful to minors. The district will monitor the online activities of users. The staff and students are advised never to access, keep or send anything that they would not want made public. While some pages are blocked by human intervention, other sites are blocked based on an algorithm that attempts to discern inappropriate sites. Best efforts are made to make the filtering as accurate as possible given the vast number of websites on the Internet. Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

Inappropriate Network Usage

Staff and students should be aware that some material accessible via the Internet might contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or potentially offensive. The Internet is to be used for constructive educational purposes only. Drives and files may be reviewed by network administrators occasionally to maintain system integrity.

To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the Worcester Public Schools online computer network when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications.

Specifically, as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, prevention of inappropriate network usage includes: a) unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities; and b) unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors.

Unacceptable Uses

- The activities listed below are not permitted. The list of activities described below is not meant to be comprehensive. The Worcester Public Schools reserves the right to make judgments both as to what constitutes inappropriate behavior and the consequences that apply.
- Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures
- Using obscene language
- Giving personal information, such as full name, phone number, address or identifiable photo without permission from teacher and caregivers
- Harassing, insulting or attacking others (cyber-bullying)
- Damaging or modifying computers, computer systems or network resources, whether physically or through use of software means such as deletion, formatting, viruses, hacking, phishing, cracking
- Attempting to bypass web content filters through proxy sites or other means
- Violating copyright laws
- Using others' passwords
- Trespassing in others' folders, work, or files
- Intentionally wasting limited resources
- Installing any software, shareware or freeware without Principal approval and installation by on-site contact person
- Employing the network for commercial purposes, financial gain or fraud

The network, wired and wireless, is for educational uses only. Any non WPS device on the Worcester Public Schools network shall be used for educational purposes only. Non educational use is prohibited.

Penalties

Violation of any terms set forth in this policy may result in the loss of Worcester Public Schools computer network privileges, disciplinary action and/or appropriate legal action.

Electronic Messaging Guidelines

The Worcester Public Schools contracts with a vendor to provide emergency and informational calls, texts and emails. The Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991 "TCPA" (and subsequent amendments) was created to prevent consumers from receiving "robo" marketing calls from telemarketers. By signing the student handbook, you are providing prior express consent for the school district to contact you and your family via phone, email or text message for emergency and informational purposes. If you would like to opt-out of receiving informational messages, you can do so at www.worcesterschools.org. Emergency messages will continue to be sent to the contact numbers provided, as authorized under TCPA. When using email or the WPS messaging system to communicate with teachers, please follow these important guidelines: Email is not confidential. Teachers will not respond via email to discuss contentious, emotional, or highly confidential issues. These issues are to be handled by phone or personal contact. Emails should be used for general information that is non-vital. For example, do not use email to inform a teacher that your child is not to go home on the bus. A teacher may not read the message in time. A phone call should be made to make sure your message is clearly received.

AI and Future Technologies Guidelines

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and future technologies can enhance learning and creativity when used responsibly. Students are encouraged to leverage AI tools to support their education, such as conducting research, organizing information, or

improving project design. However, all use of AI must adhere to the district's academic integrity policies and the following considerations:

Originality and Attribution: Students must acknowledge and cite AI tools used in their work, specifying their purpose (e.g., editing, brainstorming, or problem-solving).

Learning Focus: AI should complement, not replace, student effort. Assignments should reflect the student's understanding and skills.

Ethical Use: AI should not be used to plagiarize, fabricate, or generate work intended to deceive.

Teacher Guidelines: Specific assignments may have additional restrictions or expectations for AI use as determined by teachers.

By using AI responsibly, students can explore innovative ways to learn while maintaining academic integrity and personal growth. Guidance for the district may be updated through the school year based on changes in technology.

Social Media

Social media is a popular communication tool for schools and the district to share information about activities, accomplishments, and announcements, and can enhance family and community engagement when used responsibly. Use of social media by students or staff must follow existing policies that protect against harassment, bullying, discrimination, sharing of personal information that is prohibited by law, and using personal devices during class time. Additionally, students, staff, and third-party visitors are subject to comment moderation that would ban commentary that violate these existing policies while also preserving freedom of speech, which includes expressing opposing thoughts and views. Please note that all content on a district or school social media account is considered public information under the state Public Records Law (G.L.c.4, § 7(26)). The district's social media guidelines are reviewed annually and posted on worcesterschools.org.

Adoption

The School Committee of the Worcester Public Schools adopted this Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy at a public meeting following normal public notice on May 21, 2009. This amended policy was adopted by the School Committee of the Worcester Public Schools on June 5, 2014.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

The Worcester Public Schools utilizes a number of computer software applications and web-based services to supplement educational services provided by school-based staff. While these tools are reviewed to ensure that they provide students with effective tools for learning, the applications and services are not operated by the district but by third parties. In order for students to use these programs and services, certain personal identifying information – typically the student's name and e-mail address – may be provided to the website/application operator. The Worcester Public Schools enters into a data sharing agreement with third parties to ensure student data is handled in a manner not in violation of federal requirements.

Under the federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), the websites/

application operators must provide caregiver notification and obtain consent before collecting personal information from children under the age of 13. The law permits school districts to consent to the collection of personal information on behalf of its students thus eliminating the need for individual caregiver to consent directly to individual website/application providers.

A list of the sites used in our classrooms with links to privacy policies, terms of service and our data share agreements can be found on our Student Data Privacy Consortium website: https://sdpc.a4l.org/district_listing.php?districtID=786

If a caregiver wishes for their child to be removed from specific third party services, an opt-out form can be obtained at the above district website. Completed forms should be returned to the school principal.

Science Laboratory Safety

Science is taught using an inquiry based approach in the Worcester Public Schools. This can be done safely only with the cooperation of students to the teacher's directions and procedures. It is the responsibility of students to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner in the lab setting. Students are expected to:

1. Successfully complete a Lab Safety Assessment after engaging in instruction with their instructor.
2. Sign a safety contract which emphasizes their responsibilities in the science lab;
3. Have caregivers co-sign the contract to alert them to these responsibilities;
4. Use protective equipment (gloves, aprons, goggles, etc.) provided as instructed;
5. Wear appropriate clothing, including closed-toe shoes, and tie back long hair;
6. Refrain from eating and drinking in the laboratory;
7. Dispose of all waste materials according to the teacher's instructions.
8. Report all accidents, injuries, and spills to the teacher immediately, regardless of severity; and
9. Know classroom evacuation procedures in case of an emergency.

SECURITY MEASURES

Crisis Prevention/De-escalation/Physical Restraint

It is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools to comply with state law and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ("DESE") physical restraint regulations, 603 CMR 46.00 et seq. ("Regulations").

Physical restraint shall be considered an emergency procedure of last resort and shall be used only when a student's behavior poses a threat of assault, or imminent, serious, physical harm to self or others and the student is not responsive to verbal directives or other lawful and less intrusive behavior interventions, or such interventions are deemed to be inappropriate under the circumstances.

Mechanical restraints, medication restraints and seclusion are prohibited in all public education programs. Prone restraint is prohibited in the Worcester Public Schools. The Regulations apply not only at school but also at school-sponsored

events and activities, whether taking place on school property or in the community. The regulations can be found at:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr46.html?section=all>

Security Cameras in Schools

The Worcester Public Schools works to maintain a safe and secure environment for all students, staff, and visitors. Safety and security involves physical hardware and equipment as well as procedures to use in case of an emergency. All hardware, equipment, and procedures have as their goal the prevention, mitigation, protection, response, and recovery from any emergency situation.

Physical safety measures include the deployment of video surveillance cameras at schools and sites.

School facilities and their contents constitute one of the greatest investments of the community. The School Committee believes it to be in the best interest of students and taxpayers for the district to exert every reasonable means to protect the investment adequately.

In pursuit of this objective, the School Committee authorizes the deployment and use of security/video cameras within school district buildings, on school property, and video cameras with audio capability on both the exterior and interior of school buses to ensure the health, welfare and safety of all students, staff, and visitors; to deter theft, vandalism, and other negative behavior; to safeguard district buildings, grounds, and equipment; and to monitor unauthorized individuals in or on school property. Security cameras may be used in locations as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent of Schools in consultation with school officials as well as local law enforcement and emergency response agencies. They may be used in any area, inside or outside of school buildings, and on the inside and outside of school buses where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy.

The district shall notify students and staff through student and employee handbooks and appropriate signage that security cameras have been installed and may be used at any time. Students or staff identified on security cameras in violation of School Committee policies will be subject to disciplinary action.

The Superintendent shall ensure that proper procedures are in place and are followed regarding use, viewing, disclosure, retention, disposal and security of video recordings or photographs from security cameras in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. A video recording used for security purposes in school district buildings and/or on school property shall be the sole property of the school district. All video recordings will be stored in their original format and secured to avoid tampering and to ensure confidentiality in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Access to video recordings from security cameras shall be limited to school administrators (Superintendent/designee, School Principal/designee). Law enforcement and emergency response officials shall be granted access to video recordings or the security system after giving prior notice to the Superintendent/designee.

The Superintendent may, from time to time, issue further guidance that is consistent with current laws and this policy.

Emergency Plans

Advance planning for emergencies and disasters is essential to provide for the safety of students and staff; it also strengthens the morale of all concerned to know

that plans exist and that students and staff have been trained in carrying out the plans.

The Superintendent shall review annually the safety plan with local police and fire officials. Building principals will meet all requirements for conducting fire drills and emergency response drills to give students practice in moving with orderly dispatch to designated areas under emergency conditions, and the staff practice in carrying out their assigned responsibilities for building evacuation.

Student Lockers

All lockers available to students are the property of the Worcester Public Schools. Use of lockers by students is regulated by the school administration and all lockers are subject to inspection by the school administration when deemed appropriate.

Students may be assigned a locker to use a school issued lock. The administration will remove all non-school issued locks. If a locker is not used/ assigned, the administration will secure it with a lock.

Students may carry backpacks or store book bags, gym bags, and outerwear in their lockers during the school day.

For security reasons, students will not be permitted to wear outerwear (coats and jackets) during the school day. Students will be permitted to carry backpacks made of a mesh or transparent material at the secondary level.

Any weapon, drugs or other prohibited items or substances found in a locker in violation of school policy may be considered to be the property of the student assigned to the locker for purposes of disciplinary action under this code.

Access to Students During School Hours

The following persons may be granted access to students during school hours:

1. The custodial caregiver (the caregiver with physical custody more than 50% of the time) or guardian or personnel or agency legally authorized to act on behalf of the child in place of or in conjunction with the caregiver. According to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, §34H, the noncustodial caregiver must submit a written request to the school principal for such access. For further information, contact your child's principal.
2. A student, age 14, or upon entering grade 9, may consent to meet with an individual.
3. Certain individuals, including school personnel, police, and employees of certain state agencies may be granted access to students in the performance of their official duties. This information can be viewed at <https://www.worcesterschools.org/>

If any court ordered restrictions exist regarding access to your child, it is imperative that you provide the WPS a copy of the order so that we can comply with the order of the court.

Dismissal of Students

1. Students may only be dismissed to persons specified by the caregivers in writing. Principals may remind families to update student emergency contact information to include a robust network of persons who may be called in case of

an emergency.

2. Caregivers may be provided a notarized Caregiver Affidavit to designate someone to make educational and/or medical decisions for a child if the child is temporarily living with someone who is not the caregiver.
3. Please note that a Caregiver Affidavit expires every two years and must be resubmitted.

Handling of Students Whose Caregivers Have Been Detained or Taken Into Custody

If a school receives notification that the caregiver of a student has been detained or taken into custody by immigration law enforcement officials or agents, the school will take the following steps:

1. Contact the person(s) listed on the student's emergency card to inform the person(s) of the situation and ask if they can retrieve the student;
2. Make arrangements for school counselors to be available to support the student;
3. Contact DCF if there is no responsible adult authorized by the caregivers to receive the student;
4. Consult with the district's homeless liaison if the student becomes homeless as a result of their caregiver's detention.

Visitors in the Schools

All Worcester Public Schools are posted with signs requiring that all visitors must report to the Office of the Principal. This ensures that the school administration knows who is visiting in the building, the reason for the visit, and if the timing of the visit is appropriate.

The following sign-in procedures will be adhered to upon entering a school building:

- Enter through the front door (some schools have Intercom Systems that will allow you to enter after ringing a bell and identifying yourself)
- Go immediately to the front office
- Please sign in at the register
- Affix a Visitor's Tag on a visible area of your attire
- Wait for further instructions from the school clerk or administrator on how to proceed to the respective visiting area or classroom. Any other entry into a school building by visitors will be considered trespassing. Intruders into the building are immediately asked to leave, and if they refuse to do so, local law enforcement officials are contacted for assistance. Trespassing laws will be enforced in accordance with this policy.

Use of Motor Vehicles

Students are extended the privilege of bringing automobiles to school as long as they respect the safety of others and obey these basic rules:

1. Automobiles must be parked in the assigned student parking areas.
2. Students who leave the campus in motor vehicles during the school hours without following established dismissal procedures will be subject to disciplinary action.
3. Idling of a motor vehicle engine in excess of 5 minutes is prohibited on school property.

4. Students must drive slowly and carefully on or near school grounds, always remembering that pedestrians have the right of way.
5. Cars may not be visited during the school day except with principal's approval
6. Parking privileges will be revoked or suspended for the following reasons:
 - a. Speed in excess of 15 m.p.h.
 - b. Any act endangering life or property while on school grounds.
 - c. Parking in areas other than student parking areas.
7. Parking privileges will not be available without an appropriate school registration and parking permit.

CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools to ensure fair and effective disciplinary practices. Every student has a right to an education in a safe, secure, and supportive environment. Every teacher has a right to expect respectful, prepared students in their classroom.

A key aspect of a student's education is the acquisition of social and behavioral skills; effective learning can only occur when students obey basic rules of conduct. This means that:

1. Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that is in the best interest of the school and its students.
2. Caregivers have a responsibility to develop positive attitudes toward study and behavior.
3. Teachers have a responsibility to continue behavior development through teaching and discipline in the classroom.
4. The Administration and the School Committee have a responsibility to support and maintain the enforcement of discipline within the school buildings through policies and practices that are designed to use discretion and to re-engage the student in the learning process.

The administrator will exercise discretion in determining disciplinary consequences. The administrator may utilize their discretion to increase penalties in the cases of second and third offenses or for other factors. In determining the penalty or suspension, the appropriate administrator may consider all relevant facts, including but not limited to:

- 1) Findings of the investigation, including student interviews, of the school-related disciplinary incident.
- 2) previous disciplinary record,
- 3) severity of disruption to the educational process,
- 4) degree of danger to self and/or others,
- 5) the degree to which the student is willing to change their inappropriate behavior and
- 6) whether alternative consequences are appropriate to re-engage the student in learning.

In every case of student misconduct for which suspension may be imposed under MGL c. 71 §37H ¾ the principal shall first consider ways to re-engage the student in learning and shall not use suspension from school as a consequence until alternative remedies have been tried and documented, except as follows: (1) where said decision-maker documents specific reasons why alternative remedies are unsuitable or counterproductive; or (2) where the student's continued presence in school would

pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm to another person while in school.

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws, requires that additional provisions be made for students who have been found by an evaluation team to have special needs and whose program is described in an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Such provisions will also be made, when appropriate, for students with a disability who are receiving accommodations or related services under a 504 plan.

MGL c. 71, § 37H: Policies relative to conduct of teachers or students; student handbooks Schools must have policies about student discipline, and students must get a handbook that explains the rules. A student who brings a weapon or drugs to school, or assaults a staff member may be expelled.

MGL c. 71, § 37H ½: Felony complaint or conviction of student; suspension; expulsion; right to appeal If a student is charged with a felony, they may be suspended. If they are convicted of a felony, they may be expelled. The student can appeal the decision.

MGL c. 71, § 37H ¾: Rules for schools to follow if they suspend or expel a student for any other reason, and use of alternative remedies other than suspension or expulsion.

603 CMR 53.00: limits the use of long-term suspension as a consequence for student misconduct until other consequences have been considered and tried as appropriate; promotes engagement of a student's parent in discussion of the student's misconduct, and options for responding to it; assures that every student who is expelled or suspended, regardless of the reason for suspension or expulsion, has the opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of suspension or expulsion; and keeps schools safe.

School-Imposed Discipline

Expulsion means the removal of a student from the school premises, regular classroom activities, and school activities for more than ninety (90) school days, indefinitely, or permanently, as permitted under MGL c. 71, §§37H or 37H½ for: a) possession of a dangerous weapon; b) possession of a controlled substance; c) assault on a member of the educational staff; or d) a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, or adjudication or admission of guilt with respect to such felony, if a principal or their designee determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school, as provided in MGL c. 71, §§37H or 37H½.

In-school suspension means removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises, for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions during the school year. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days. In-school suspension for ten (10) days or less, consecutively or cumulatively during a school year, shall not be considered a short-term suspension under these regulations. If a student is placed in in-school suspen-

sion for more than ten (10) days, consecutively or cumulatively during a school year, such suspension shall be deemed a long-term suspension for due process, appeal, and reporting purposes under 603 CMR 53.00.

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

Long-term suspension means the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten consecutive school days, or for more than ten school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. A principal may, in his or her discretion, allow a student to serve a long-term suspension in school. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days. Except for students who are charged with a disciplinary offense set forth in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H(a) or (b), or M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H½ no student may be placed on long-term suspension for one or more disciplinary offenses for more than 90 school days in a school year beginning with the first day that the student is removed from school. No long-term suspension shall extend beyond the end of the school year in which such suspension is imposed.

Other Discipline:

Reengagement strategies such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative practice, PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention & Support), caregiver meetings, collaborative problem solving, social skills groups, Wellness Room consultation, safety plans, trauma-sensitive learning, and other evidence-based strategies may be used as appropriate. After school, before school, and Saturday detentions may be imposed for infractions of these rules at the school level. School-wide or district-wide models shall be considered a direct response to a specific incident.

The district shall not suspend or expel a student under MGL c. 71 §37H ¾ until reengagement in learning has been employed and their use and results documented. In cases where procedures for reengaging students before suspension or expulsion through alternative remedies is not suitable the principal will document specific reasons why these alternative remedies are unsuitable or counterproductive. If the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm to another person while in school this will be documented.

Participation in clubs and activities at Worcester Public Schools and attending school-sponsored, school-related events is a privilege afforded to students who remain in good standing. To participate in school activities, events and clubs, students are expected to maintain good attendance and demonstrate good behavior and citizenship during school and at school-sponsored events. Eligibility for participation in activities, events, clubs, awards, scholarships and honorary positions at Worcester Public Schools is limited to students who are currently enrolled in and attending Worcester Public Schools in good standing. Students not meeting these expectations may be excluded at the discretion of the principal or their designee. If a student is suspended from an extracurricular activity, at the determination of the principal, the student may be excluded from that specific type of event involving the student's school of enrollment for the remainder of the school year.

A student's removal from extracurricular activities and attendance at school spon-

sored events is not subject to the procedural requirements of MGL c. 71 §37H ¾ (Principal's Hearing). The removal is not a suspension for the purpose of counting the school days that a student is suspended. Caregivers will be notified when a student is removed or excluded from extracurricular activities.

Corporal Punishment

School discipline shall not include the right to inflict corporal punishment. MGL c. 71, § 37G Corporal punishment of pupils prohibited. However, reasonable force may be used as necessary to protect pupils, other persons, and themselves from an assault by a pupil

Search of Student

School Officials may legally search a student and confiscate property provided: 1. there are reasonable grounds to suspect a search will turn up evidence tending to show that the student has violated or is violating the law or the school's rules; and 2. the search as conducted is reasonably related in scope to the circumstances that justified the search in the first place.

Disruptive Conduct

Violation of any of the following rules is grounds for discipline as defined above and pertains to actions both on or off school grounds during school or school-related situations.

Rule 1. – Damage or Destruction of School Property

A student shall not steal or cause damage to school property, nor make such attempts. The Administration reserves the right to file criminal complaints against, and seek restitution from, any student who violates this rule.

Rule 2. – Damage or Destruction of Private Property

A student shall not steal or cause damage to private property nor make such attempts during school situations on or off school grounds or at any school-related situations including, but not limited to, travel to and from the situation.

Rule 3. – Physical Assault on a School Employee

A student shall not use or attempt to use physical force against a school employee or cause or attempt to cause physical injury to a school employee on or off the school grounds or during school situations or school-related situations including, but not limited to, travel to and from the situation. Any student who assaults any school employee or any student who assaults a principal, teacher, paraprofessional, or other educational staff on school premises or at school sponsored or school related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion or a long-term suspension from the school by the school principal. Any student charged with a violation of Rule 3 shall have the due process rights outlined in Due Process, Section III.

Rule 4. – Physical Assault on a Student or Other Person not Employed by the School

A student shall not use or attempt to use physical force against a student or other person or cause or attempt physical injury to another student or any other person on or off school grounds at any school-related situation including, but not limited to, travel to and from the situation.

Rule 5. – Verbal Assault on a School Employee

A student shall not assault verbally any school employee on or off school grounds at any school related situation including, but not limited to, travel to and from the situation. Verbal assault means obscenity, bullying or abusive language. Abusive language shall include but not be limited to derogatory statements concerning race, sexual orientation, color, gender, age, religion, gender identity, national origin or disability.

Rule 5A. – Threatening a School Employee

A student shall not threaten any teacher, administrator, or other school employee or volunteer with physical harm so as to place such person in reasonable apprehension that force will be used to inflict such physical harm.

Rule 6. – Verbal Assault on, or Threat to, a Student or Non-employee of School

A student shall not assault verbally any person on or off school grounds at any school-related situation including, but not limited to, travel to and from the situation. Verbal assault means obscenity, bullying or abusive language. Abusive language shall include but not be limited to derogatory statements concerning race, sexual orientation, color, gender, age, religion, gender identity, national origin or disability.

Rule 6A. - Written Assault or Threat on a Student or Non-employee of School

A student shall not threaten, intimidate or bully in writing, any person on or off school grounds at any school-related situation including, but not limited to, travel to and from the situation. Written threats mean any messages including e-mail, text messaging or any other cyber-related forms of communication; e.g. chat rooms.

Rule 7. - Policy on Possession or Use of Dangerous Weapons

If any device which may be considered a weapon under this policy is distributed by a teacher, for use in the classroom, then no student receiving such a device shall be charged with an offense under Rule 7 provided the device remains in the classroom and provided the device is only used for the classroom purpose. A student shall not possess, use, or attempt to use, any weapon on school premises or at a school related situation, including but not limited to travel to and from the situation. In order to protect the students of the Worcester Public Schools, any student who is found on school premises or at school sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including but not limited to, a gun or a knife may be subject to expulsion or a long-term suspension from the school by the principal regardless of the size of the knife. For purposes of this policy, a weapon is any instrument or object possessed or used to inflict harm on another person, or to intimidate any person. Examples include firearms of any kind (operable or inoperable, loaded or unloaded); all types of knives, chains, pipes, razor blades or similar instruments with sharp cutting edges; ice picks, dirks, other pointed instruments (including pencils, pens); nunchakus; brass knuckles; Chinese stars; billy clubs; tear gas guns; electrical weapons or devices (stun guns); BB or pellet guns; and explosives or propellants. Any other device or object used or attempted to be used to inflict bodily harm on a person may be considered a weapon. This policy will be implemented according to the due process provisions of the WPS Discipline Code applicable to all students. Any student charged with a violation of Rule 7 shall have the due process rights outlined in Due Process, Section III.

This policy will be implemented according to the due process provisions of the WPS Discipline Code applicable to all students. Any student charged with a violation of Rule 7 shall have the due process rights outlined in Due Process, Section III.

Rule 8. - Policy on Possession or Use of Drugs or Alcohol

- a. Any student who distributes or possesses, with intent to distribute, any controlled substance as defined in MGL c. 94C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, or heroin, on school premises or at a school sponsored activity, may be expelled or have a short-term or long-term suspension imposed from the Worcester Public Schools by the school principal. This applies to drug paraphernalia such as scales, grinders, pipes, electronic smoking devices and any and all instruments used for drug products.
- b. Any student who uses or possesses any controlled substance as defined in MGL c. 94C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine or heroin, or is under the influence of such a substance on school premises or at a school sponsored activity may be subject to expulsion or a short-term or long-term suspension from school by the school principal.
- c. Possession or use of alcohol on the premises of the Worcester Public Schools is forbidden. Any student who uses or possesses alcohol on school premises, or at a school sponsored activity, or is under the influence of alcohol on school premises, or a school sponsored situation, may be subject to a short-term or a long-term suspension imposed from the Worcester Public Schools.
- d. This policy will be implemented subject to the due process provision of the Worcester Public Schools Discipline Code applicable to Regular and Special Education students. Any student charged with a violation of Rule 8 shall have the due process rights outlined in Due Process, Section III.
- e. Possession or use of drugs or controlled substances which are medically prescribed is not a violation of this policy. However, all prescribed medications will be administered to students by authorized school personnel and will be kept in a secure location.

Rule 9. - Excessive Tardiness

A student shall not be tardy from school or class without legitimate cause.

Rule 10. – Repeated School Violations

A student shall not repeatedly fail to comply with directions and reasonable requests of any authorized school personnel during any period of time they are under school supervision.

Rule 11. - Hazing

The term "hazing" shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which wilfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. A student shall not organize or participate in hazing. A student with knowledge of any hazing activity must report the incident to the school administrator.

Rule 12. - Sounding False Alarms

A student shall not, without reasonable cause, by outcry, bells, or otherwise cause a false alarm of fire (such action shall be reported under MGL c. 269, §13). No student

shall set a fire in a school building or at a school-sponsored site or situation.

Rule 13. - Smoking and Tobacco Product

Smoking, possession, use, or distribution of tobacco or tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vaping devices within school buildings, school facilities, school grounds, on school buses or at a school sponsored activity by any person are prohibited. Any student who violates this rule may be suspended.

Rule 14. - WPS Cell Phone Use

In the Worcester Public Schools, we recognize technology's significant role in modern education. We acknowledge the potential benefits of cell phone use as a tool for educational purposes. However, we also recognize the challenges that come with cell phone usage in schools, including distractions, disengagement, and overuse. We have formulated the following Cell Phone Use Guidance to strike a balance and ensure a conducive learning environment.

Section 1: Educational Use

At the discretion of the classroom teacher and building administrator, cell phones may be used for educational purposes and communication as follows:

Research and Specialized Educational Applications in the Classroom: Students are expected to use school-issued computers for research (e.g., accessing databases) and accessing specialized educational applications. Teachers may authorize students to use personal cell phones for these educational purposes only when a school-issued device is unavailable.

Communication: Students may use cell phones for educational communication via district-approved applications (e.g., email or chat application) with teachers, classmates, and parents outside of class time.

Section 2: Important Use

In the case of emergencies and other important matters:

Safety First: During the school day, students are expected to report to a school staff member any situation where personal safety or the safety of others is at risk. However, if no school staff member is available or the situation takes place outside of school time, students are permitted to use cell phones to contact emergency services, caregivers.

Communication between Students and Caregivers: During the school day, Caregivers should channel urgent communication with their children through the school office. Students are not permitted to use cell phones to communicate with their parents during instructional time.

Emergency Notifications: Caregivers are encouraged to keep the school informed of any changes to their contact information to ensure timely communication during emergencies.

Section 3: Proactive Uses and Boundaries

To promote responsible cell phone use and maintain an engaging learning environment: **Non-Educational Uses:** Classroom teachers should not authorize the use of

cell phones for non-educational purposes (e.g., social media, video games) during class time.

Out-of-Sight and Silent During Instructional Time: Cell phones must be powered off (or left on “silent” or “airplane” mode) and stowed out of sight (e.g., in a clothing pocket, purse or backpack) during class to minimize disruptions.

Respect for Others: When authorized, students are expected to use cell phones in a manner that respects the overall learning environment and does not disrupt fellow students or staff. Taking photographs and recording audio or video without permission is strictly prohibited.

Digital Citizenship: Teachers, administrators, and school staff will promote digital citizenship by teaching students responsible and ethical use of technology, including cell phones, in educational and professional contexts.

Section 4: Consequences for Violations

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including:

Warning: Students may receive a warning and be reminded of the policy for minor violations.

Confiscation: Continued violations may result in temporary confiscation of the cell phone, which is returned to the student or caregivers at the end of the day.

Caregivers Meeting: For persistent violations, a meeting with the parent/guardian may be scheduled to discuss the issue and find a resolution.

Use of Earphones in Schools

In the WPS, we aim to strike a balance between harnessing the educational potential of technology and maintaining a productive and respectful learning environment. With proactive guidance, responsible cell phone use can be integrated into our educational mission. Students, parents, and staff must adhere to this policy to create a positive and engaging educational experience.

Acceptable Use of Earphones in School

In the Worcester Public Schools, we recognize the value of technology in education and the importance of creating an environment conducive to learning. Wireless and corded earphones (“Air Pods”) and other personal audio devices can enhance the learning experience when used responsibly. We have established this acceptable use policy to ensure that such wireless devices are a positive addition to our educational environment.

Acceptable Use Guidelines:

Educational and Study Purposes: At the discretion of teachers and building administration, wireless and corded earphones may be used for educational and study purposes as follows:

- Listening to educational podcasts or audiobooks.
- Participating in virtual classes or remote learning sessions.
- Using language learning applications or educational software.

Personal Use in Designated Areas: At the discretion of teachers and building administration, students may use wireless and corded earphones in designated areas during non-instructional time (e.g., lunch breaks).

Respect for Others: Students using wireless and corded earphones must do so in a manner that respects the learning environment and does not disrupt fellow students or instructors.

Volume Control: The volume on wireless and corded earphones must be kept at a level that is not audible to others.

Safety Considerations: Wireless and corded earphones should not be worn in situations where they may pose a safety risk.

Prohibited Uses:

Classroom Distraction: Using wireless and corded earphones during instructional time in the classroom is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by the teacher for a specific educational purpose.

Consequences for Violations

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including: **Warning:** Students may receive a warning and be reminded of the policy for minor violations. **Confiscation:** Continued violations may result in temporary confiscation of the cell phone, which is returned to the student or parent/guardian at the end of the day.

Caregivers Meeting: For persistent violations, a meeting with the parent/guardian may be scheduled to discuss the issue and find a resolution.

Students should also be aware that recording an individual without their consent could result in criminal charges under MGL CH. 272.

Use of such devices in violation of this rule may result in disciplinary action including, but not limited to, out-of-school suspension time. The School Administration reserves the right to confiscate cellular phones or other electronic devices when a student is believed to be violating this rule.

A student shall not use or possess a laser pointing device of any type on school premises or at a school sponsored event, unless such device is distributed by a teacher or its use is authorized by a teacher in connection with school work. Use of a laser pointing device against the face, eyes, or head of another individual may be considered a weapon for disciplinary purposes including, but not limited to, the possibility of long-term suspension.

Enforcement and Penalties:

This cell phone policy may be enforced by the principal, any teacher (including substitutes) or by any other school official or employee designated by the principal.

Enforcement personnel shall have the right to confiscate any cell phone or electronic device possessed or used in violation of the Code of Conduct.

Penalties for students found in violation of the policy will be as follows:

1. First offense: Student's cell phone/electronic device will be confiscated and returned to the student at the end of the school day.
2. Second and subsequent offenses: Student's cell phone/electronic device will be confiscated and returned only to the student's caregivers. Any such caregiver may, within five days of any such confiscation, request a hearing to determine the validity of the violation of the Code of Conduct and resulting

confiscation of the cell phone/electronic device. In such event the principal shall designate a hearing officer who shall: 1) give the student and/or their caregivers an opportunity to present their case; 2) hear or review the incident report from the enforcing person and any other person with relevant information; and 3) provide a recommendation to the principal as to whether there is a reasonable basis to conclude that the cell phone policy of the Code of Conduct was violated by the student. Regardless of any request for a hearing, any confiscated cell phone/electronic device shall be returned to the caregiver at the first opportunity and shall not be dependent on the scheduling or outcome of any hearing.

3. Students committing repeated violations of this policy may be subject to additional disciplinary action, consistent with the Worcester Public Schools Code of Conduct up to and including suspension from school.

Rule 15. - Policy on Gangs and Obscene Clothing

1. No student on school property or at any school sponsored function shall wear any article of clothing (including hats, bandanas, scarves and sweatbands), jewelry, emblem, badge, symbol or sign which has wording, or designs that are reasonably deemed by the school administration to be obscene, lewd or vulgar and which causes disorder or disruption to the school environment.
2. No student on school property or at any school sponsored function shall wear any article of clothing (including hats), jewelry, emblem, badge, symbol or sign, which displays, evidences or advertises alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, illegal drugs, or other controlled substances illegal under Massachusetts law.
3. No student on school property or at any school sponsored function shall wear any article of clothing (including hats), jewelry, emblem, badge, symbol or sign which the school administration reasonably deems to be evidence of membership or affiliation in any gang. As defined in this policy a "gang" is any group of two or more persons affiliated together, either formally or informally, whose purposes include the commission of illegal acts or who in concert commit illegal acts.

Rule 16. - Students Charged with or Convicted of a Felony

In accordance with MGL c. 71 §37 H ½ principals have the authority to suspend students charged with a felony and expel or impose a long-term suspension for students convicted or adjudicated of committing a felony if the principal determines that the student's continued presence would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. Any student charged with a violation of Rules 3, 7, 8 and 18 shall have the due process rights outlined in Due Process, Section III.

Rule 17. - Disruption of School

1. In addition to complying with Rules 1 through 15 stated above, a student shall not use violence, force, threat, fear, passive resistance or any other conduct in order to cause the disruption or obstruction of any lawful mission, process, or function in school.
2. Students are not permitted in any area of the school building/grounds without supervision by a staff person of the WPS before, during and after normal school hours. Students are not permitted access to the school building/grounds until 30 minutes before the official start of the school day or when personnel of the Worcester Public Schools are available for supervision.

Rule 18. - Bomb Threats

No student shall communicate or cause to be communicated any information in any form whatsoever that a bomb or any type of explosive device is located in or on any building or property under the control of the Worcester Public Schools or is at any school sponsored situation, including but not limited to transportation provided by the Worcester Public Schools, either directly or by contracted services. Any student charged with a violation of Rule 18 shall have the due process rights outlined in Due Process, Section III.

Rule 19. - Fighting

A student shall not engage in physical altercation with another student on or off school grounds at any school-related activity or event including, but not limited to, travel to and from the activity or event.

Rule 20. - Inciting a Disturbance

A student shall not incite a disturbance on or off school grounds at any school related activity or event. A student shall not organize, encourage, or participate in a disturbance or disruption of school. It can apply to one who urges or instigates others to disturb the school setting or related activity.

Rule 21. - Leaving School without Permission

A student shall not leave the school grounds or school-related activity without permission from the school administration.

Rule 22. - Lab and Shop Safety

A student shall comply with all standards of safety in a lab or shop setting. Students are expected to behave appropriately in these settings without causing any unsafe situation that may cause harm to self or others.

Rule 23. - Bullying and Harassment

"Bullying", the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Rule 24 Cheating, Forgery, Plagiarism

A student shall not cheat, forge or plagiarize any work submitted for academic credit or documentation.

Rule 25. – Theft of School Property

A student shall not steal school property, nor make such attempts. The Administration reserves the right to file criminal complaints against, and seek restitution from, any student who violates this rule.

Rule 26. – Theft of Private Property

A student shall not steal private property nor make such attempts during school

situations on or off school grounds or at any school-related situations including, but not limited to, travel to and from the situation.

LEGAL POLICIES

Due Process

The Code of Conduct of the Worcester Public Schools is administered within the framework of the United States Constitution and federal and state laws and regulations with regard to due process for students. The Code of Conduct is intended to be administered for disciplinary infractions that occur on school grounds or at school-sponsored events (on and off school grounds) OR for disciplinary infractions that occur off school grounds but substantially disrupt the educational environment or create a hostile environment at school. The Code of Conduct applies during remote learning opportunities and events.

The Worcester Public Schools adheres to the Student Discipline Laws and Regulations as set forth in MGL c. 71 §§37H, 37 H½ and 37 H ¾ and 603 CMR 53.00 et seq.

Section I

IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION DUE PROCESS PROCEDURES:

A student may be removed from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises, for up to ten (10) consecutive school days or up to ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions during the school year. Students who are placed in in-school suspension shall have the opportunity to earn credits, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the in-school suspension.

A student who is unable to adhere consistently to acceptable classroom standards in a particular class may be removed from the class permanently and assigned to a different class at the discretion of the principal and/or their designee.

Notice of In-School Suspension:

The principal or their designee shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student with an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal or their designee determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal or their designee shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.

On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal or their designee shall make reasonable efforts to notify the caregiver orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension.

On the day of the suspension, the principal or their designee shall send written notice (by hand-delivery, first class mail or email) to the student and caregiver including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the caregiver to a meeting if the meeting has not already occurred. The notice shall be in English and the primary language of the home if another language is identified in the home language survey, or by other means, as appropriate.

Caregiver Meeting:

The principal or their designee shall also invite the caregiver to a meeting (in person or by telephone) to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the principal or their designee is unable to reach the caregiver after making and documenting at least two (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the caregiver of the in-school suspension.

No Right to Appeal:

The decision of the principal or their designee is the final decision for in-school suspensions not exceeding ten (10) days, consecutively or cumulatively during a school year.

Section II**OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION DUE PROCESS PROCEDURES FOR OFFENSES UNDER MGL c. 71 §37H ¾:****Due Process Procedures for Out-of-School Suspensions:**

There are two types of out-of-school suspensions, short-term suspensions and long-term suspensions. The principal or their designee shall determine the extent of the rights to be afforded the student at a disciplinary hearing based on the anticipated consequences for the disciplinary offense. If the consequence may be long-term suspension from school, the principal or their designee shall afford the student additional rights as described below, in addition to those rights afforded to students who may face a short-term suspension from school. All students facing out-of-school suspension shall have the right to oral and written notice, as described below.

Notice for any Out-of-School Suspension:

Prior to suspending a student, the principal or their designee will provide the student and the caregiver oral and written notice of the possible suspension, an opportunity for the student to have a hearing and the opportunity for the caregivers to participate in the hearing. The notice will be in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English as identified in the home language survey, or by other means of communication where appropriate. The notice for every potential out-of-school suspension will set forth in plain language:

- a) the disciplinary offense;
- b) the basis for the charge;
- c) the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension;
- d) the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal or their designee concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the caregiver to attend the hearing; the date, time, and location of the hearing; and the right of the student and the student's caregiver to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

If the student is placed on long-term suspension following the hearing with the principal, the student shall be provided notice of the rights described above, and

also the following rights:

1. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
2. The right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's/caregiver's expense;
3. The right to produce witnesses on their behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so;
4. The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;
5. The right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal and to receive a copy of the audio recording provided to the student or caregiver upon request. If the student or caregiver requests an audio recording, the principal shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made and a copy will be provided to the student and the caregiver upon request;
6. The right to appeal the principal's decision to the Superintendent or their designee.

The principal or their designee shall make reasonable efforts to notify the caregiver orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. Prior to conducting a hearing without the caregiver present, the principal or their designee will document reasonable efforts to include the caregiver. The principal or their designee is presumed to have made reasonable efforts if the principal or their designee has sent written notice and has documented at least two (2) attempts to contact the caregiver in the manner specified by the caregiver for emergency notification.

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

Emergency Removal of Student:

Under certain emergency circumstances, it may not be practical for the principal or their designee to provide prior oral and written notice before removing a student from school. The principal or their designee may remove a student from school temporarily when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the principal's or their designee's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. The principal or their designee will immediately notify the superintendent in writing of the removal and the reason for it, and describe the danger presented by the student. The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time the principal shall:

- a) Make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's caregiver of the emergency removal, the reason for the need for emergency removal, the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, the potential consequences, including potential length of suspension, the opportunity for a hearing including the date/time/location of the hearing, the right to interpreter services, and other rights permitted for students who may be placed on short or long-term suspension as set forth in 603 CMR 53.08;

- b) Provide written notice to the student and caregiver, including the information described in 603 CMR 53.06(2);
- c) Provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the principal or their designee that complies with 603 CMR 53.08(2) or 53.08(3), as applicable, and the caregiver an opportunity to attend the hearing, before the expiration of the two (2) school days, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and the caregiver.
- d) Render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day, which meets the requirements of 603 CMR 53.08(2)(c) and 53.08(2)(d) or 603 CMR 53.08(3)(c) and 53.08(3)(d), as applicable.

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

SHORT-TERM SUSPENSION PROCEDURES UNDER MGL c. 71 §37H ¾:

A short-term suspension is the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive school days or less. Any student facing a potential short-term suspension is entitled to a hearing with the principal or their designee with the following process:

Principal Hearing - Short-term Suspension:

- a) The purpose of the hearing with the principal or their designee is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, the consequences for the infraction. At a minimum, the principal or their designee shall discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student also shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts that the principal or their designee should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate as alternatives to suspension. The principal or their designee shall provide the caregiver, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.
- b) Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the principal or their designee shall determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, what remedy or consequence will be imposed.
- c) The principal or their designee shall notify the student and caregiver of the determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal, as provided in 603 CMR 53.13(1). The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice.
- d) If the student is in a preschool program or in grades K through 3, the principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

No Right to Appeal:

The decision of the principal or their designee is the final decision for short-term out-of-school suspensions not exceeding ten (10) days, consecutively or cumulatively during a school year.

LONG-TERM SUSPENSION PROCEDURES UNDER MGL c. 71 §37H ½:

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. Except for students who are charged with a disciplinary offense set forth in MGL c. 71, §37 H, or in MGL c. 71 §37H ½, no student may be placed on long-term suspension for one or more disciplinary offenses for more than ninety school days in a school year beginning with the first day that the student is removed from school. No long-term suspension shall extend beyond the end of the school year in which such suspension is imposed. Any student facing a potential long-term suspension is entitled to a hearing with the principal or their designee with the following process:

Principal Hearing - Long-term Suspension:

- a) The purpose of the hearing with the principal or their designee is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, the consequences for the infraction. At a minimum, the principal or their designee shall discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student also shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal or their designee should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate as alternatives to suspension. The principal or their designee shall provide the caregiver, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.
- b) In addition to the rights afforded a student in a short-term suspension hearing, the student shall have the following additional rights:
 1. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
 2. The right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student choice, at the student's/caregiver's expense;
 3. The right to produce witnesses on their behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so;
 4. The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;
 5. The right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal or their designee, and to receive a copy of the audio record upon request. If the student or caregiver requests an audio record, the principal or their designee shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made and a copy will be provided to the student and caregiver upon request.

- c) The principal or their designee shall provide the caregiver, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.
- d) Based on the evidence, the principal or their designee shall determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension, what remedy or consequence will be imposed, in place of or in addition to a long-term suspension. The principal or their designee shall send the written determination to the student and caregiver by hand-delivery, first-class mail or email to an address provided by the caregiver for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the principal or their designee and the caregiver. If the principal or their designee decides to suspend the student, the written determination shall:
 - 1. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
 - 2. Set out the key facts and conclusions reached by the principal or their designee;
 - 3. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
 - 4. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive educational services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school;
 - 5. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's or their designee's decision to the superintendent or designee, but only if the principal or their designee has imposed a long-term suspension. Notice of the right of appeal shall be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English as determined by the home language survey, or other means of communication where appropriate, and shall include the following information stated in plain language:
 - a. The process for appealing the decision, including that the student or caregiver must file a written notice of appeal with the superintendent within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the long-term suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or caregiver may request and receive from the superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar days; and that the long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the principal's determination on appeal.
 - b. If the student is in a preschool program or in grades K through 3, the principal or their designee shall send a copy of the written determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the suspension takes effect.

Superintendent's Appeal Hearing:

- a) A student who is placed on long-term suspension following a hearing with the principal shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent.
- b) The student or caregiver shall file a notice of appeal with the superintendent

within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the long-term suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or caregiver may request and receive from the superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar days. If the appeal is not timely filed, the superintendent may deny the appeal, or may allow the appeal in their discretion, for good cause.

- c) The superintendent shall hold the hearing within three (3) school days of the student's request, unless the student or caregiver requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, in which case the superintendent shall grant the extension.
- d) The superintendent shall make a good faith effort to include the caregiver in the hearing. The superintendent shall be presumed to have made a good faith effort if they have made efforts to find a day and time for the hearing that would allow the caregiver and superintendent to participate. The superintendent shall send written notice to the caregiver of the date, time, and location of the hearing.
- e) The superintendent shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and, if so, what the consequence shall be. The superintendent shall arrange for an audio recording of the hearing, a copy of which shall be provided to the student or caregiver upon request. The superintendent shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made of the hearing and a copy will be provided to the student and caregiver upon request.
- f) The student shall have all the rights afforded the student at the principal's hearing for long-term suspension.
- g) The superintendent shall issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing which meets the requirements of 603 CMR 53.08(3)(c)1 through 5. If the superintendent determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the principal, but shall not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the principal's decision.
- h) The decision of the superintendent shall be the final decision of the school district, with regard to the suspension.

A caregiver conference (re-entry meeting) with the principal or their designee is strongly encouraged before students who are suspended return to school. This conference will be used to promote the engagement of the caregivers in discussions of the student's misconduct and to assist the student in reengaging with the school community.

Section III

LONG-TERM SUSPENSION/EXPULSION FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER MGL c. 71 §37H:

The long-term suspension or expulsion of a student from school will be in accordance with MGL c. 71 §37H. The grounds for long-term suspension or expulsion include but are not limited to the following:

- a) Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun, a knife, or their facsimile, or anything used in the commission of assault and battery; or a controlled substance as defined in Chapter 94 C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and

heroin, may be subject to long-term suspension or expulsion from the school by the principal or their designee.

- b) Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide, or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to long-term suspension or expulsion from the school or school district by the principal or their designee.
- c) Due process for a student who is subject to an expulsion or a long-term suspension as a result of possessing drugs/weapons or assaulting school staff includes:
 - 1. A student shall receive written notice before the expulsion or a long-term suspension takes place and written notice of the right to appeal.
 - 2. The student shall be given an opportunity for a hearing and the opportunity to present witnesses and evidence. The student may have an attorney at their own expense.
 - 3. Following the hearing, the principal or their designee may, in their discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel the student.
 - 4. The student may appeal the expulsion (suspension of more than 90 days) to the superintendent provided the appeal is requested in writing, within ten (10) calendar days following the long-term suspension or expulsion.
 - 5. At the appeal hearing, the student may be represented by an attorney and may present oral and written testimony.
 - 6. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of MGL c. 71 §37H.
 - 7. The superintendent's decision is final.
 - 8. Any student who is suspended or expelled for more than ten (10) consecutive days shall have the opportunity to receive education services and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through the school-wide education service plan.

PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS WITH FELONY COMPLAINT OR CONVICTION UNDER MGL c. 71 §37H ½:

In accordance with MGL c. 71 §37 H ½ principals have the authority to impose a long term suspension or expulsion of a student with a felony charge, with a felony delinquency complaint or conviction, or adjudication or admission of guilt with respect to such felony, if a principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. Due process for a student who is subject to suspension as a result of a felony charge includes:

- a. At the appeal hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf, and shall have the right to counsel.
- b. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing.
- c. Any student who is suspended or expelled pursuant to this section shall have the opportunity to make academic progress during the period of their removal.
- d. Any school district that suspends or expels a student under this section shall con-

tinue to provide educational services to the student during the period of suspension or expulsion,

e. If the student moves to another district during the period of suspension or expulsion, the new district of residence shall either admit the student to its schools or provide educational services to the student under an education service plan.

Section IV
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS UNDER MGL c. 71 §§37H, 37H½ AND 37H¾:

Any student who is serving an in-school suspension, short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or expulsion shall have the opportunity to earn credits, as applicable, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of their removal from the classroom or school.

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

Any student receiving special education services, 504, or in the process of a special education evaluation, the student and their parent will receive a copy of the parent procedural safeguards. Within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct, the LEA, the parent, and relevant members of the child’s IEP Team (as determined by the parent and the LEA) must review all relevant information in the student’s file, including the child’s IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine manifestation of the nexus of the disability . On the date on which the decision is made to make a removal that constitutes a change of placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct, the LEA must notify the parents of that decision, and provide the parents the procedural safeguards notice described in §300.504.

Nondiscrimination Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Title IX
ADA Title I Section 504/Chapter 622 Grievance Procedure

The Worcester Public School District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying, harassment, discrimination and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

Concerns regarding the following may be reported to the appropriate officer/WPS Staff:

Title II & VI- Marie Morse 508-799-3644

Title IX - Triada Frangou-Apostolou 508-799-3020

504- Tom Toney 508-713-7466

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action- Yue Kue 508-799-3502

Sexual Harassment Policy

All persons associated with the Worcester Public Schools including, but not necessarily limited to, the Committee, the administration, staff, and students, are expected to conduct themselves at all times so as to provide an atmosphere free from sexual harassment. Any person who engages in sexual harassment while acting, as a member of the school community, will be in violation of this policy. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating in an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated.

Since the Worcester School Committee takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously, we will respond promptly and equitably to complaints of sexual harassment and where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose such corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action, where appropriate.

When a complaint or report of sexual harassment is made under this school's policy, the Title IX Coordinator (or designee) will: (1) confidentially contact the complainant to offer supportive measures, consider the complainant's wishes with respect to supportive measures, and inform them of the availability of supportive measures with or without filing a formal complaint; (2) explain the process for how to file a formal complaint; (3) inform the complainant that any report made in good faith will not result in discipline; and (4) respect the complainant's wishes with respect to whether to investigate unless the Title IX Coordinator determines it is necessary to pursue the complaint in light of a health or safety concern for the community.

Please note that while this policy sets forth our goals of promoting a workplace and school environment that is free of sexual harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit our authority to discipline or take remedial action for workplace or school conduct which we deem unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of sexual harassment.

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT UNDER TITLE IX:

Sexual harassment under Title IX means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- (1) An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
- (2) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity; or (
- 3) "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30)

Sexual violence, as the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) uses the term, refers to physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent (e.g., due to the student's age or use of drugs or alcohol, or because an intellectual or other disability prevents the student from having the capacity to give consent).

A number of different acts fall into the category of sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual abuse and sexual coercion. Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 119, Section 51 A, requires that public schools report cases of suspected child abuse, immediately orally and file a report within 48 hours detailing the suspected abuse to the Department of Children and Families.

For the category of sexual violence, in addition to Section 51A referrals these offences and any other serious matters shall be referred to local law enforcement. Schools must treat seriously all reports of sexual harassment that meet the definition of sexual harassment and the conditions of actual notice and jurisdiction as noted above. While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct, which if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment, depending on the totality of the circumstances, including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances-whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life; comment on an individual's body, comment about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences; and,
- Discussion of one's sexual activities.

The District takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously, we will respond promptly to complaints of sexual harassment, and following an investigation where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate.

A recipient with actual knowledge of sexual harassment in an education program or activity of the recipient against a person in the United States, must respond promptly in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent. A recipient is deliberately indifferent only if its response to sexual harassment is clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances.

For the purposes of this section, §§106.30, and 106.45, “education program or activity” includes locations, events, or circumstances over which the recipient exercised substantial control over both the respondent and the context in which the sexual harassment occurs, and also includes any building owned or controlled by a student organization that is officially recognized by a postsecondary institution.

Please note that while this policy sets forth our goals of promoting an environment that is free from sexual harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit our authority to discipline or take remedial action for conduct which we deem unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of sexual harassment.

Retaliation against a complainant, because they have filed a sexual harassment complaint or assisted or participated in a sexual harassment investigation or proceeding, is also prohibited. A student or employee who is found to have retaliated against another in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including student suspension and expulsion or employee termination. The complainant does not have to be the person at whom the unwelcome sexual conduct is directed. The complainant, regardless of gender, may be a witness to and personally offended by such conduct.

RESPONSE TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS

The regulations require a school district to respond when the district has actual notice of sexual harassment. School districts have actual notice when an allegation is made known to any school employee. Schools must treat seriously all reports of sexual harassment that meet the definition of sexual harassment and the conditions of actual notice and jurisdiction as noted whether or not the complainant files a formal complaint. Schools are required to investigate every formal complaint and respond meaningfully to every known report of sexual harassment. Sexual Harassment complaints will be responded to in accordance with ACAB-R:

Grievance Procedure for Complaints of Sexual Harassment under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

The regulation highlights the importance of supportive measures designed to preserve or restore access to the school's education program or activity, with or without a formal complaint. Where there has been a finding of responsibility, the regulation would require remedies designed to restore or preserve access to the school's education program or activity. In some instances, the conduct may not meet the definition of sexual harassment under Title IX but may meet the definition of harassment under state law. In these instances, the complaint will be addressed through the District's Civil Rights Policy (AC) and accompanying Civil Rights Grievance Procedures (AC-R).

Grievance Procedures (AC-R).

This policy, or a summary thereof that contain the essential policy elements shall be distributed by the Worcester School District to its students and employees and each parent or guardian shall sign that they have received and understand the policy.

Informal Resolution of Complaint

The District must offer the Complainant a formal resolution process and may offer an informal resolution process. If the District does not provide the option of informal resolution, the formal resolution process shall be followed.

If the District elects to offer an informal resolution process, such process shall be offered and implemented at the election of the Complainant and only after receipt of voluntary, informed, written consent of both the Complainant and the Respondent. The Complainant may elect informal resolution of a complaint at any time prior to a final determination by the decision maker. This may include conciliation and/or mediation by an individual trained to conduct such processes. At any time prior to agreeing to a resolution, either party has the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process and resume the formal complaint grievance process. The District shall not offer an informal resolution process when a student alleges sexual harassment by staff.

Formal Investigation Process

Once a formal Title IX complaint is filed, an investigator will be assigned and the parties will be treated equitably, including in the provision of supportive measures and remedies. They will receive notice of the specifics of the allegations as known, and as any arise during the investigation. The investigator will be unbiased and free from conflicts of interest and will objectively review the complaint, any evidence, and any information from witnesses, expert witnesses, and the parties. The investigation may include, among other things, interviewing the complainant, the respondent, and any witnesses; reviewing relevant student or employment files (preserving confidentiality wherever necessary); and gathering and examining other relevant documents, social media, and evidence. The parties shall be provided with an opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence, and may also be represented by an advisor or attorney at their own expense. The school will review the evidence provided by all parties and will make a final determination of responsibility after the investigation. The decision-maker will not be the Title IX Coordinator, the investigator, or any other individual who may have a conflict of interest. The final determination will be provided to the parties at the same time, with appeal rights provided. It will explain if any policies were violated, the steps and methods

taken to investigate, the findings of the investigation, conclusions about the findings, the ultimate determination and the reasons for it, and any remedies available to the complainant to restore or preserve equal access. If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, the Worcester Public Schools will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct, restore a sense of safety for the Complainant and remedy any impact upon the Complainant and the school community. In appropriate circumstances, law enforcement or the Department of Children and Families may be notified.

Worcester Public Schools adopts a “two-pronged” approach. All conduct not covered under the current definition of sexual harassment, including sexual misconduct, will be addressed by the building principal (or designee) under the student code of conduct. Title IX procedures will be reserved only for those alleged actions that fall under the Title IX definition of sexual harassment.

Retaliation Prohibition

Retaliation in any form against any person because of or related to a sexual harassment or retaliation complaint, or because of or related to cooperation with an investigation of a sexual harassment or retaliation complaint, is unlawful and prohibited. Retaliation is also prohibited against any individual that participates or chooses not to participate in the grievance process. If retaliation occurs, it could be considered grounds for discipline, up to and including suspension and/or discharge for employee (s), and appropriate disciplinary action for students.

Appeal Process

Both parties have the right to appeal the decision maker’s determination to the Superintendent or designee. Any appeal should be submitted in writing to the Superintendent within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the final determination.

The Superintendent or designee in reviewing the appeal may consider the following factors:

- A. Was there any procedural irregularity with the investigation process?
- B. Is there any new evidence not reasonably available at the time of the investigation ?
- C. Did the Title IX investigator have a conflict of interest?

The decision of the appeal process is final and is not subject to further the review by the School Committee.

All Title IX personnel including Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision makers, people who facilitate any informal resolution process shall receive training as required by Title IX and its supporting regulations. All training materials shall be made available to the public for inspection upon request.

State and Federal Remedies

Nothing in this policy or procedure shall be deemed to affect a complainant's right to pursue other remedies at law, including administrative appeals or lawsuits. Administrative agencies with jurisdiction in these matters include:

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination ("MCAD")
One Ashburton Place, Room 601
Boston, MA 02108 (617) 727-3990

The U.S. Department of Education,
Office for Civil Rights 5 Post Office Square 8th Floor
Boston, MA 02109-3921 (617) 289-0111

Massachusetts Department of Education 75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148 (781) 388-3300

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC")

One Congress Street - 10th Floor
Boston, MA 02114 (617) 565-3200

LEGAL REFS.: Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended 45 Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq. (Title IX) Board of Education 603 CMR 26:00 SOURCE: WPS Questions and Answers on the Title IX Regulations on Sexual Harassment. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/202107-qa-titleix.pdf>

ANTI-HAZING LAW (G.L. c. 269)

Section 17. Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$3,000.00 or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term "hazing" as used in this section and in Sections 18 and 19, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

Section 18. Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in Section 17 and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to their self or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000.00.

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

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

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post-secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full-time student in such institution a copy of this section and Sections 17 and 18.

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

Child Abuse

MGL c. 119, §§51A and 51B govern the reporting of child abuse and neglect and require all professional school employees to report suspected cases of abuse of students to the Department of Children and Families.

Worcester Public Schools' policy requires personnel to inform the caregivers when there is an indication of a student's self-destructive behavior. The purpose of this is to alert the caregivers about the student's possible need for additional support and/or treatment.

Related to this requirement, a 51A report will be filed by school authorities when a caregiver ignores the school staff's efforts to involve the caregiver in a perceived need of the child requiring special education, counseling, or emergency medical attention.

Drug Free School Zones

Any person who distributes or possesses with intent to distribute any controlled substance as defined by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 94C within one thousand feet of Worcester Public Schools' property, whether or not school is in session, shall be subject to punishment by imprisonment of not less than two nor more than fifteen years. In addition, a fine of not less than one thousand nor more than ten thousand dollars may be imposed but not in lieu of the mandatory minimum term of imprisonment as established by law.

Gun Free School Zones MGL c.269 §10(j)

MGL c. 269 §10(j) prohibits anyone who is not law enforcement from carrying a gun or dangerous weapon on the grounds of any school (elementary, secondary, college or university). This prohibition is applicable regardless of whether or not an individual possesses a valid license to carry.

Education of Students Experiencing Homelessness

The Worcester Public Schools complies with all requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B – Education for Homeless Children and Youth) reauthorized in January, 2002 and the amendments to this act under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. The Worcester Public Schools will:

1. Establish safeguards that protect homeless students from harassment and/or discrimination on the basis of their homelessness
2. Ensure that all children and youth will receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools
3. Inform caregivers/students of their right to appeal the district's enrollment or transportation decisions to the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or their designee, consistent with the Homeless Education Advisory 2003-7; McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Dispute Resolution process
4. Follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act

When a family is enrolling a student or students in school or changing an address, but is unable to provide the usual form of address verification, or is sharing housing with others or is temporarily sheltered in some other alternative arrangement, the family member will be asked to verify the current living situation on the Student Address Verification Form so as to determine whether the student(s) is/are eligible under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for required supplementary supportive services and legally mandated exemptions from certain enrollment requirements. In keeping with these requirements:

1. Homeless students have a right to either remain in their school of origin or to attend school where they are temporarily residing, assuming transportation arrangements are feasible and are in the best interest of the student;
2. Students who choose to remain in their school of origin have the right to remain there until the end of the school year in which they get permanent housing;
3. Students who choose to enroll in school where they are temporarily residing must be enrolled immediately, even if they do not bring the records usually required for enrollment with them;
4. If a homeless student arrives without records, the student will be enrolled immediately and the district's designated Homeless Education Liaison must assist the family and contact the previously attended school system to obtain the required records;
5. To the extent feasible, transportation will be provided for students in order to maintain continuity of their attendance in a single school over the course of the school year;
6. When a student is residing outside of the city due to circumstances related to homelessness (in accordance with the statutory definition of "homeless") efforts will be coordinated with the district where the student is temporarily residing to provide transportation to the school of origin if this is the preference of the caregivers and student;
7. Persons living in battered person's shelters or a safe house can give school

officials the Post Office Box or mailing address of the shelter office, along with verification from the shelter director that the children are residing in that facility in lieu of the street address. Transportation arrangements will be made in a manner that seeks not to disclose such shelter addresses.

8. Questions or concerns regarding issues pertaining to homeless students should be referred to the Office of Social and Emotional Learning at (508) 799-3175.

POLICY ON CAREGIVERS NOTIFICATION RELATIVE TO SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 32A, the School Committee has adopted the following policy:

At the beginning of each course, all caregivers of students in the Worcester Public Schools will be notified in writing of the courses and curriculum offered that primarily involve human sexual education or human sexuality issues. The principal of each school will be responsible for sending notice(s) to the child's caregivers. The caregivers notice will include the date and time for a caregiver meeting to be held at the school.

At Know Your School Night, a teacher or school representative will be available to answer any questions about the curriculum and delivery

At the time of enrollment, principals will give this written notice to caregivers of those students who enroll in school after the start of the school year.

If the school's curriculum changes during the school year, to the extent practicable, caregivers will be notified of this fact in a timely manner before changes are implemented. For more information regarding the 3Rs health education curriculum, visit <https://worcesterschools.org/sexual-health-education-curriculum-information-sessions/>

Each written notice sent to caregivers will include a brief description of the curriculum covered by this policy and will inform caregivers that they may:

1. Exempt their child from any portion of the sexual health 3R's curriculum that primarily involves human sexuality issues, without penalty to the student's grades or academic standing. Caregivers who request to exempt their child can send to their child's principal a letter or the reply form attached to the caregiver notice. The caregiver should specify specific 3 R's sexual health curriculum topics, class or school activity from which the child is to be exempted. Any student who is exempted by request of the caregiver under this policy will be given an alternative assignment or a directed study period for the duration of the exemption.
2. Inspect and review program instructional materials for these curricula, which will be made reasonably accessible to caregivers and others to the extent practicable. Caregivers may arrange with the principal to review the materials at the school, and you may review through the Office of Teaching and Learning, 20 Irving Street, 508-799-3115.

A caregiver, dissatisfied with the process for notice, the access to instructional materials, or the exemption for a student under this policy will follow the Procedures for Resolving School-Related Problems as described in this Policy Handbook.

After following the school district's problem-resolution process, a caregiver who is still dissatisfied can write to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education at 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148 to request a review of the issue(s) in dispute.

**ANNUAL NOTICE TO CAREGIVERS ON THE
PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)**

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) gives parents and students (18 years or older or emancipated) certain rights when a school conducts student surveys, collects and uses information for marketing purposes, and administers certain physical exams to students. Parents have the right to:

1. **Consent** before students can be given a survey concerning one or more of the following protected areas(“protected information survey”):
2. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent;
3. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family
4. Sex behavior or attitudes;
5. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
6. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
7. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
8. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents;
- or
9. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility

10.Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of:

- Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others;
- Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding; and
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law.

11. Inspect the following, upon request and before administration or use:

- Protected information surveys of students;
- Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and
- Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

These rights transfer from the parents to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law.

Please note that parents are not required by PPRA to be notified about the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the exclusive purpose of developing, evaluating, or providing educational products or services for, or to, students.

The Worcester Public Schools protects student privacy in the administration of protected information surveys and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes. The District's Office of Research and Accountability reviews all internal and external requests to conduct surveys to ensure compliance with ethical and legal requirements.

Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Student Privacy Policy Office
US Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-58520

For more information visit their website at: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/protection-pupil-rights-amendment-ppra-general-guidance>

SELECTIVE SERVICE

Peacetime Registration Requirement of Selective Service System

Section 3 of the Military Selective Service Act states that male U.S. citizens and aliens residing in the United States, who are between the ages of 18 and 26, are required to register in a manner prescribed by proclamation of the President. The proclamation under which registration is presently required was signed on July 2, 1980. It provides that males born on or after January 1, 1960, must register with Selective Service within 30 days of their 18th birthday.

The Every Student Succeeds Act reiterates that the various branches of the United States armed forces may have access to directory information of 11th and 12th grade high school students. However, the Family Rights to Privacy Act states that caregivers may deny this access if they so wish. Directory information includes student's name, address, phone number, and age. If the caregiver wishes for the Worcester Public Schools not to divulge their child's information, the caregiver must make that request in writing to the school principal.

STUDENT RECORDS

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal privacy law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive federal funds. This serves as the Worcester Public Schools' required annual public notice of the types of information it may release and under what conditions.

FERPA gives caregivers certain rights with respect to their child's education records. These rights transfer to the student when they reaches the age of 18. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

Under FERPA, caregivers and eligible students have the following rights:

1. To inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless it is impossible for caregivers or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee if copies are requested.
2. To request that a school add information, comments, data or any other relevant written material to the student record. If the school decides not to amend the record, the caregiver or eligible student then has the right to a conference with the principal. After the conference, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the caregiver or eligible student has the right to appeal to the Superintendent and has a further right to appeal to the School Committee.
3. To have control over the disclosure of personal identifiable information from the education record. Generally, schools must have written permission from the caregiver or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - a. School officials with legitimate educational interest
 - b. Other schools to which a student is transferring
 - c. Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
 - d. Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
 - e. Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school
 - f. Accrediting organizations
 - g. To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
 - h. Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies
 - i. State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law
 - j. State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization, for the care and protection of the student, pursuant to State or tribal law.

Directory Information

FERPA allows schools to disclose, without consent, "directory" information, which is considered by the Worcester Public Schools, under state regulation 603 CMR 23.07, to include student's name; address; date of birth; school; class and grade level; dates of attendance; honors and awards received (honor roll and graduation lists); participation in officially recognized activities and sports; and post-high school plans; and telephone listings (grade 11 and 12 students only).

Caregivers and eligible students may request that the Worcester Public Schools not

disclose certain directory information by completing the Notification Concerning Privacy of Student Directory Information “Do Not Release” Form and returning it to your child’s school. The form is located at the end of the student handbook and is also available through the Office of Research and Accountability.

Student Data and Online Instructional Applications

Worcester Public Schools may share student data with vendors that provide online instructional applications that are used with students, which is an institutional function or service, but only when the vendor signs a student data privacy agreement with the school district or if an express written consent form has been signed by the student’s parent/guardian/caregiver. A list of approved online instructional resources can be found at: https://sdpc.a4l.org/district_search_national.php?districtID=786

Additional Information

Additional information on FERPA may also be obtained from the U.S. Department of Education at the following address:

Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-8520

For more information visit their website at: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/parent-guide-family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa>

Maintenance of Student Records

In compliance with Chapter 71, Section 34D of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Worcester School Department is notifying the caregivers of public school students of its plans to gather information regarding students and their backgrounds, aptitudes and achievement in order to better meet their individual needs.

On the secondary level, students may be asked to complete a questionnaire which relates to identifying information, family background, interests and plans for the future.

Any questions which students and/or caregivers feel should not be answered may be omitted. This information is necessary in order to keep school records up to date.

Types of Student Records

The school principal or their designee is responsible for the privacy and security of all student records maintained in the school. The Superintendent of Schools or their designee is responsible for all student records that are not under the supervision of the school principal.

Teachers' notes and similar information that is not accessible to authorized school personnel or third parties are not included in the student record. Such information may be shared with the student, caregiver, or a temporary substitute without making the file part of the student record. However, if such information is released to authorized school personnel, it then becomes a part of the student's record. Any information added to the temporary record shall include the name, signature and

position of the person entering the information, date of entry, and shall be limited to that which is relevant to the educational needs of the student.

According to the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (Title 603 CMR 23.00), the student record consists of the transcript and the temporary record that is kept by the public school. It includes all information, regardless of physical form or characteristics or where they are located, concerning a student that is organized on the basis of the student's name or in a way that such student may be individually identified.

1. **Transcript** - Minimum administrative records necessary to reflect the student's educational progress and to operate the educational system. Data is limited to:

- a. Name (student and caregiver)
- b. Address (student and caregiver)
- c. Telephone number (student and caregiver)
- d. Date of birth
- e. Course titles
- f. Grades or equivalent
- g. Course credit
- h. Grade level completed
- i. Year completed

2. **Temporary Record** - All information in the student record not contained in the transcript which is clearly of importance to the educational process. This information may include:

- a. Standardized test results (including MCAS results)*
- b. Class rank
- c. Extracurricular activities
- d. Evaluations
- e. Educational plans
- f. IEP, 504, Regular Education Accommodation, Behavior Support Plans and Safety Support Plans
- g. Student Support Process Reports
- h. Individual Student Success Plans
- i. Health records
- j. Attendance
- k. School discipline records including Incident reports involving student suspension or the committing of criminal acts

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 87, the score of any group intelligence test shall be removed from the record of the student at the end of the school year in which the test was administered.

****Section 37L of the Education Reform Act of 1993 requires that any incident report involving student suspension for the committing of criminal acts must be included in the student's record. This includes reports in which the "student" was charged with an infraction that resulted in suspension. If a student transfers to a new school system, this information must be included as part of the student record, as the new system must be provided with this information.**

Destruction of Student Records

The **transcript** may be destroyed sixty (60) years following the student's graduation, transfer, or withdrawal from the school system.

During the time a student is enrolled in a school, the principal or their designee shall periodically review and destroy misleading, outdated or irrelevant information contained in the **temporary record**. The Worcester Public Schools hereby gives notice on an annual basis that temporary records are so reviewed and destroyed at the end of each school year as deemed appropriate. Caregivers wanting an opportunity to receive the information or a copy prior to its destruction should contact the principal by June 1st of the school year.

The **temporary record** of each student enrolled on or after June 2002 shall be destroyed no later than seven (7) years after the student transfers, graduates, or withdraws from the school district. Written notice to the eligible student and their caregiver of the approximate date of destruction of the temporary record and their right to receive the information in whole or in part, shall be made at the time of such transfer, graduation or withdrawal.

Access to Student Records

The following personnel have access to students' records in the performance of their official duties:

1. School administrators, teachers, counselors and other professionals who are employed by the Worcester Public Schools or who are providing services to the student under an agreement between the Worcester Public Schools and a service provider who work directly with the students.
2. Administrative office staff and clerical personnel, including operators of data processing equipment or equipment that produces microfilm/ microfiche who process information for the student's records. Such personnel shall have access only to the student record information that is required for them to perform their duties.
3. The Evaluation Team which evaluates children pursuant to Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws.
4. School health personnel and local and state health department personnel in the performance of official duties.
5. Authorized school administrative personnel may examine records for administrative reasons even if they are not providing direct service to the student.

Other officials as outlined exceptions to disclosure under the Family Educational

Rights and Privacy Act have access:

- a. Federal, state and local education officials, and their authorized agents, as necessary, in connection with the enforcement of federal and state education laws. Personally identifiable data shall be protected and destroyed when no longer needed for enforcement purposes.

- b. To authorized school personnel of the school to which a student transfers or seeks to enroll [603 CMR 23.07 (4)(f)].
- c. Upon the receipt of a court order or lawfully issued subpoena, provided that the eligible student or caregiver is notified in reasonable time that they may seek to have the process quashed, as required by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 66A, § 2(k).
- d. The Department of Children and Families (DCF).
- e. A probation officer.
- f. A justice of any court.
- g. The Department of Youth Services (DYS).
- h. The Bureau of Special Investigation on Welfare Fraud may inspect enrollment and attendance records of any student who is being investigated for welfare fraud or of any student who is the child, ward or dependent of someone who is being investigated for welfare fraud. The law prohibits the Bureau from obtaining access to academic, medical and evaluative records.
- i. Appropriate parties, including the local police department and the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in connection with a health or safety emergency, including weapon reports, if knowledge of the information may be necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.

The student, if age fourteen (14) or upon entering grade nine (9), has access to their record.

The following persons serving in a caregivers role shall have access to a student's records:

- a. The custodial caregiver with physical custody.
- b. The student's caregiver.
- c. A person or agency legally authorized to act on behalf of or in conjunction with the student's caregiver, assuming this caregiver has physical custody.

Non-custodial caregivers **shall not** have access to a student's records when:

- a. The caregiver has been denied legal custody based on a threat to the safety of the child or to the custodial caregiver.
- b. The caregiver has been denied visitation or has been ordered to supervised visitation.
- c. The caregiver's access to the child or to the custodial caregiver has been restricted by a temporary or permanent protective order, unless the protective order (or any subsequent order modifying the protective order) specifically allows access to the student information described in

the statute.

All such documents limiting or restricting parental access to a student's records or information which have been provided to the school or school district are placed in the student's record.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71 § 34H requires the non-custodial caregiver to submit a written request for access to the student's records to the school principal. The school reviews the student record for any documents limiting or restricting parental access to a student's records or information which have been provided to the school or school district and shall immediately notify the custodial parent of the receipt of the request. Notification is made by certified mail and by first class mail in both the primary language of the custodial parent and in English. The notification also informs the custodial parent that information requested shall be provided to the requesting parent after 21 days unless the custodial parent provides documentation to the school principal about any court order which prohibits contact with the child, or a court order that prohibits the distribution of the information referred to in this section, or a court order which is a temporary or permanent order issued to provide protection to the child in the custodial parent's custody from abuse by the requesting non-custodial parent unless the protective order or any subsequent order which modifies the protective order, specifically allows access to the information described in this section. For further information contact your child's principal.

Special note: Schools are required by state law to "flag" or mark the student record of a child who has been reported missing, and should notify the police whenever there is an inquiry regarding the records.

Access of other third parties requires the written consent of the eligible student or caregiver except for the provisions specified under 23.07(4) of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (Title 603 Section 23.08). When granting consent, the eligible student or caregiver shall have the right to designate which parts of the student's record shall be released to the third party. A copy of such consent shall be retained by the eligible student or caregiver and a duplicate placed in the temporary record. Except for information described in 603 CMR 23.07(4)(a), personally identifiable information from a student record shall be released to a third party on the condition that (s)he will not permit any other third party to have access to such information without the written consent of the eligible student or caregiver.

Amending Student Records

The student and/or their/caregiver shall have the right to add information, comments, data or any other relevant written material to the student record as specified in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (Title 603 Section 23.08).

District and school records are to reflect a student's stated name and pronouns. Massachusetts' law recognizes common law name changes. An individual may adopt a name that is different from the name that appears on his or her birth certificate provided the change of name is done for an honest reason, with no fraudulent

lent intent. Nothing more formal than usage is required, consistent with the statutory standard.

The above persons have the right to request, in writing, deletion or amendment of any information contained in the student record with the exception of information which was inserted into the record by an Evaluation Team. Requests to delete or amend the student record must follow this procedure:

- a. If the student or parent believes that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify or correct objectionable material in the student record, they may either present the objection in writing and/or they have the right to have a conference with the principal or his/her designee to make the objections known regarding material contained in the record.
- b. The principal or his/her designee shall make a decision within one week after the conference or receipt of the objection in writing stating the reason or reasons for the decision. If the decision is in favor of the student or parent, the principal or his/her designee shall promptly take steps to put the decision into effect.

In the event any decision of a principal is not satisfactory to the student and/or their caregiver, they may then appeal to the Superintendent in writing for a review of the objections. A further appeal is possible to the School Committee if the Superintendent's response is not satisfactory. A hearing shall be conducted by the School Committee within four weeks of written notice of an appeal. The student and/or caregiver may be represented by an advocate of their choosing to cross-examine witnesses and to present evidence. Written notice of the decision will be furnished to the student and/or caregiver.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

The Worcester Public Schools makes every effort to comply with the regulations and requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a federal law enacted in 2015. This legislation requires school district personnel to notify caregivers of a variety of issues regarding their children's education. Among them is a requirement to notify caregivers of students attending Title I schools of their right to know about the qualifications of the teachers and instructional assistants who work with their children.

In a Title I school, caregivers have the right to know the professional qualifications of classroom teachers who instruct their children. ESSA allows caregivers to ask for certain information about a student's classroom teacher and requires that the district provide the caregivers with the requested information in a timely manner. Specifically, caregivers have the right to ask for the following information about each of their children's classroom teachers in a Title I school:

1. Whether the teacher has met the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
2. Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which DESE qualification or licensing criteria have been waived.
3. Whether the teacher is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher.
4. Whether any instructional assistants or other paraprofessionals provide services to your child, and, if they do, their qualifications.

If caregivers would like to receive any of this information, they must contact the principal of their child(ren)'s Title I school.

In addition, districts are required to provide to each individual caregiver information on the child's level of achievement and academic growth of the student, if applicable and available, on each of the state academic assessments required under Title I. Districts are also required to provide timely notice that the caregiver's child has been assigned, or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable State certification or licensure requirements at the grade level and subject area in which the teacher has been assigned.

At the beginning of each school year, Title I schools must notify caregivers of each child that the caregivers may request (and the school will provide) in a timely manner information regarding any state or school policy regarding student participation in any assessments mandated by ESSA and by the state or school district which must include a policy, procedure, or parental right to opt the child out of such assessment, where applicable. Information on each mandated assessment is available on the Worcester Public Schools' website.

No later than thirty days after the beginning of the school year, each Title I school must inform caregivers of an English learner identified for participation or participating in a language instruction educational program of the reasons for placement; the child's level of English proficiency and academic achievement; and how the program will address the child's specific needs; and to provide caregivers with written guidance detailing the caregiver's rights and options with regard to such a program.

For a child who is identified as an English learner after the school year begins, the child's caregivers must be notified within two weeks of being placed in a language instruction educational program.

Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plan and other School Policies and State and Federal Law

The Worcester Public Schools (WPS) Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) is designed to help the district comply with Massachusetts state law and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment. It emphasizes proactive measures to prevent bullying and procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing bullying incidents and shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law. The BPIP is aligned with the Massachusetts law on bullying prevention and provides guidelines for educators, administrators, and students to foster a culture of respect, empathy, and kindness.

An overview of the plan is included below. The entire policy is available on the WPS website. Please review the full plan using the following link: worcesterschools.org/page/bullying-prevention-and-intervention-plan

Definition of Bullying:

The BPIP will provide a clear and concise definition of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation to align with Massachusetts law.

1. Bullying is the repeated use of physical, verbal, or relational aggression or power imbalances to harm or intimidate others. It includes acts committed by one

or more individuals against a victim and creating a hostile environment. Bullying can occur in person or through electronic means (cyberbullying) and encompasses all actions that occur on school grounds, during school-sponsored events, on school buses, or through electronic communication related to school matters.

2. Cyberbullying is the repeated use of physical, verbal, or relational aggression or power imbalances to harm or intimidate others. It includes acts committed by one or more individuals against a victim and creating a hostile environment through the use of technology that includes but is not limited to phones, social media platforms, and computers.
3. Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation about bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
4. Retaliation Protection:
 - i. Massachusetts law prohibits retaliation against individuals who report bullying, provide information during an investigation, or participate in related proceedings.
 - ii. Retaliation will result in immediate disciplinary action by WPS.

Prevention Strategies:

The WPS BPIP will emphasize proactive measures to prevent bullying by:

- Creating a positive and inclusive school climate that values diversity and respect. (Each building has developed a Culture and Climate team, Student Council, and Universal/Tiered Positive Behavior Strategies such as PBIS.)
- Implementing evidence-based anti-bullying programs and curricula(Undercover Anti Bullying Team Approach)
- Promoting social-emotional learning to develop empathy, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution skills. (CASEL aligned Tier 1 SEL lessons- Second Step, Zones of Regulation, Harmony)
- Conducting regular training for administrators and faculty, students, and caregivers to raise awareness about bullying prevention and intervention strategies.
- Establishing clear expectations for behavior and consequences through a code of conduct.

Reporting Bullying

1. Anyone can call the **“Anonymous Bullying Reporting Line” at 508-799-3116** to report any acts of bullying.
2. Anyone can visit the WPS website: <https://www.worcesterschools.org/documents/student-support/safety/forms/560455> and download and print a form to submit to the school or the Culture and Climate Office. **(The Office of Culture and Climate, 20 Irving Street, Worcester Ma. 01610)**
 - a. Report forms can be found on the WPS website:
 - i. Report forms can be printed and then mailed using this link: <https://www.worcesterschools.org/documents/student-support/safety/forms/560455>
 - ii. A Bullying Incident Form can be filled out and submitted online: https://docs.google.com/forms/de/1FAIpQLSfRTB298O6VeC-nXK3Kg7fH7WswAIXiM_v5MQBs69HG3BbDQA/viewform?

3. Anyone can email **[“ReportBullying@worcesterschools.net”](mailto:ReportBullying@worcesterschools.net)** to report any acts of bullying.
4. For students and families:
 - a. Students and families are encouraged to report all instances of bullying and retaliation to the principal or staff at their school. No disciplinary action will take place solely based on a report.
5. For staff:
 - a. A staff member shall report immediately to the Principal or an administrator designee when they witness or become aware of conduct that could be considered bullying or retaliation.

Athletes and Participants in School-Related Activities

General

Athletes and participants in school-related activities shall be governed by local and state law, MIAA regulations, the Policies Handbook of the Worcester Public Schools, and rules included in the Worcester Public Schools Code of Conduct for Athletes and Participants in School-Related Activities.

The Worcester Public Schools does not limit access to participate in intramural sports, or clubs sponsored in each school on the basis of race, sex, gender, identity, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness. The Worcester Public Schools can limit participation based on our academic requirements and attendance.

Academic Requirements

1. A student must secure during the last marking period preceding the contest (e.g., second quarter marks determine third quarter eligibility) a grade of 65 or above in four traditional yearlong major courses. Yearlong major courses are equivalent to a Carnegie Unit which is a minimum of 1.0 credits.
2. A student cannot at any time represent a school unless that student is taking courses that would be the equivalent of four traditional yearlong major courses.
3. To be eligible for the fall marking period, students are required to have passed four yearlong classes with a 65 or above during the prior academic year. Incoming 9th graders are exempt from academic requirement for the first quarter only.
4. Academic eligibility of all students shall be considered as official and determining only on the published date when the report cards for that ranking period are to be issued to the caregivers of all students.
5. Incomplete grades may not count towards eligibility.
6. A student who repeats work upon which they once received credit cannot count that subject a second time for eligibility.
7. A student cannot count for eligibility any subject taken during the summer, unless that subject has been previously pursued and failed.

Attendance

1. A student who is absent from school will not participate in any school-related activity. This includes in-house suspensions.
2. A student must be in school for at least three (3) hours to be able to participate in any school-related activity.
3. A student with fourteen (14) or more unexcused absences will be ineligible

for any club or team for the remainder of the academic year.

Head Injuries and Concussions in Extracurricular Activities

Consistent with the requirements of Chapter 166 of the Acts of 2010, An Act Relative to Safety Regulations for School Athletic Programs:

1. At or before the start of each sport or band season, all students who plan to participate in extracurricular athletic activities shall complete and submit to the coach, athletic director, or band director a current WPS Permission Form, signed by both the student and the caregiver, that provides comprehensive history with up-to-date information relative to concussion history; any head, face or cervical spine injury history; and any history of co-existent concussive injuries.
2. Any student, who during a practice or competition, sustains a head injury or suspected concussion, or exhibits signs and symptoms of a concussion, shall be removed from the practice or competition immediately and may not return to the practice or competition that day.
3. The student shall not return to play unless and until the student provides medical clearance and authorization as specified in 105 CMR 201.011.

All head injuries must be reported to the nursing administrative office, including those that occur outside of the school prior to the start of the sports season or physical activity. caregivers must also complete the history of head injury section on the **Extracurricular Athletic Activities Permission Form**.

Additional information, including the *Post Sports-related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization Form*, can be found on the Worcester Public Schools website: <https://www.worcesterschools.org/>

Gender and Participation MIAA Rule 43

1. No student shall be denied in any implied or explicit manner the opportunity to participate in any interscholastic activity because of gender. A school may establish separate teams for males and females for interscholastic competition in a sport provided that both teams receive equal instruction, training, coaching, access to available facilities, equipment, opportunities to practice and compete. 43.2 If a school offers a single team in a particular sport, it may not restrict eligibility based on gender unless such a restriction is necessary to ensure that the school's gendered designation of athletic opportunities complies with Title IX (either by demonstrating proportionality or the absence of unmet interest among members of the underrepresented sex). 43.3 If a school offers a girls' team and a boys' team in a particular sport (including offering the same sport in two different seasons), it may restrict eligibility based on gender. MIAA Handbook July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025 31 43.3.1 A student shall not be excluded from participation on a gender-specific sports team that is consistent with the student's bona fide gender identity. 43.3.2 When a school district submits a roster to the MIAA, it is verifying that it has determined that the students listed on a gender-specific sports team are eligible to participate either based on the gender listed on their official birth certificate or based on their bona fide gender identity and that no students are included on the roster solely for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage in competitive athletics. The MIAA shall defer to the determination of the student and the student's school regarding gender classification. 43.3.3 Nothing in this policy shall be read to entitle a student to

selection of any particular team or to permit a student to transfer from one gender-specific team to another team of a different gender during a single sports season. 43.3.4 It is a recommended best practice that schools communicate with their opponents as necessary about the gender-specific needs of their team in order to promote inclusion – e.g., to ensure that appropriate locker room facilities are available, that announcers use athlete’s correct pronouns, etc.

Chemical Health MIAA Rule 62

From the earliest fall practice date, to the conclusion of the academic year or final athletic event (whichever is later), a student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use, consume, possess, buy/sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product (including e-cigarettes, Vape pens and all similar devices); marijuana (including synthetic); steroids; or any controlled substance. This policy includes products such as “NA or near beer”, inhalants (defined as any substance that produces a mind-altering effect when inhaled), and misuse of over-the-counter medications and substances used for the purposes of altering one’s mental state. It is not a violation for a student to be in possession of a legally defined drug specifically prescribed for the student’s own use by their doctor.

If a student who violates this rule is unable to participate in interscholastic sports due to injury or academics, any penalty imposed will not take effect until that student is able to participate again. See MIAA Handbook for penalties.

Reasonable Conduct

The Worcester Public Schools recognizes that the safety and welfare of individual students and teams are a priority. Therefore, students will not engage in any acts of criminal activity such as, but not limited to, vandalism, assault and battery, sexual misconduct, hazing, plagiarism, theft or other disruptive conduct.

Students are also expected to behave appropriately during all school-related activities. Detrimental actions include, but are not limited to, insubordination, fighting, taunting, unsportsmanlike conduct, lying, and inappropriate language or gestures and all other infractions as stated in the Worcester Public Schools’ Policies Handbook and school handbooks.

Recognizing the varying degrees of severity, the type of misconduct and a student’s previous record of conduct, each situation will be considered individually. The principal working with the coach/advisor will determine appropriate consequences, which may include denial of participation or dismissal from the team/activity. In all cases the student will have the right to due process (**Due Process, page 24**).

It is also understood that spectators, including caregivers of all Worcester Public Schools’ athletes/students, are to conduct themselves appropriately at all athletic competitions/activities, both home and away. Caregivers are not expected to taunt or display any inappropriate behavior to other fans, officials, coaches or players. Inappropriate behavior may lead to expulsion from the event.

Felony Charge/Conviction

1. Any student charged with a felony will be ineligible to participate in any school-related activities until the case has been adjudicated and the charges dismissed or reduced to a non-felony status

2. Any student convicted of a felony and/or expelled or issued a long-term suspension from school will be ineligible to participate in any school-related activities for the duration of the expulsion or long-term suspension.

Team Management Plan

At the preseason meeting with the Director of Athletics, each coach will turn in a management plan outlining rules and expectations for the coming season that has been approved by the principal. This plan will be distributed to all candidates for the team.

Students with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Service/ Students with Suspected Disabilities who are not yet determined eligible for Special Education Service/ or 504 Plan

Under various federal and state laws and regulations, students with disabilities may not be discriminated against in discipline matters on the basis of their disability or impairment. In addition to those rights set forth in the Worcester Public Schools Student Handbook, procedures will be implemented to comply with state and federal law and regulations regarding students with disabilities. Additional information can be found at: www.worcesterschools.org or you may obtain a copy from your child's school or by contacting the WPS 504 coordinator at their school.

Students with Disabilities and/or Suspected Disabilities Receiving Special Education Services or 504 Plan

For special education students, the principal or their designee will notify the Evaluation Team Chair of the suspendable offense of a student with a disability and a record will be kept in the Student Information System. For 504 students, the principal or their designee will notify the 504 Coordinator of the suspendable offense of the student and a record will be kept in the Student Information System.

Procedures for Suspension(s) Not Exceeding 10 School Days

- Any student with a disability may be suspended for up to ten (10) school days during a school year unless there is a pattern of suspensions that constitute a change in placement. Disciplinary decisions are the same as for students without disabilities and in accordance with the due process procedures in this handbook.
- The school provides additional safeguards for students with disabilities prior to any suspension beyond 10 consecutive days or more than 10 cumulative days (if there is a pattern of suspension) in any school year. Parents are provided with The Parents Notice of Procedural Safeguards as described in §300.504.

Procedures for Suspension(s) Exceeding 10 School Days

If your child is suspended for more than 10 school days in a school year, or if there is a pattern of suspension, this removal is considered a "change of placement". On the date which the decision is made to make a removal that constitutes a change of placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student

conduct, the Local Education Agency (LEA) must notify the parents of that decision, and provide The Parents Notice of Procedural Safeguards as described in §300.504.

A change of placement because of a disciplinary removal occurs if your child with a disability is removed from their current educational placement for more than 10 consecutive school days, or the child is subjected to a series of removals that constitutes a pattern because: (1) the removals total more than 10 school days in a school year; (2) your child's behavior is substantially similar to previous incidents that resulted in the series of removals; and (3) additional factors such as the length of each removal, the total amount of time the child has been removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another constitute a pattern.

A change of placement invokes certain procedural protections under federal special education law and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability, or for students who are in process and have a suspected disability but have not yet been determined eligible, because of a violation of a code of student conduct, the LEA, the parent, and relevant members of the child's IEP Team (as determined by the parent and the LEA) must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine if the disciplinary action was related to the disability.

Before any removal constitutes a change of placement, the school must inform you that the law requires the school district to consider whether or not the behavior that forms the basis of the disciplinary action has a direct nexus to your child's disability. This consideration is called a "manifestation determination", parents/caregivers have a right to participate in this team process. All relevant information will be considered including the IEP or Section 504 Plan, teacher observations, evaluation reports, and any information provided by parents/caregivers.

At a manifestation determination meeting, the team will consider: Did the student's disability cause or have a direct and substantial relationship to the conduct in question? Was the conduct a direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP and provide Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)?

- If the team's manifestation determination decision is that the disciplinary action was related to your child's disability, then your child may not be removed from the current educational placement (unless the behavior falls under the special circumstances described below or the parents/caregivers agree that a change in placement is appropriate). The team will review the IEP or Section 504 Plan and any behavioral intervention plans and may amend those plans as appropriate. The team must complete and update a functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention plan.
- If the manifestation determination decision is that the disciplinary action was not related to your child's disability, then the school may suspend or otherwise discipline your child according to the school's code of conduct. The team may, as appropriate, complete a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention services and modification, to address the behavior so that it does not recur.

For students with IEPs, during the period of removal from school that exceeds 10 school days, the IEP team will identify the services necessary to provide Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) which include services that allow your child to continue to make educational progress during the period of exclusion. For students with Section 504 Plans, there is no automatic right to receive educational services beyond the 10th school day of suspension under federal law, however, state law does provide all students with the right to receive educational services during periods of suspension lasting longer than ten days.

Special Circumstances for Exclusion

Special circumstances exist if your child: possesses, uses, sells, or solicits illegal drugs on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event; carries a weapon to school or a school-sponsored event; or inflicts serious bodily harm upon another person at school or a school-sponsored event. Under these circumstances, the principal may place your child in an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) for up to 45 school days. Your child may remain in this IAES for a time not to exceed 45 school days. Thereafter, your child will return to the previously agreed-upon placement unless a hearings officer has ordered another placement, or the parent/caregiver and the school agree to another placement. For students with Section 504 Plans, there is no automatic right to receive educational services beyond the 10th day of school suspension under federal law, however, state law does provide all students with the right to receive educational services during periods of suspensions lasting longer than ten days. School personnel will provide you a parent's /caregiver's Notice of Procedural Safeguards from the Special Education Department or Notice of Caregiver and Student Rights Under Section 504 for students with disabilities before any suspension exceeding 10 school days in one school year or removal that results in a change in placement. These notices will explain the process should there be disagreement regarding the manifestation determination or any placement decision. The caregiver and/or student may petition the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA) for a hearing and may have additional rights as outlined in the Notice of Procedural Safeguards.

RESOLVING SCHOOL-RELATED PROBLEMS

Procedure

In order to resolve school-related problems, caregivers will follow this process:

If a problem arises, contact:

1. Child's Teacher
2. Child's Assistant Principal
3. Child's Principal
4. Quadrant Executive Directors - 508-733-3419
5. Deputy Superintendent - 508-799-3644
6. Superintendent - 508-799-3115
7. School Committee - 508-799-3610

Policy Regarding the Reporting of any Potential or Actual Incidents that may Impact on the Safety of Children.

Principals have been directed to provide caregivers with verbal and written reports of any potential or actual incidents that may impact on the safety of students.

Criteria for reporting will include the following:

1. Caregivers should be notified immediately by telephone of any incident which might impact safety.
2. Each verbal report will be followed up immediately by a written report which is either mailed or delivered to the caregivers.
3. Principals will file a dual report immediately with the appropriate Managers for Instruction and School Leadership and the School Committee.

HEALTH SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

Wellness Policy

Preamble

It is the mission of the Worcester Public Schools (WPS) Wellness Policy to enable students to become independent and self-directed learners, responsible for meeting their own health and nutritional needs as developmentally appropriate. It is the goal of the Wellness Policy to promote **all students'** physical, emotional and social well-being through the coordinated efforts of all departments and services offered in the Worcester Public Schools. This model calls for a collaborative, coordinated and comprehensive approach to learning and health, and serves as the model for the WPS Wellness Policy and nursing practice.

Overview of School Health/Nursing Services Offered

A coordinated program of accessible health services will be provided to students through the leadership of the Nursing Department, in collaboration with the school Physician Consultant, various school departments, and community agencies, as applicable. The program includes communicable disease prevention and reporting, immunization compliance, health education and wellness promotion, health assessments and screenings, chronic condition (including but not limited to asthma, diabetes, life-threatening allergies, seizures, ADHD) management, counseling, community health referrals, first aid and emergency care.

The school nurses collaborate and coordinate with caregivers and other health care providers to create an Individual Health Care Plan.

School nurses provide **mandated screenings** for students at various grade levels in accordance with MA State laws and the Division of Public Health requirements. Screenings include vision and hearing (grades K-5, 8, 10), scoliosis (grades 5-9) height, weight and Body-mass Index (BMI) (grades 1, 4, 7, 10) and Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment [SBIRT] (grades 7 and 9). All students will receive a form from school for caregivers to choose to opt out of one or more of these preventive screenings. All school staff throughout the district are trained by school nurses yearly on life threatening allergy awareness education and Epi-Pen administration and basic first-aid. There are also many school staff members who are trained by the Nursing Department in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) use. Every school and outside athletic area has at minimum one AED available and at least one person trained to use it at all times.

The Nursing Administration coordinates and supports other health services available to students including oral health screenings and preventive care such as fluoride and sealant application with referral to a dentist as needed. All high schools,

Burncoat, Worcester East, and Sullivan middle schools, and Elm Park Community, Goddard School of Science and Technology, and Woodland Academy elementary schools have School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) staffed with Nurse Practitioners who can provide more advanced health assessments, diagnoses, and treatment as indicated. Students can also receive physical examinations and immunizations if registered. The Edward Kennedy Health Center (EKHC) and the Family Health Center (FHC) of Worcester operate the SBHCs in the WPSs. Caregivers who are interested in this additional health service must register their child/children at the start of every school year, providing consent for treatment.

School Health Advisory Council

The School Committee recognizes the relationship between student wellness and student achievement. The purpose of the School Health Advisory Council is to recommend, review and help implement school district policies addressing school nutrition, nutrition education, physical activity and related issues that affect student health (105 CMR 215.000). The council is composed of the Coordinator of Nursing and a variety of community agencies who work together to advocate, develop, implement, monitor, review and revise school health policy as needed/mandated.

See the WPS Nursing and Health website (www.worcesterschools.org) for the complete Wellness Policy and other health-related policies and forms or call your school nurse with any questions.

School Nutrition Program Charge Policy

Worcester Public Schools makes available at no cost to each student a Breakfast and Lunch meal daily during the school year. If the Worcester Public Schools begins to charge for meals, the following policy will be adhered to.

The School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on schoolwork, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs and minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services is a self-supporting entity within the district.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

Charges and Balances

In the event a student takes an additional meal after receiving the first at no cost, or other food items from the cafeteria, they will be subject to provide payment for those items at the Point of Sale in the cafeteria. A proposed price list will be provided to the Worcester Public Schools, School Committee for review. There will be a No-Charge policy for meals and items provided by the Nutrition Services Department.

Payments

If the USDA makes changes to the meal programs, Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service programs. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent directly to parents/guardians via email or regular postal mail

at regular intervals during the school year. At no time shall any staff member give payment notices to students unless that student is known to be an emancipated minor who is fully responsible for themselves or over the age of 18. If parents/guardians have issues with student purchases, they should contact food services for assistance.

The school will ensure that students with unpaid meal charges are not stigmatized or discriminated against in any way. Food service personnel will not announce or discuss the unpaid charges in front of other students, and students will not be treated differently or denied any services because of unpaid charges.

The School District will work with parents or guardians to establish a payment plan for unpaid charges.

This may include payment over time, payment through available financial assistance programs, or other arrangements that are reasonable and fair. The school will also work with families to apply for these programs and will not discriminate against any student who is eligible for these programs.

All school cafeterias that possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems will maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and those records are available to parents/guardians by setting up an online account (see student handbooks for more details) or by speaking with the school's food service Manager or Director. The point-of-sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's meal status. Parents/guardians will receive notifications when the student balance is negative by emails or mailed notices weekly, if applicable. If notices do not result in payment, parents/guardians will receive a phone call from Worcester Public Schools Nutrition Department. If the phone call does not result in payment the food service manager shall turn the account over to the business office.

Refunds

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request (email, postal, or in person) for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted. Graduating students also have the option to transfer funds to the Nutrition Department fund balance to be used for program improvements with a written request.

Delinquent Accounts/Collections

Failure of a caregiver to maintain reasonably current accounts may result in a referral to the Superintendent for their review. The Superintendent shall ensure that there are appropriate and effective collection procedures and internal controls within the school district's business office that meet the requirements of law.

If a student is without meal money consistently, the administration may investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. Each school handbook shall contain detailed instructions for family assistance.

Policy Communications

This policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.

LEGAL REFS: MGL 71:72; USDA School Meal Program Guidelines May 2017, Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023 CROSS REFS: JQ, Student Fees, Fines & Charges

Suggested Guidelines for Safe Backpack Use Recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics for choosing the correct backpack include:

1. Do not carry weight greater than 20% of body weight
2. Select a style that has padded shoulders and a waist strap
3. Use both shoulder straps
4. Tighten the straps so the pack is close to the body
5. Distribute the weight of objects evenly in the backpack
6. Utilize all compartments
7. Pack heaviest objects close to the back with the center of gravity near the hips.

Access for Pregnant Students

In accordance with Federal Law and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations and guidance, a student who is pregnant is permitted to remain in regular classes and participate in extracurricular activities with non-pregnant students throughout her pregnancy. After giving birth, a student is permitted to return to the academic program in which they were enrolled and is permitted to participate in extracurricular programs.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Program

Free transportation is provided to students in grades K-12 who live two (2) miles or more from their assigned school. The legal obligation of the School Committee is to provide transportation for elementary students. The School Committee does have the right, if necessary, to charge fees or decline to provide transportation at the secondary level.

All eligible K-12 students must ride only their assigned bus to and from school and use their designated bus stop. Students will walk to common bus stops, and those in grades K-6 should be accompanied by a caregiver. The responsibility for escorting a child to and from the bus stop rests with the caregiver, especially where there are no sidewalks or other safety concerns.

Caregivers are responsible for supervision until the child boards the bus in the morning and after the child exits the bus in the afternoon. The school district assumes responsibility for the student only while they are on the bus. Students must be at their bus stop at least 10 minutes before the scheduled pickup time. Bus drivers will not stop if no student is visible at the stop. Kindergarten students will receive an identification tag to ensure they are not released without a caregiver present. If no caregiver is present, the student will be taken to North High School, and must be picked up by a caregiver.

Students who are assigned a school bus pass or RFID swipe pass through their school are expected to carry the pass with them at all times when riding the school bus and to display it to the driver for inspection or swipe the RFID reader if requested. Only students that are assigned to the bus and have a valid pass or RFID swipe pass will be permitted to ride the school bus.

Transportation eligibility is based solely on a student's home address and is only provided between the assigned home bus stop and school. Temporary free transportation will be provided under the "open seat" policy that would allow a student,

that is presented with a long-term safety hazard on the prescribed route, to occupy a seat if the capacity on the bus allows. The Transportation Department will not create a new bus stop; the student must get to an existing bus stop on their own. If for any reason, the seat is needed for a student that resides beyond two miles, the open seat option would be rescinded.

Additionally, transportation shall be provided at district expense for children whose Individualized Education Plan (IEP) requires such transportation or if a student has an approved 504 plan.

Busing Privileges

In view of the fact that a school bus is an extension of the classroom, the Worcester Public Schools shall require each student to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Code of Conduct and the Safety and Behavior Rules for Pupils Riding School Buses outlined in the student handbook. Bus drivers are responsible for maintaining order and will report misconduct to the school principal. The principal will notify caregivers and may suspend bus privileges for disciplinary issues. Caregivers must ensure alternative transportation if privileges are revoked.

Worcester Public Schools' school buses may be equipped with cameras to create a video and audio record of each trip. This video and/or audio may be used to assist the school principal in determining what discipline, if any, is appropriate in cases of reported violations of safe riding practices. It may also be used as a tool to teach and reinforce safe riding practices for all students.

Safety is of primary importance. At the bus stops and on the school bus, students are expected to be well behaved and cooperative at all times.

Two-Mile Limit & Bus Stops

The two-mile measurement is the shortest vehicular route between the nearest walkway or driveway to the student's residence and the nearest walkway or gateway leading to the front door of the school. Mileage will NOT be calculated to or from a daycare provider.

Bus Stops and Routing

- Students will walk to a common bus stop (no door-to-door service).
- Stops are determined only by the Worcester Public Schools Transportation Department.
- Caregivers must ensure their child is at the correct stop.
- Unauthorized bus stop use will result in non-pickup.
- Bus drivers cannot change bus stops.
- Any stop change request should be submitted to the school, and the school will submit the request to the transportation router for approval.

School Bus Rules & Safety

To maintain a safe and orderly environment, students must follow these rules:

1. Only assigned students and staff may ride the bus unless approved by the Director of Transportation.
2. Be on time and ready at the designated stop.
3. At the bus stop:
 - Stay out of the street.

- o Respect private property.
 - 1. o Remain 10 feet away from the bus until it stops and the door opens.
- 4. Students issued a bus pass or RFID swipe card.
 - o Bus passes must be displayed to the driver for inspection.
 - o RFID swipe pass must be swiped to board the bus and swiped to exit the bus
- 5. Ride only your assigned bus.
- 6. Sit promptly and remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- 7. Do not open or close windows or emergency doors unless instructed
- 8. Prohibited behaviors:
 - o Smoke or vape;
 - o Throw any objects on the bus or out the windows;
 - o Disturb the driver or other students;
 - o Littering.
 - o Loud or disruptive behavior.
 - o Eating or drinking. o Bringing dangerous items.
 - o Damaging the bus.
- 9. Remain silent when approaching railroad crossings
- 10. When exiting the bus, cross in front (10 feet away) and check for traffic.
- 11. In an emergency, stay on the bus unless directed otherwise.
- 12. Enter the school immediately upon arrival
- 13. Bus Conduct Violations:
 - o Drivers and monitors will report misconduct to school officials.
 - o Violations may result in temporary or permanent loss of bus privileges.

Riding the school bus is a privilege, not a right. Failure to follow these rules may result in disciplinary action, including suspension of transportation services.

STUDENT SERVICES

The WPS are committed to supporting a whole child approach to teaching and learning, whereby all students experience academic and social emotional success. Our schools collaborate with students, families, parents, staff and community resources to provide support to increase student access to instruction and reduce barriers which prevent students from experiencing success in school.

A comprehensive list of student supports, including in the areas of attendance, behavior, physical health, mental health, guidance, psychology, restorative practices, social work, special education and section 504s, can be found on the district website at **www.worcesterschools.org**.

Section 504 - Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act

It is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools to comply with Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAA, 2008) in all aspects of its programming, including both academic and extra-curricular activities and programs.

The Rehabilitation Acts of 1973, also known as “Section 504,” is a non-discrimination statute enacted by the United States Congress. The purpose of the Act is to prohibit discrimination by institutions that receive federal funding and to assure that qualified disabled students have educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided to non-disabled students. Section 504 requires that

school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

An eligible student under Section 504 is a student who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities
2. has a record of such an impairment
3. is regarded as having such an impairment

Major life activities include but are not limited to caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and working.

Under the ADA Amendments Act, whether an impairment substantially limits a major life activity is to be determined without reference to the ameliorative effects of mitigating measures. This means that the school cannot consider the ameliorative effect of mitigating measures — with the exception of eyeglasses and contact lenses — in determining whether someone has a qualifying disability.

Eligibility

If you believe that your child may qualify for a 504 accommodation plan in order to access programs or activities in the Worcester Public Schools, please notify the Principal at your child's school. If you have medical or other documentation about the disabling condition, it is helpful to bring this to the Principal, although a medical diagnosis is not required. The Principal or their designated 504 coordinator for the school will review the concerns and gather data from teachers, school nurses, caregivers or others working with your child. This information will assist the 504 team to determine how and whether your child's impairment substantially limits a major life activity. Specialists at the school may be consulted. If an assessment by a specialist is needed, you will be asked for written consent to complete these at school at no charge to you. When relevant data and information has been collected, the 504 team will meet with you to determine the student's eligibility under Section 504 and to develop a plan of appropriate accommodations for your child. If found eligible, families will be provided this decision in writing and receive information concerning procedural rights.

Obligations of School Districts

The district will conduct an evaluation for any student who has a disability or is suspected of needing special education or related services to access learning activities in a manner comparable to their non-disabled peers of the same age. This evaluation will include the collection and analysis of data to assess how the disability affects the student's ability to access the curriculum, learning experiences, social interactions, and enrichment opportunities within the educational program.

Additionally, Worcester Public Schools must "identify and locate every qualified individual with a disability between the ages of 3 and 22 residing in the district who is not receiving a public education" (34 CFR 104.32(a)). Worcester Public Schools must also take appropriate steps to notify students with disabilities and their caregivers of this Child Find obligation (34 CFR 104.32(b)). Written notice of caregiver rights under Section 504 may be requested at your child's school or accessed through the Worcester Public Schools website at www.worcesterschools.org.

The person responsible for Section 504 at your school is the principal or 504 Coordinator. Please contact your students' school if you have any questions or concerns regarding this notice or Section 504.

Special Education

The mission of the Worcester Public Schools (WPS) Special Education Department is to empower the WPS staff to support and educate our scholars within the least restrictive environment. We are dedicated to proactively fostering partnerships with families and other stakeholders, recognizing their valuable role in our scholars' success. Our commitment is to promote inclusivity, equity, and collaboration among students, educators, families, and the wider community. We strive to create and use consistent, data-driven practices and processes to optimize each scholar's learning journey.

Overview of Special Education in Worcester Public Schools

Massachusetts students who are eligible for special education are entitled to receive specialized instruction, services, and supports designed to help them reach their full educational potential in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Special education services are provided in accordance with state and federal law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Massachusetts special education law (MGL c.71B). Under IDEA and state law (603 CMR 28.00), eligible students are entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive setting. This means that, whenever possible, students should receive their education in the general education setting with appropriate supports. If a student cannot make effective progress in that setting, additional services or placements may be considered.

If a student is suspected of having a disability, they may be referred for evaluation by a parent/guardian or by any caregiver or professional concerned about the student's development. The evaluation includes assessments in academic achievement and any area of suspected disability. The goal of the evaluation is to determine whether the student has skill deficits consistent with an educational disability category.

A Team meeting is held to determine eligibility. The Team includes a teacher, parents/guardians, a school-based decision-maker, and any professionals who conducted assessments. If a student is found eligible, the Team develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP), outlining the services and supports needed to build skills in deficit areas and ensure access to the curriculum. Worcester Public Schools offer a full continuum of services, including specialized instruction, speech and language therapy, occupational and physical therapy, assistive technology, vision support, and behavioral/emotional services.

The student's IEP Team meets annually to review progress and update the IEP. Every three years, or as needed, the student is re-evaluated to ensure the IEP and placement remain appropriate based on current information.

Under the law, students have specific procedural and substantive rights, which are detailed in the Notice of Procedural Safeguards. This document is available in multiple languages at www.doe.mass.edu/sped/prb/.

Caregivers seeking additional support can contact the following resources:

- **Parent Training Information Center** at the Federation for Children with Special Needs: 1-800-331-0688

Referrals for a special education evaluation can be made by contacting the school principal, school personnel, or the district's Director of Special Education and Intervention Services. A caregiver must provide written consent before the evaluation process can begin. Within five school days of receiving the referral, the school must contact the caregiver to request written permission to proceed with the evaluation.

Principals at each school are responsible for ensuring that students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are implemented as written. The Director of Special Education and Intervention Services is responsible for ensuring that the district complies with all federal and state special education regulations. If you have any questions or concerns about special education services or your child's educational program, please contact your child's school, the evaluation team chairperson, or the Special Education Director. For additional information, visit the district website at www.worcesterschools.org.

Employment Information and Procedures

Employment Permits (14-18 years of age) are issued in the nine (9) secondary schools for students enrolled in those schools. Students who do not attend public schools must present proof of date of birth when applying for the certificate or permit during the school year from their home school.

Anyone under 18 years of age must obtain a work permit before starting a new job (M.G.L. c. 149 §86-89). Applications for work permits and complete information on legal limits of work hours and conditions of employment are available on the Massachusetts Department of Labor's Division of Occupational Safety website at: <http://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-get-a-work-permit>

Occupation Restrictions

In Massachusetts, minors under the age of 14 are generally prohibited from employment. However, there are specific exceptions where they may legally work, including employment as news carriers, work on farms, or in a family business. These exceptions may be subject to specific regulations and often require permits.

Home Hospital Educational Services 603 (CMR 28.03(3) (c))

State regulations provide educational services to a student who is confined to the home or hospital for medical reasons for a period of not less than fourteen school days in a school year. The intent of the regulation is to provide students receiving a publicly-funded education with the opportunity to make educational progress even when a physician determines that the student is physically unable to attend school. Home/hospital educational services are not intended to replicate the total school experience. The number of tutoring hours provided to the student will be based upon Worcester's recommendations of what is required to minimize educational loss and taking into account the medical needs of the student. The Principal and/or their designee determines the credits which will be awarded for work completed during tutoring.

Any student who will be confined to a hospital or a home by an attending physician for fourteen (14) school days or longer due to a medical condition is eligible for this service. Note that for chronically ill students, the fourteen days need not be

concurrent, but must result from the stated diagnosis.

If a chronic or acute medical condition that is not temporary in nature appears likely to adversely impact a student's educational progress, the Principal and/or their designee will initiate a referral to determine eligibility for special education or 504 services.

Worcester requires students who seek home/hospital instruction to provide the Principal with a completed Physician's Affirmation of Need for Temporary Home or Hospital Education for Medically Necessary Reasons. The Principal and/or their designee may seek the caregiver permission to speak with the physician in order to clarify the student's medical availability to receive educational services, to gather additional information and to develop a transition plan to return the student to a school setting. Students who do not provide a fully-completed and signed form will not be provided with tutoring. The Home Hospital Department will review and approve requests once the Referral Form for Home and Hospital Services is submitted by principal or their designee.

The program begins as soon as the physician requests Home and Hospital Instruction on the Physician's Statement form and the district approves the services. Once the Home and Hospital Department receives the completed Physician's Statement, the caregiver will be contacted to coordinate the services and an instructor will be assigned to provide educational services.

Homeschooling

Caregivers who choose to educate their children at home, as allowed under Massachusetts law, can fulfill the requirements of the compulsory attendance statute by having their educational programs reviewed and accepted in advance by the Worcester Public Schools. Students enrolling in homeschool for initial year must attend their assigned school until approval has been received.

Homeschool Plan Forms should be submitted online and are available as a PDF in other languages by sending a request to [**homeschoolplans@worcesterschools.net**](mailto:homeschoolplans@worcesterschools.net).

Caregivers are expected to provide evidence of their child's homeschooling program once a year. Students completing high school through homeschooling programs are not eligible for a Worcester Public Schools' Diploma.

A student being educated through Homeschooling may have access to public school activities of an extra-curricular nature (e.g. sports, clubs) with the approval of the Superintendent or designee.

The district reserves the right to allow enrolled students to have precedence or priority over the homeschooled student with regard to placement on sports teams and activities that have limited enrollment. With approval of the Superintendent or designee, and in consultation with the principal, a homeschooled student may participate in sports teams and activities that have limited enrollment provided that they do not displace an enrolled student. Homeschooled students applying to participate in district-sponsored sports must follow the athletic eligibility guidelines listed in this handbook.

Homework Policy

The Worcester Public Schools believes that students' development is not only academic but also social and emotional, and that time dedicated to wellness and balance are as crucial as homework time.

What is Homework?

Homework can be a valuable tool to accelerate academic growth, enrich the school experience, and promote a positive interest in learning, but only when teachers assign purposeful, manageable, and developmentally appropriate tasks. Individual students may respond differently to homework, which means teachers need to differentiate homework appropriately and use formative, growth-oriented assessments.

Purposes of Homework

Effective homework is directly connected to classroom lessons and has a clear educational purpose. It can be categorized in many ways:

- **Practice:** Strengthens skills and concepts taught in class. It also helps students integrate newly acquired skills with prior knowledge.
- **Preparation:** Allows students to prepare for classroom instruction, preview content, and confidently participate in future lessons.
- **Checking for Understanding:** Provides teachers with information about each student's knowledge to plan for reteaching and further learning.
- **Study Skills:** Fosters valuable traits like responsibility, perseverance, self-discipline, and time management.
- **Extension and Enrichment:** Provides opportunities for students to apply skills and concepts to new situations, including real-world problems.
- **Independence:** Encourages self-direction, time management, personal responsibility, confidence, ownership, and resilience.
- **Authenticity:** Values creative, authentic, and student-led homework, prioritizing quality over quantity.
- **Accounts for Different Learning Styles and Needs:** Provides multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning through the provision of accommodations and scaffolds for student needs (notes, tools, modified length, different ways of demonstrating knowledge).

Due Dates and Calendar

- **Four no-homework weekends per year** will be scheduled for secondary grades (6-12). These weekends which coincide with the four major vacations (Thanksgiving, December, February, April), are considered protected family and leisure time. Therefore, no homework will be assigned the day before these breaks, and no homework will be due or assessments given on the first day back. If a student requests an extension, the new due date may fall on a previously prohibited date. Students may also choose to work during a break to manage their time. Elementary students will only be assigned homework 4 days per week, Monday through Thursday.

- In our diverse district, we understand that religious and cultural observances may limit homework completion for some students. Families should communicate this information to teachers so that reasonable accommodations can be made. In accordance with school policy and Massachusetts law, no student will be penalized solely because religious practice interfered with their ability to complete works.
- Students will receive advance notice of long-term assignments. While concurrent deadlines cannot always be avoided, teachers will attempt to coordinate the dates of major assessments and due dates for major assignments across disciplines.

Considerations:

Teachers may assign homework for the entire week on Monday and students will have the opportunity to exercise time management to complete assignments by the due date on Friday. This is a suggestion and not a requirement.

Makeups for homework should be allowed, the length of time allowed for late submission should be determined by the classroom teacher.

Schools will help ensure that tools required for homework assignments are readily available to students: laptop if needed, paper and materials, books, reading material, math tools etc. to take home

Guidelines for Homework Time:

K-1	approximately 20 minutes of reading/math for 4
Grade 2	approximately 30 minutes of reading/math or ad work per night for 4 nights
Grade 3	approximately 40 minutes of reading/math or ad work per night for 4 nights
Grades 4-5	approximately 1 hour of reading /math or addition per night for 4 nights
Grade 6	approximately 5 hours per week
Grade 7	approximately 6 hours per week
Grade 8	approximately 7 hours per week
Grades 9-12	up to 2 hours per academic course per week

AP Courses:

Please note that AP classes and other advanced coursework may require additional work hours.

AP/advanced courses/ programs may have homework outside of the abovementioned homework schedule. An example may be that summer reading may be assigned to be completed before the school year, during the school year, and homework over vacation weeks to prepare for the AP exams/other assessments. When choosing and enrolling in these courses, caregivers and students should be aware that effective time management will be critical for success. Enrolling into advanced programs, honors, or AP courses may result in more time and effort being required for homework.

Process for Assigning Textbooks

Students and caregivers are responsible for books and all other equipment issued to a student of the Worcester Public Schools. All books and equipment shall be returned by the student and in the condition in which they were issued. Reasonable wear on books and materials is anticipated due to students use.

Worcester Public Schools reserves the right to collect payment for lost or damaged textbooks and other equipment from the students and/or their caregivers.

**Promotion Policy
General**

The principal, after considering recommendations from members of the Student Support Process (SSP), may determine that a child, who is trying but lacks the maturity or has failed to grasp the basic skills, and can gain academically from an additional year at their present grade designation, may be retained for one year. Before retaining a student, all elementary principals will meet and collaborate with the Student Support Team. The school will provide notifications to caregivers.

The principal is the final authority in promotion at the building level and for good cause may override the passing of promotional subject requirements. In all such cases, the principal must file a statement with their supervisor stating the reasons for such promotions and the steps that will be taken to provide the necessary remediation at the next level.

**Elementary (K- 6)
Promotional Subjects**

Grade 1
English Language Arts:
(Reading, Language and Writing)

Grades 2-6
English Language Arts:
(Reading, Language and Writing)
Mathematics

Students must pass English Language Arts (Reading, Language and Writing) at the first-grade level. Students must pass English Language Arts and Mathematics from the second-grade level through the sixth-grade level.

Students in grades 2-6 must pass English Language Arts and Mathematics each year.

Grades 7-8

Middle school students must complete core academic subjects and enrichment courses that are unique to each school. All middle school students participate in physical education as required by state law (M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 3).

Core Academic Courses (full year)

English Language Arts
Mathematics
Science and Technology/Engineering
History and Social Sciences

Pathway/Enrichment Courses may include:

Academic Literacy, Word Study or Intervention Reading Courses
Academic Numeracy - supplemental math course
AVID
Art
Music
Computer Literacy Health/Physical Education Family/Consumer Science
Other: Dance, Theatre, etc.

For promotion, students must pass English Language Arts and Mathematics, two (2) additional core academic subjects and two (2) enrichment courses each year. Students cannot fail ELA and Mathematics in grades 7 and 8 and pass to grade 9.

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating, plagiarism and forgery are considered to be academic dishonesty. For any work containing any information improperly submitted as one's own, or completed by means of academic dishonesty or deception, including information obtained from the Internet and not properly cited, students will receive appropriate consequences which may include suspension and require that the student redo the assignment for credit. Violation of this policy may result in discipline ranging from a student receiving a failing grade for the assignment to suspension from school.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Overview:

In accordance to the Massachusetts General Laws, the Worcester Public Schools recognizes and enforces that every child, between the ages of six and sixteen, must attend school.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter76>

School personnel and caregivers must work together to ensure that all students, Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12, attend school every day, and on time, during the 180-day pupil calendar. School attendance is a priority for the Worcester Public Schools. Students' academic, social and emotional growth and development depend upon students' daily attendance, classroom participation and exposure to high quality teaching and learning. The daily interactions among teachers and students

are irreplaceable components of the learning experience. In addition, daily attendance and punctuality habits acquired during schooling are essential skills in adulthood life, and it begins as early as the pre-school years. Students who are chronically absent from school impact their own learning and the school community as a whole. Schools can take the following steps to address absenteeism:

School Attendance

Chapter 76, section 1 of the Massachusetts General Laws states that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school. A school district may excuse up to seven day sessions or fourteen half-day sessions in any period of six months. In addition to this law, Worcester has an attendance policy and should make sure that caregivers are familiar with it.

The school recognizes that there are legitimate reasons for being absent from school, such as illness. In accordance with state law, to the extent that excused absences do not exceed seven days or 14 half-days in a six-month period, documented absences that fall within these limits may be excused. Eligible students who require modifications to the attendance policy due to a qualifying disability may seek accommodations through a 504 Plan or IEP.

Absences for any reason other than illness must be pre-arranged. School officials will not grant permission for a student to leave the school for any reason during the school day until a parent/guardian has been informed. Absences and tardies are part of a student's permanent record.

Excused Absences

The following is a list of absences which will not count toward retention or loss of credit:

1. Family bereavement (parent/caregiver note required)
2. Religious holiday (parent/caregiver note required): The student has a sincerely held religious belief and that school attendance would interfere with their religious observances.
3. Illness (or a medical appointment) absences with written or other communicated verification from the parent/caregiver or the student's treating physician's office. In instances of chronic or irregular absences reportedly due to illness, the administration may request a doctor's note or other documentation from the student's treating health care provider and may seek consent to communicate with the health care provider. For absences of five consecutive days or more, the student must report to the nurse on the day of return with documentation from the student's treating health care provider and/or parent note.
4. Hospitalization: The caregiver must submit to the school discharge papers from the hospital documenting the student's hospitalization.
5. School-approved field trips (including a limited number of athletic events to be designated by the administration) the appropriate form signed by the parent granting permission and teacher approval.
6. Representation of Worcester Public Schools in a school-related activity.
7. Suspension for violation of the school disciplinary code.
8. Court appointment with official court time and date verification.
9. For Grade 12 and 11 students ONLY: College interview/visit documented on college Letterhead (limit of 6 between Junior and Senior year).

Documented Absence:

Caregivers requesting to have an absence excused must present the required documentation when they return to school but no later than 7 school days following their absence. .

Please be advised that absences without documentation will count as unexcused absences. Please see the DESE guidance for reference:

www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/attendance/

Examples of UNDOCUMENTED ABSENCES (not a complete list):

- Truancy
- Tardy to school/class (20 minutes late)
- Class cutting
- illness without documentation/communication by parent/caregiver
- Family vacations, trips, obligations, etc.
- Unnecessary absences from class as determined by an administrator
- Non-school related extracurricular events
- Any form of "Skip Day"

Special Note: Any student who is twenty minutes late for class or who is dismissed twenty minutes before the end of the class will be considered to have an undocumented absence unless the tardiness/dismissal falls in the category of documented absence.

Upon receipt of a physician's written order verifying that any student enrolled in the Worcester public schools must remain at home or in a hospital on a day or overnight basis, or any combination of both, for medical reasons and for a period of not less than fourteen school days in any school year, the student may be eligible to receive home or hospital instruction. For more information refer to Home Hospital instruction .

Student Absence Notification Program

The District will notify a student's caregiver daily of a student's absence based on morning attendance via a ConnectEd automated phone call.

Beginning with 5 absences, caregivers will receive an attendance letter via U.S. Mail with each absence. Each Principal, by whatever title they may be known, or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's caregiver, who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days (a school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day) in a school year. The meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's caregiver. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit agencies.

Dropout Prevention

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to a student, and that student's caregiver, who has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence. The notice shall be sent within five days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least 2 dates and

times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the Superintendent or designee, the student, and the student's caregiver. The notice shall be in both English and the primary language of the home, if applicable. The notice shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview and shall indicate that the parties shall reach an agreement on the date/time of the interview within the ten (10) day timeframe. The timeframe may be extended at the request of the caregiver but no extension shall exceed 14 days.

The Superintendent or their designee may proceed with any interview without a caregiver present.

Tardiness and Dismissal

A student who is not in their assigned seat at the start of homeroom or class is tardy.

If a student starts school after half of the academic day has passed, then that student will be marked absent from school for that day. The student may not participate in any school activity (e.g., sports, dances, prom) during the rest of that day.

If a student leaves school before half of the academic day has passed, then that student will be marked absent from school for that day. The student may not participate in any school activity (e.g., sports, dances, prom) during the rest of that day.

Principals will address attendance issues with students and caregivers as needed.

Faculty Responsibility

Faculty members will record all absences, tardiness, and dismissals of students from their assigned classes. As students may miss some classes more frequently than others, each faculty member will be responsible for notifying the administration on occasions when notification must be sent to a caregiver.

Attendance Notification to Students and their Caregiver

Caregivers are notified by phone on a daily basis if their child is absent. After five unexcused absences, the principal or their designee will notify the caregiver (s) in writing and, when appropriate, request a meeting to discuss the student's attendance. Caregivers will continue to receive written notification of their child's attendance at every 5th absence from school.

Caregivers and guardians will also receive attendance information through:

1. Interim and attendance progress reports (at five weeks into each marking period)
2. Report cards (every ten weeks). The secondary report cards show students' absences from each class and students' total absences from school

SPECIAL ATTENDANCE ISSUES

Student Not Living with Parent or Guardian

A student who is not living with a parent or guardian is expected to follow all school policies in the same manner as all other students. Notes (to excuse absences, etc.) should be written by an adult member of the household in which the student lives. If the student lives in a situation where no adult authority is present, arrangements regarding attendance and discipline procedures must be set up by means of a meeting of the student and the assistant principal. M.G.L. Chapter 76 Section 1.

Retention and/or Loss of Credit

Fourteen absences or more per school year may result in retention and/or loss of credit.

Absences accumulated due to out-of-school suspensions do not count towards a loss of academic credit. Students who are absent because of out-of-school suspensions must make up missed assignments, including homework and test(s). The principal can determine that other extenuating circumstances justify absences which do not merit a loss of academic credit.

Truancy/Unresolved Chronic Absenteeism

When a student accumulates excessive unexcused absences, the principal (or their designee) may seek assistance from the Juvenile Court and/or the Department of Children and Families to resolve attendance matters.

High School Attendance and Academic Credit Policy

1. Attendance is required to earn credit
A student who has enrolled in a class is expected to be present each time the course is in session. For the 2025-2026 school year, high school students will not receive credit when they exceed the following number of absences:
 - a. Fourteen (14) unexcused class absences per one-credit course
 - b. Seven (7) unexcused class absences for courses less than one credit
2. Administrative Procedure for Loss of Credit
 - a. In any case where a student fails to receive credit for any course, the final course grade will still be recorded on that student's permanent record card.
 - b. In the case where no credit is received for a course required for graduation (e.g., American History) and in which a passing grade has been received, it is required that the course be repeated.
 - c. A minimum of twenty-four (24) credits is required to graduate.
3. Attendance Buyback Program During the 2025-26 school year, eligible high school students will be able to voluntarily participate in an Attendance Buyback Program. Through this program, students can make up the credit(s) which they lost due to excessive absences. To be eligible for the Attendance Buyback Program, students must have passed a course and must have between 15 and 22 absences. Eligible students who complete additional hours of instruction beyond the school day or on Saturday mornings can then receive full credit for the course. Students will not be able to change their passing grade for their course. Eligible students who are interested in this program, should contact their high school guidance counselor for additional information.
4. Appeal Procedure
 - a. The following areas may be considered in the appeal process:
 - Documented illness
 - Mandated school-sponsored activities
 - School-sponsored field trips
 - Alternative Education Programs
 - Home tutoring assigned by the school
 - b. Appeals for waiver of the policy will be heard by the Principal or their designee.
 - c. The caregiver may appeal an adverse decision by the Principal or their designee to the Managers for Instruction and School Leadership
 - d. The caregiver may appeal an adverse decision by the Managers for

- Instruction and School Leadership to the Superintendent
- e. The caregiver may appeal an adverse decision by the Superintendent of Schools to the School Committee. Appeals to the School Committee must be submitted in writing to the Superintendent, who will place the caregiver's or guardian's appeal on the School Committee agenda for the next regular meeting. The caregiver is to be notified of the date, time and place of the School Committee meeting.

Note: Confirmed class cuts and confirmed truancy cannot be appealed.

FIELD TRIP POLICY*

The Worcester Public Schools has adopted a Field Trip Policy that is in compliance with the requirements of Chapter 346 of the Acts of 2002, An Act Relative to Safety of School Sponsored Travel. The policy establishes procedures for school sponsored student travel that is planned between the hours of midnight and 6:00 a.m., overnight or foreign trips, and over water or air travel.

A copy of the policy is available through the Office for Instruction and School Leadership.

Cancellation Policy: The Superintendent reserves the right to cancel an approved field trip until the time of departure. In the event of a cancellation, the school system is not responsible for any expenses incurred.

***The Worcester Public Schools does not condone or take responsibility for privately funded trips without authorization of the school principal.**

HONOR ROLL POLICY

High School

Honor roll status in the Worcester Public Schools is determined by the individual student's average in all major subject areas. A major subject is defined as a course that yields a minimum of 1.00 unit of credit.

Eligibility

First Honors is defined as those students who receive grades of 90 or above in all major subjects.

Second Honors is defined as those students who receive grades of 80 or above in all major subjects.

Note: There is no weighting relative to courses of study.

Middle School

Honor roll status in the Worcester Public Schools is determined by the individual student's average in all major subject areas and enrichments. A major subject is defined as a full year course or the equivalent thereof.

Eligibility

First Honors is defined as those students who receive grades of 90 or above in all major subjects and A's in all subjects including enrichments.

Second Honors is defined as those students who receive grades of 80 or above in all major subjects and A's and B's in conduct and effort in all subjects including enrichments.

Note: There is no weighting relative to courses of study.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Throughout their education, students will take selected standardized tests. A standardized test is one that is administered under uniform and controlled conditions. This ensures that any difference in scores (pre and post-results, between students, etc.) reflect differences in knowledge and skills, rather than differences in unrelated factors such as test conditions. These tests are one of many ways educators assess what students know and can do. This can include paper-based or computer-based testing, oral and written tasks, classroom observations and portfolios of student work. These measures are used to monitor progress, refine instructional practices and improve our capacity to ensure that all students reach and exceed grade level expectations and graduate from the Worcester Public Schools career and/or college ready. Students whose caregivers opt them out of state standardized assessments will not be academically penalized or face disciplinary action except as prohibited by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or by the United States.

For Information on Testing

For questions or concerns related to testing procedures and security or for information on your child's performance or participation in testing, please contact your child's principal or teacher. For general questions about assessment or for questions or concerns related to testing procedures and security or for information on your child's performance or participation in testing in the Worcester Public Schools, please contact the Office of Research and Accountability (508) 799-3592. You may also visit the Worcester Public Schools website for information on testing. Information from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education concerning state assessments can be found online at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/TestingMatters.html> or by contacting the State Office of Student Assessment at (781) 338-3625.

Caregivers may also visit the Worcester Public Schools website, www.worcesterschools.org, for information on testing.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In Massachusetts, public school students must fulfill both local and state requirements to graduate with a high school diploma. This section outlines the state-level requirements.

Under the Massachusetts Education Reform Law of 1993 (G.L. c. 69, § 1D), all students educated at public expense—including those in public schools, educational collaboratives, and approved or unapproved private special education settings—must meet the Competency Determination (CD) standard. In the past, this was typically achieved by earning a passing score on the MCAS exams.

I. Competency Determination

To receive a high school diploma, students must meet the Worcester Public Schools competency determination requirements, which are in addition to the graduation requirements.

The Massachusetts Education Reform Law of 1993, G.L. c. 69, § 1D, requires that all students meet the Competency Determination (CD) standard in Math, ELA and Science to earn a diploma in MA. The new statute says:

"The "competency determination" shall be based on the academic standards and curriculum frameworks for tenth graders in the areas of mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, foreign languages, and English, and shall represent a determination that a particular student has demonstrated mastery of a common core of skills, competencies and knowledge in these areas, by satisfactorily completing coursework that has been certified by the student's district as showing mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge contained in the state academic standards and curriculum frameworks in the areas measured by the MCAS high school tests described in section one I administered in 2023, and in any additional areas determined by the board."

Two Pathways Toward Competency Determination and Graduation

1. Students who have previously earned a Competency Determination (CD) through a regular or retest administration of the MCAS (including the November 2024 retest) or through a DESE appeal process, have earned their Competency Determination.
2. Students in the Worcester Public Schools who have not yet earned their Competency Determination through previous MCAS administrations can meet the requirements for a competency determination through the following:

Receive a passing grade in the equivalent of a grade 9 & 10 English courses
Receive a passing grade in the equivalent of an Algebra I/II and Geometry or an equivalent course
Receive a passing grade in the equivalent of a Biology or Physics or an equivalent course

II. Worcester Public Schools

Proposed Certified Courses to Meet Competency Determination for Class of 2025

English

Students must satisfactorily complete (Passing, D, 65%) content aligned with 9th and 10th English courses, regardless of the year in which the student is taking the class as follows:

English 1 Honors

English 1 CP

Standard English 1

Edmentum (PLATO)/VHS coursework fully aligned to above courses

Dual Enrollment/Early College Worcester coursework fully aligned to above courses

English 2 Honor
English 2 CP
English 2 Edmentum (PLATO) coursework fully aligned courses
Dual Enrollment/Early Worcester coursework fully to above courses

Guidance counselors, with support from School Administration, determine equivalency for students transferring into the District from out of state or country, with Principal approval.

Mathematics

Students must satisfactorily complete (Passing, D, 65%) content aligned with tenth grade mathematics curriculum frameworks, regardless of the year in which the student is taking the class as follows:

Algebra 1 Honors
Algebra 1 CP
Edmentum/VHS coursework fully aligned to above course Dual Enrollment/Early College Worcester coursework fully aligned to above courses

Geometry Honors
Geometry CP
Algebra 1 Honors Algebra 1 CP
Standard Algebra
Edmentum (PLATO)/VHS coursework fully aligned to above course
Dual Enrollment/Early College Worcester coursework fully aligned to above course

Guidance counselors, with support from School Administration, will determine equivalency for students transferring into the District from out of state or country, with Principal approval.

Science

Introductory Physics Honors or CP
Biology Honors or CP
AP Biology
Chemistry Honors or CP
AP Physics I
Introduction to Engineering Design (PLTW)
Principles of Engineering (PLTW)
Engineering Design and Development (PLTW)
Edmentum (PLATO)/VHS coursework fully aligned to above course
Dual Enrollment/Early College Worcester coursework fully aligned to above courses

Guidance counselors, with support from School Administration, will determine equivalency for students transferring into the District from out of state or country, with Principal approval.

Grading

A—100-90 B—89-80 C—79-70 D—69-65 F—64-0

Graduation Course Requirements

In order to graduate from the Worcester Public Schools, a student must have earned at least 24 credits and complied with all state accountability requirements. Course requirements are the following:

Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 beginning in 2025-2026 school year

4 credits English

4 credits Mathematics (Effective with the graduating class of 2019, three of the four courses must include Algebra I and II, Geometry)

3 credits Science and Technology/Engineering

3 credits History/Social Science (including 1 credit World History and 1 credit U.S. History and 1 credit chosen by the student)

2 credits Foreign Language (of the same language)

1 credit Arts

5 credits additional core courses

Additionally, students must complete a physical education course each year

Additional course credits are required by taking elective classes.

High School students seeking alternative Physical Education options should discuss their requests with their Guidance Counselor, who can provide information on the process.

1. The Worcester Public Schools adheres to the Mass Core requirements.
2. Students who successfully complete Algebra in grade 8 have the option of receiving one (1) high school credit that will be recorded on their high school transcript. (Massachusetts college admissions accept Grade 8 College Preparatory Courses, provided that the student successfully completes the next level course with a grade of "C" or better). Students electing to take Algebra I in high school will not receive credit for Algebra taken in grade 8. Students who have earned a credit for 8th grade Algebra must complete 4 credits of Mathematics during their high school years.
3. Students in grades 7 & 8 who successfully complete high school courses in World Language will receive one high school credit per course that will be recorded on their high school transcript. Students who take Part 1 of a World Language Course in grade 8, will not receive credit for the course taken in middle school. It is recommended that students take two years or more of the same language at the high school level.
4. The intent of awarding credits for College Preparatory courses taken in grade 8 is so that students can have additional learning opportunities while in high school. These additional opportunities include but are not limited to Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, online, service learning and work-based learning courses. All students must complete 24 credits of coursework while in high school in addition to fulfilling the other graduation requirements as per the policy handbook.
5. Exception Allowances
 - a. English Language Learners (ELL) identified through the Massachusetts' state standardized test (ACCESS) as English Proficiency Level (EPL) 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 may substitute two college preparatory elective courses for the two required foreign language courses. Students who reach EPL level 6 while in grades 9 or 10 are required to take the two foreign language courses to meet graduation requirements.
 - b. Students with disabilities whose psycho-educational evaluation provides a specific diagnosis of a learning disability that precludes the student's successful completion of a foreign language course may substitute two college preparatory elective courses for the two required foreign language courses.
 - c. Students enrolled in Career/Vocational Technical Programs may substitute required foreign language and art/music courses plus one of

the following options:

- i. complete at least one full year of study of foreign language or
 - ii. complete a fourth year of study of science and technology/ engineering or
 - iii. complete one full year of study for computer science
- d. Students with disabilities whose psycho-educational evaluation provides a specific diagnosis of a learning disability that precludes the student's successful completion of a foreign language course may substitute two college preparatory elective courses for the two Required foreign language courses.

Massachusetts State College and University Minimum Required Courses for Admission

English	4 courses
Mathematics	4 courses (Algebra I & II and Geometry or Trigonometry, or comparable coursework) including mathematics during the final year of high school
Sciences	3 courses (from Natural Science and/or Physical Science and/or Technology/ Engineering), including 3 courses with laboratory work
Social Sciences	3 courses (including 1 in U.S. History and 1 in World History)
Foreign Languages	2 courses (in a single language)
<i>Note: American Sign Language (ASL) is a foreign language.</i>	
Electives	2 courses (from the above subjects or from the Arts & Humanities or Computer Sciences)

Advanced Placement Policy

Advanced Placement courses provide students with unique learning experiences that help ensure college success. Students engage in intense discussions, solve problems collaboratively, and learn to write clearly and persuasively, while developing time management skills, discipline and study habits. Students who achieve a score of 3, 4 or 5 on the Advanced Placement Exam may earn college credit from many four-year colleges in the US.

Worcester Public Schools offers over 20 Advanced Placement Courses in on-site, community-based or virtual learning settings.

Recommendations for Advanced Placement Enrollment

Students who are interested in enrolling in Advanced Placement Courses should discuss readiness for this challenging learning opportunity with their caregivers, teachers, and guidance counselors.

The indicators below may be considered together when assessing a student's readiness. One indicator is not more valuable than another in determining readiness.

- AP Potential using PSAT results
- Motivation and interest
- Course expectations and course work
- Prior grades in the same-discipline courses
- The number of same-discipline courses taken

Teachers may assign work to students during the summer to help prepare them for the course.

Advanced Placement Exams

The Worcester Public Schools will pay for the AP exams for those students who choose to take them.

Class Rank Grade Point Average

Class rank is computed at the end of the 6th semester, using major subjects only. Class rank will be recomputed at the end of the second marking period senior year for determining the valedictorian and for processing of college applications. The student grades are weighted as follows:

Average	AP.	Honors	College
100-99	5.3	4.8	4.3
98-97	5.2	4.7	4.2
96	5.1	4.6	4.1
95-94	5.0	4.5	4.0
93	4.9	4.4	3.9
92	4.8	4.3	3.8
91	4.7	4.2	3.7
90	4.6	4.1	3.6
89	4.4	3.9	3.4
88	4.3	3.8	3.3
87	4.2	3.7	3.2
86	4.1	3.6	3.1
85	4.0	3.5	3.0
84	3.9	3.4	2.9
83	3.8	3.3	2.8
82	3.7	3.2	2.7
81	3.6	3.1	2.6
80	3.4	2.9	2.4
79	3.3	2.8	2.3
78	3.2	2.7	2.2
77	3.1	2.6	2.1
76	3.0	2.5	2.0
75	2.9	2.4	1.9
74	2.8	2.3	1.8
73	2.7	2.2	1.7
72	2.6	2.1	1.6
71	2.4	1.9	1.4
70	2.3	1.8	1.3
69	2.2	1.7	1.2
68	2.1	1.6	1.1
67	1.9	1.4	0.9
66	1.8	1.3	0.8
65	1.7	1.2	0.7
64-0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Marking System

A=100-90 B=89-80 C=79-70 D=69-65 F=64-0

Dual Enrollment (College Courses for High School Students)

Early College Worcester (ECW)

The Early College Worcester (ECW) program is a secondary/post-secondary partnership involving Worcester Public Schools (WPS), Quinsigamond Community College

(QCC), Worcester State University (WSU), and Clark University.

This program enables WPS high school students to participate in college and career readiness activities and college credit course offerings. The activities and courses are offered at the high school or on the QCC or WSU campuses. Students earn college and high school credits at the same time and can graduate from high school with a high school diploma and at least 12 college credits.

The goals of the ECW program are to increase the percentage of students who are college ready, receive a high school diploma, enroll in college in the fall, and persist in college.

Other Dual Enrollment Offerings

High school students in the Worcester Public Schools who wish to pursue advanced or specialized courses beyond those offered in their high schools or through Early College Worcester may take courses at these area colleges:

Anna Maria College
Assumption College
Clark University
College of the Holy Cross
Quinsigamond Community College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester State University

Students receive dual enrollment credit for courses taken at all area colleges. For GPA computation, Worcester Public Schools students will receive the same weight as an A.P. course for each completed college course.

MA Seal of Biliteracy

The Worcester Public Schools will offer the MA Seal of Biliteracy to graduating seniors on their diplomas and transcripts. The MA Seal of Biliteracy recognizes graduates who speak, listen, read and write proficiently in English and a second or even third language.

By offering the MA Seal of Biliteracy to its students the Worcester Public Schools recognizes, honors and encourages the bilingual students and diverse communities in Worcester and encourages all students to pursue proficiency in more than one language. Bilingualism is a critical 21st century skill that recipients of the MA Seal of Biliteracy can highlight in both college and job applications.

In order to earn the MA Seal of Biliteracy, students must meet all their graduation requirements, demonstrate proficiency in English through the ELA MCAS or ACCESS, and show proficiency in a target language by earning 4 or 5 in an AP Language Exam or other state-approved language test provided by the district.

Students interested in participating in the MA Seal of Biliteracy program must complete an application available in the guidance office and on the Worcester Public Schools website.

Questions about the MA Seal of Biliteracy program can be directed to the Office of Multilingual Education.

General School Guidance

Delayed School Opening/Early Dismissal/School Cancellation Policy

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

1. Cancellation of school
2. Delay of one hour in the opening of school
3. Delay of two hours in the opening of school. If a delay is in effect, a.m. preschool will be cancelled; p.m. preschool will be held.

Delayed AM School Opening

If there is a one-hour delay in the opening of school, all procedures now in place will be delayed by one hour. A two-hour delay requires that all procedures in place be delayed by two hours. These procedures include:

4. reporting time of pupils
5. pick up time of all bus routes (i.e.: If a bus normally picks up a child at 7:15 a.m. in a one-hour delay it would be 8:15 a.m. If a bus normally picks up a child at 7:15 a.m., in a two-hour delay it would be 9:15 a.m.)

Early Dismissal

***Please note:** When schools are dismissed early, all after-school programs including daycare are canceled. Early dismissal time is two hours earlier than each school's regular dismissal time.

No School/Delayed School Opening/Early Dismissal Announcements

Announcements of no school, a delay in the opening of school, or early dismissal from school will be made via automated email and text in multiple languages via ParentSquare on the Worcester Public Schools website, www.worcesterschools.org, and on the following media outlets:

MassLive Website
Spectrum News
Telegram & Gazette Website
WBTS-TV NBC 10/Telemundo
WBZ 1030 AM
WCVB-TV Channel 5
WBZ-TV Channel 4
WFXT-TV Channel 25
WHDH-TV Channel 7

Parent Square is the primary source for families to receive updates and information about their child's school and district-wide announcements.

Radio stations have requested that students and caregivers refrain from calling to make inquiries as to the status of school.

Policy Statement and Procedural Guidelines for Recess

Quality education requires a healthy learning environment that provides students (K-6) with minimally a total of 30 minutes of recess over the course of the day. The 30 minutes can be divided into shorter breaks and shall include a break at lunch. Recess is designed for the purpose of engaging students in developmentally appropriate activity which promotes learning, social development, and physical

health. Structured/unstructured recess shall rarely be taken away from students as a form of punishment/consequences. Neither shall severe exercise be used as a form of punishment/consequences for students. This time shall not be a substitute for physical education.

The School Principal is responsible for communicating, applying, maintaining, and evaluating the Recess Policy. The School Principal shall review the Recess Policy with the members of the School Site Council annually and submit results of that review to the Deputy Superintendent in May of each year.

Procedural Guidelines

Recess shall occur outside, weather permitting, **or unless circumstances dictate otherwise for a limited period.** Students shall be supervised by adult, staff members, caregivers, or school learning community volunteers. The school principal shall insure that adults receive appropriate training to support students and intended outcomes. The school principal shall insure that students are provided with developmentally appropriate equipment. Public spaces in proximity to the school, such as parks and public playgrounds may be appropriate substitutions for play space at the school.

The School Committee shall equitably support budgetary requirements needed for recess equipment for all elementary schools. This allocation will be in addition to the per pupil allocation provided to each school. Each school principal shall have autonomy to expend allocations to support the needs of students for recess.

CAREGIVERS AND COMMUNITY

Parent Advisory Councils

School Councils

The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, Section 59C, requires the establishment of school councils in all schools, composed of caregivers of students attending the school (who shall be selected by the caregivers of students attending the school), teachers, students, and community representatives, and co-chaired by school principals. The council should be broadly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the school building and community. The council will meet with the principal and assist in identifying the educational needs of students, reviewing the annual school budget and in formulating a school improvement plan. For additional information please contact your child's school principal.

Special Education Parent Advisory Council

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) advises the school committee on matters related to the education and safety of students with disabilities. SEPAC also meets regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of special education programs in Worcester Public Schools.

SEPAC provides families of students with disabilities with networking opportunities and capacity-building resources. It serves as a space for caregivers to discuss shared concerns and specific needs related to their child's education and well-being. Throughout the school year, caregivers meet to engage in discussions, activities, and presentations on selected topics of interest. These meetings offer a forum for collaboration and a deeper understanding of special education regulations, procedural safeguards, and available resources for students and their families.

For additional information, please call 508-799-3055 or go to:
www.worcesterschools.org

English Learner Parent Advisory Committee (ELPAC)

The purpose of ELPAC is to support the academic success of English learners (ELs) and former English learners (FELs) by providing a forum in which caregivers of current and former English learners can express their perspectives and provide input to the District.

The duties of the council include: (1) advising the school district and school committee on matters that pertain to English learners; (ii) meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning and development of programs designed to improve educational opportunities for English learners; and (iii) participating in the review of school improvement plans.

The WPS English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) was established in 2018-2019. The ELPAC consists of caregivers and guardians of current and former English learners, community members, and teachers and district staff members. Meetings are a venue for meaningful discussions about Dual Language, Transitional Bilingual Education, Sheltered English Immersion, and English as a Second Language, as well as other topics related to the education of current and former English learners. Caregivers of current and former English learners are encouraged to attend the ELPAC meetings that are held throughout the school year. For additional information, please contact the Director of Multilingual Education at 508-799-3115.

Comité Asesor de Familias de Educación Bilingüe (CAFE-B)

CAFE-B is a collaborative group within the Worcester Public Schools district that brings together parents, educators, and students from schools with bilingual programs, such as Dual Language (DL) and Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE).

CAFE-B acts as a platform for discussion, feedback, and advocacy concerning bilingual education. It focuses on various aspects of these programs, including enrollment, staffing, cultural opportunities, parent involvement, and district policies. The group's meetings address a wide range of topics related to bilingual education with the goals of improving communication and collaboration between families, educators, and the district, addressing parental concerns, advocating for students' needs, promoting the growth and quality of bilingual education, and ensuring equitable access to these programs. For additional information, please contact the Department of Multilingual Education at 508-799-3115.

Citywide Parent Planning Advisory Council (CPPAC)

Each school is represented by two (2) caregiver members selected by their caregiver group and principals. Meetings are held every other month. The objectives of the CPPAC are:

1. To involve caregivers in addressing relevant issues in the Worcester Public Schools including integration and changing (increasing/ decreasing) enrollment.
2. To provide an open forum for discussion between caregivers and administrators regarding school issues and voted policies.
3. To give its members the responsibility of keeping their respective schools informed. Each school is represented by two (2) caregiver members selected by their caregiver group and principals. Meetings are typically held every other month. For additional information, contact the Office of Family & Community Engagement at 508-799-3115.

Caregiver and Family Engagement

The Worcester Public Schools believes in an authentic partnership between families, schools, and the community in which collaborative initiatives ensure student academic success and social-emotional well-being. The Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) was established in 2023 to provide a consistent approach to initiatives related to the district's family and community engagement efforts. The FACE office works with schools and district offices in various ways to ensure engagement practices are accessible and inclusive to all families.

The WPS policy is to promote caregiver and family engagement under Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. With meaningful consultation from families, the WPS implements Title I programs, activities, and procedures. For additional information on caregiver and family engagement, please contact the office of Family & Community Engagement at 508-799-3415, or at face@worcesterschools.org

Opportunities for Caregiver Support

For information on community resources available to families, please contact your school and ask for the Wraparound Coordinator or contact the Office of Family & Community Engagement at 508-799-3115.

Volunteer Staff Regulations

Application Process

All school volunteers must fill out a volunteer application which can be obtained at the school or on the WPS website. This applies to any individual who volunteers in school property or for school activities, including field trips. All volunteers must go through a screening process prior to beginning service. This includes the CORI process.

Screening Process

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has mandated that all school volunteers must complete the CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) screening process. This process must be completed before the volunteer begins in any school or program. As the CORI check can take several weeks, all volunteers are encouraged to complete the CORI form as soon as possible. Please be aware that CORI checks expire every three years and need to be resubmitted to the Human Resource Office.

Volunteer Organizations

There have been a number of initiatives in the community to strengthen school volunteer programs. Some of these include:

- State Employees Voluntary Leave Services Program
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (R.S.V.P.)
- Transitional Assistance Program (Welfare Office)

These types of initiatives are very specific about requirements for participation.

Caregiver Volunteers who bring Children

Some caregiver volunteers have come to school to perform a volunteer assignment and have brought young children with them. Each principal is responsible for developing a building policy in conjunction with their School Council regarding this issue.

If your building does allow younger children to accompany caregiver volunteers, these caregivers must perform tasks that are safe and harmless to young children.

These volunteers must not operate machinery such as:

- paper cutters
- copying machines

ALL volunteers must sign in at the office. caregiver volunteers must sign in both themselves and any child that accompanies them.

Worcester Public School District Media Policy

During the school year, your child may have opportunities to have their work or activities publicized. Examples include but are not limited to students being featured on the district website, social media, or electronic newsletters, Worcester Educational Access Television (Spectrum Charter Channel 191), or local television or print news media.

When news media visit the district, they often speak with students and will use their full names and images in their articles or segments.

WPS will not share students' names or images unless there is permission from the guardian that is documented in the Student Information System (WooEdu) or via another form of documentation. WPS will not share personal information about students that is protected by FERPA.

Procedure: Any caregiver who does not want their student's name, photograph, or work published on the district's website and social media channels, or included in newspaper or television coverage must complete and return the form on the inside back cover of this handbook or via WooEdu to the homeroom teacher.

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Belmont Street Community School	(508) 799-3588
Burncoat Street Preparatory School	(508) 799-3537
Canterbury Street Magnet Computer-Based School	(508) 799-3484
Chandler Elementary	(508) 799-3572
City View	(508) 799-3670
Clark	(508) 799-3545
Columbus Park	(508) 799-3490
Elm Park	(508) 799-3568
Flagg	(508) 799-3522
Gates Lane	(508) 799-3488
Goddard School of Science and Technology	(508) 799-3594
Grafton	(508) 799-3478
Heard	(508) 799-3525
Hiatt	(508) 799-3601
Lake View	(508) 799-3536
Lincoln	(508) 799-3504
May	(508) 799-3520
McGrath	(508) 799-3584
Midland	(508) 799-3548
Nelson Place	(508) 799-3506
Norrback	(508) 799-3500
Quinsigamond	(508) 799-3502
Rice Square	(508) 799-3556
Roosevelt	(508) 799-3482
Tatnuck	(508) 799-3554
Thorndyke	(508) 799-3550
Union Hill	(508) 799-3600
Vernon Hill	(508) 799-3630
Wawecus	(508) 799-3527
West Tatnuck	(508) 799-3596
Woodland Academy	(508) 799-3557
Worcester Arts Magnet	(508) 799-3575
Worcester Dual Language Magnet School	(508) 799-3452

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Burncoat Middle School	(508) 799-3390
Claremont Academy	(508) 799-3077
Dr. Arthur F. Sullivan Middle School	(508) 799-3350
Forest Grove Middle School	(508) 799-3420
University Park Campus School	(508) 799-3591
Worcester East Middle School	(508) 799-3430

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Burncoat High School	(508) 799-3300
Claremont Academy	(508) 799-3077
Doherty Memorial High School	(508) 799-3270
North High School	(508) 799-3370
South High Community School	(508) 799-3325
University Park Campus School	(508) 799-3591
Worcester Technical High School	(508) 799-1940

Programs

Challenge and Reach	(508)-799-3084
The Gerald Creamer Center	(508) 799-3476
Worcester Alternative Program	(508) 799-3245

Dr. James L. Garvey Parent Information Center	(508) 799-3299
.....	(508) 799-3068
.....	(508) 799-3069
.....	(508) 799-3194
Dr. James A. Caradonio New Citizen Center	(508) 799-3494

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS' OFFICE

Quadrant Executive Directors can be reached at 508-799-3499.

**Massachusetts Parental Notice for One Time Consent to Allow the School District
To Access MassHealth (Medicaid) Benefits**

WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL SERVICES

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL-BASED
MEDICAID PROGRAM**

Dear Caregiver,

As of July 1, 2019 school districts may bill MassHealth for health care services that students receive at school. Included services are vision, hearing, dental, postural, growth and SBIRT screenings, behavioral and mental health counseling, speech and direct nursing care of students with complex medical needs. This billing in no way affects your child's Mass Health coverage outside of school or any homecare services your child receives.

The School-Based Medicaid Program offers schools an opportunity to receive federal money to offset the costs for providing the above Medicaid-covered services in the school setting. The reimbursement is to the City of Worcester and therefore will benefit both the City and school finances.

Please take a moment, complete the form below and return it to your child's school nurse. Should you have questions, require additional information or translation of the caregiver consent form please don't hesitate to contact me.

Director of School Nursing

School District Name and Code:
Worcester Public Schools 0348

School/District Contact:
Director of School Nursing-- 508-799-8554
www.worcesterschools.org

Dear Caregiver:

The purpose of this letter is to ask for your permission (also known as consent) to share information about your child with MassHealth. Local communities in Massachusetts have been approved to receive partial reimbursement from MassHealth for the costs of certain health-related services provided by the district to your child (or children). In order for your community to get back some of the money spent on services, the school district needs to share with MassHealth the following types of information about your child: name; date of birth; gender; type of services provided, when, and by whom; and MassHealth ID.

With your permission, the school district will be able to seek partial reimbursement for services provided by MassHealth, including, among others, a hearing test or eye exam; a school physical; occupational, and speech or physical therapy; some school nurse visits; and counseling services with the school social worker or psychologist. Each year, the district will provide you with notification regarding your permission; you do not need to sign a form every year.

The school district cannot share with MassHealth information about your child without your permission. As you consider giving permission, please be advised of the following:

1. The school district cannot require you to sign up for MassHealth in order for your child to receive the health-related and/or special education services to which your child is entitled.
2. The school district cannot require you to pay anything towards the cost of your child's health-related and/or special education services. This means that the school district cannot require you to pay a co-pay or deductible so that it can charge MassHealth for services provided. The school district can agree to pay the co-pay or deductible if any such cost is expected.
3. If you give the school district permission to share information with and request reimbursement from MassHealth:
 - a. This will not affect your child's available lifetime coverage or other MassHealth benefit; nor will it in any way limit your own family's use of MassHealth benefits outside of school.
 - b. Your permission will not affect your child's special education services or IEP rights in any way, if your child is eligible to receive them.
 - c. Your permission will not lead to any changes in your child's MassHealth rights; and
 - d. Your permission will not lead to any risk of losing eligibility for other Medicaid or MassHealth funded programs.
4. If you give permission, you have the right to change your mind and withdraw your permission at any time.
5. If you withdraw your permission or refuse to allow the school district to share your child's records and information with MassHealth for the purpose of seeking reimbursement for the cost of services, the school district will continue to be responsible for providing your child with the services, at no cost to you.

I have read the notice and understand it. Any questions I had were answered. I give permission to the school district to share with MassHealth records and information concerning my child(ren) and their health-related services, as necessary. I understand that this will help our community seek partial reimbursement of MassHealth covered services.

Caregiver Signature: _____ Date: _____

Child's Name	Date of birth	SASID #(for district to add)
--------------	---------------	------------------------------

Child's Name	Date of birth	SASID #(for district to add)
--------------	---------------	------------------------------

Child's Name	Date of birth	SASID #(for district to add)
--------------	---------------	------------------------------

Massachusetts DESE Mandated Form 28M/13

Revised June 2018

NOTIFICATION CONCERNING PRIVACY OF STUDENT

DIRECTORY INFORMATION

What is this form?

This form is to notify you of your privacy rights concerning student directory information, and to give you the option to limit or not release your child's directory information if you choose.

Why am I being notified?

Federal law requires school districts to provide "directory information" to organizations that request this information. This information is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released. As a parent/guardian of students 17 years or younger, or as a student age 18 or older, you have the right to not release directory information or to limit the release of some directory information. Directory information is released beginning October 15 of each year.

What is Student Directory Information?

Directory information, which is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can be given to outside organizations without a parent/guardian's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, federal law requires school districts receiving federal funding to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information: names, addresses, and telephone listings for juniors and seniors.

Student directory information includes the following:

Name, address and date of birth of student
Student grade level and class, school, and dates of attendance
Weight and height of members of athletic teams
Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
Telephone number
Degrees, honors and awards (honor roll and graduation lists)
Post-high school plans

What am I being asked to do?

Please review the information on this notification and consider whether you want to limit or not release directory information.

- If you are comfortable with this information being released, **DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM.**
- If you do not want to release of directory information, please return the completed form below to your child's school.
- If you change your decision at any time, you may contact your child's school to submit an updated form.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

You may contact your child's school or the Office of Research and Accountability with any questions

STUDENT DIRECTORY INFORMATION “DO NOT RELEASE” FORM

This form is NOT required to be filled in. Only complete this form if you object to the release of directory information as explained above.

1. If you **agree** to have your child’s directory information released, **do not return this form.**
- OR**
2. If you **do not want to release** directory information place a check in any or all of the boxes below.

I do not want my child’s directory information (name, address and telephone number) released to the Military/United States Armed Forces Recruiting Agencies (for students in grades 11 and 12 only). Leave unchecked if no objection.	
I do not want my child’s directory information released for school sponsored purposes . If checked, I understand my child will <i>not</i> be included in athletic team rosters, graduation and honor rolls, school publications such as a playbill or yearbook, etc., unless I give written authorization to the school. Leave unchecked if no objection.	
I do not want my child’s directory information released for any other purpose . Leave unchecked if no objection.	

School:	Today’s Date:
Student Name (Printed):	Date of Birth:
Parent/Guardian Name (Printed):	

WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT MEDIA POLICY

Purpose: During the school year, your child may have opportunities to have their work or activities publicized. Examples include, but not limited to: student work published on the district website(s); feature stories about student performances or school-wide events in newspapers or on television (the district's Charter Channel 191 WEA-TV or local/national coverage); and photographs and videos of students "in action" on the website(s) and in local and regional newspapers. Students first names and last initials (example: Paul F.) are used to identify pictures of three or fewer students and student work on the district website(s). When reporters visit the district, they often speak with students and use their full names in covering the story.

General Media Coverage: Throughout the year there may be in-school programs, events or meetings (such as a school-wide assembly or PTA event) that are open to the public and where large group photographs or videotapes will be taken by caregivers, the media, or school district staff. In these cases, students would not be identified by name. Your consent to these types of group photographs or videotapes is assumed. If you do not want your child photographed or video-taped at these public events, please speak with the principal or event coordinator to insure that your child is excluded from the coverage.

OPT-OUT PROVISIONS FOR WPS DISTRICT MEDIA POLICY

Please check only those items that you do not grant permission to.

Publication of Student Work on the Internet

☐ I/We **do not grant** permission for this student's work to be published on the School District Website(s).

Publication of Student First Name, Last Initial and/or Photograph on the Internet

☐ I/We **do not grant** permission for photographs that include this student to be published on the School District Website(s), using the student's first name and last initial to identify them.

Interviews and Photographs with Newspapers, Radio, and Television Reporters

☐ I/We **do not grant** permission for this student to be photographed or interviewed by reporters who are covering events in the School District.

***If a box is unchecked and the caregiver signs the student handbook, your consent is granted for the full school year. This decision can be changed at any time by contacting your child's school in writing.**

To All Caregivers and Guardians:

Please spend some time discussing these policies within this booklet with your children. Your signature below confirms that you have reviewed it.

The policies in this handbook pertain to student actions both on and off school grounds during school and school-related situations (including transportation to and from school). In addition to the academic year, the policies set forth in the handbook apply to all after-school and summer programs.

The Worcester Public Schools and the School Committee consider the violation of the Weapons Policy found in this booklet to be a serious matter. Please review the Worcester Public Schools Media Policy **on the opposite side of this page**.

The School Committee requires that all caregivers of students in the Worcester Public Schools sign the statement below acknowledging receipt of this handbook and return it to their child's school.

As a caregiver of a student within the Worcester Public Schools, I acknowledge receipt of the 2025-2026 Policies Handbook for the Worcester Public Schools . The Worcester Public Schools does participate in out-of-district School Choice, but students residing outside of the City can attend the Worcester Public Schools only if they are accepted for enrollment under this program. Unless accepted under this program, I pledge residency in the City of Worcester.

--	--	--

(Student's Name)

(School)

--	--	--

(Caregiver Signature)

(Date)

Worcester Public Schools' students enrolled in secondary schools are also required to sign below, acknowledging receipt of this handbook and knowledge of the policies contained within this handbook.

--	--	--

(Student Signature)

(Date)