



Westford Public Schools
Shaping the future one child at a time.

Employee Handbook

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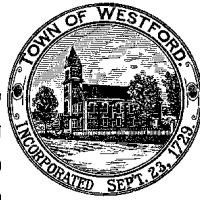
Westford Public Schools

Administrative Offices

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www.westford.mec.edu • (978) 692 -5560 • FAX (978) 392 -4497

Dear Colleague:



It is with a great sense of pride and pleasure that I welcome you to another exciting year in the Westford Public Schools. Our reputation as an excellent school system is the result of the outstanding contributions of our veteran staff. If you recently have joined our educational community, welcome you into a highly professional, strongly supportive learning environment in which the needs of children come first in our thoughts and actions.

This employee handbook has been developed to provide information on many personnel and operational issues. The contents characterize the caring, respectful culture for which we are well known. With your help, this atmosphere will continue through collaborative, respectful conversations with colleagues and students. The handbook reflects federal and state statutes as well as the policies and regulations of the Westford Public Schools. Updates that correspond to policies or operating procedures will occur from time to time. This handbook is not intended to take the place of any collective bargaining agreement, and is consistent with current state, federal and school committee policies.

I want to sincerely thank you for taking the time to read and understand the contents of this document. Our objective is to bring organizational consistency to the school district. With this strong foundation, we can devote the majority of our time to our true mission and passion: developing the minds and lives of our students.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of the Employee Handbook Committee. The endless hours devoted to this handbook have produced a document that reflects great pride in our school system and a deep respect for our core values. Thank you for a job well done.

Sincerely,

Everett V. Olsen, Jr.,
Superintendent of Schools

Shaping the future one child at a time.

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ABOUT THIS EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Our Employee Handbook was created to provide all employees of the Westford Public School System with an overview of policies and procedures. Understand that this handbook contains important information on the general personnel policies, practices, privileges, and obligations of being an employee. In addition, the Westford Public School Employee Handbook contains notifications required by law.

This handbook does not constitute a contract and makes no guarantees of employment, compensation, or benefits. The Superintendent and/or School Committee reserve the right to make changes in the policies and practices at any time at their sole discretion, and interpret and administer the policies in light of changing circumstances and events.

SECTION I – SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATION

School Committee

The School Committee is the elected body that establishes goals and policies for the Westford Public Schools, appoints the Superintendent and approves the budget.

Mariclare O’Neal, Chair
John Moran, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Andrews
Arthur Benoit
Judy Culver
Margaret Murray
Diane Weir

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/sc/index.html>

Central Office Administration

Everett V. Olsen Jr., Superintendent of Schools
Lorraine Tacconi-Moore, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Kathleen Auth, Director of School Finance
Ronald Koehler, Director of Technology & Informational Technology
Diane Pelletier, Director of Pupil Services
Lucy Smith, Director of Student Information & Administrative Technology
Michelle Wilson, Human Resource Coordinator

Principals/Schools

James Antonelli, Westford Academy
Suzanne McGrail, Lloyd G. Blanchard Middle School
Peter Cohen, Stony Brook School
Rose Vetere, Abbot School
Kevin Regan, Norman E. Day School
Laurie Kirby, John A. Crisafulli School
Susan DuBois, Nabnasset School
Jill Mullavey, Rita Edwards Miller School
Denise Arvidson, Col. John Robinson School
Diane Pelletier, Westford Integrated Preschool at Millennium School

System Wide Directors & Coordinators

Director of Guidance	Mark Lucey
Director of Athletics	Robert Conley
School Health Coordinator	Joan Mitchell

English Language Arts: K – 5 Margie Berenson 6 – 12 Anita Goldberg	Science: K – 5 Carol Shestok 6 – 12 William Bobrowsky	Foreign Language: 6 – 12 Debra Heaton
Mathematics: K – 5 Anne Marie Condike 6 – 12 Catherine Coughlin	Social Studies: K – 5 Rose Vetere 6 – 12 Elizabeth Porter	Health, Physical Education and Consumer Family Science Coordinator: K – 12 John Lyons

Westford Public Schools Home Page

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu>

School Calendar

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/calendar/index.html>

School Cancellation and Delays

The Superintendent 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. Delayed opening of schools: 1-hour or 2-hour option
 - If a 1-hour delay is announced, preschool and kindergarten will be held
 - If a 2-hour delay is called, AM preschool and kindergarten will be cancelled
 - Bus pick-up times will be delayed accordingly. *Example: If school is delayed by 1 hour, busses will pick up the students 1 hour later than the usual pick-up time.*

Announcements of no school or delayed opening will be communicated by the following methods:

1. Radio stations: WBZ1030; WRKO 680
2. Television stations: Channels 4, 5, 7 & Fox 25
3. Posting on the Westford Public Schools web page
4. Staff members are notified via the Connect-Ed recorded phone message system.

*Note: Each school will have appropriate procedures regarding school scheduling.

Mission, Beliefs & Goals

The Westford Public Schools will provide an excellent, free education to all students in the community. The School System will engage its students in a challenging learning environment to prepare them for the political, economic, social, and technological challenges of a rapidly changing world. It will develop in its students the skills and attitudes that will enable them to be lifelong learners, to exercise sound judgment and to become responsible, contributing members of society. The Westford Public Schools will endeavor to create an environment of mutual respect, courtesy and responsible behavior.

To accomplish this mission, the Westford Public Schools will:

- Provide a curriculum designed to educate the whole child while recognizing that each child is a unique and individual learner.
- Engage staff and administration in on-going professional development.
- Provide support services that meet the needs of each individual student.
- Encourage the collaboration of parents, residents, and the greater Westford community.
- Practice responsible and efficient fiscal planning and management.

Standards of Conduct

Standards of conduct are guidelines for all employees to follow in order to help create a safe, comfortable and productive work environment that sets forth a model worthy of emulation by students. All staff members are expected to carry out their assigned responsibilities with conscientious concern for the well being of staff and students.

Respectful Climate

Our hope and expectation is that all employees of the Westford Public School System will contribute to making our working climate one that is characterized by respectful interactions, cooperation among school and department personnel, open and constructive communication and trust. We will speak kindly with one another and acknowledge each other's talents and skills although we may have different ways of achieving the same goals. We will work collaboratively toward common goals, support one another and accept each other's ideas. We will communicate openly by seeking, giving and receiving feedback, and by sharing information necessary to successfully complete our tasks.

Ethical Behavior

The Westford Public School System expects its employees to follow the highest standards in terms of moral, legal, and ethical conduct in the workplace.

From time to time, employees may be in a predicament that may be considered unethical or illegal. If they are uncertain of the situation, they are expected to contact their supervisor or the Human Resources Department for guidance and direction.

Website: <http://www.mass.gov/ethics>

SECTION II – GENERAL PERSONNEL INFORMATION

Staff Hiring

The Westford Public Schools will endeavor to attract, secure, and hold the highest qualified personnel for all positions.

It is the responsibility of the Superintendent and Principals to determine the personnel needs and to recruit suitable candidates for employment. All applications for employment either on a permanent or temporary basis, shall be in writing, on the standard application provided, and shall be addressed to the Superintendent's office.

To be eligible for a teaching position, an applicant shall meet the certification requirements imposed by law, and shall furnish satisfactory evidence of citizenship and/or legal right to work and previous relevant work experience, as required.

An offer of employment will be subject to applicable licensure, confirmation of "CORI" (Criminal Offender Record Information), and passing a pre-employment drug test.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:38G- Definitions; Provisional Educator, Provisional Educator with Advanced Standing and Standard Educator Certificates

M.G.L. 71:41- Professional Status for Teachers; Contracts; Good Cause Protection for Principals; Dismissal of Principals by Superintendent

Employee Orientation

Each new teacher is expected to participate in the summer "New Teacher Program". New teachers will be assigned a mentor for the first year of employment. On-site supervisors provide on-going support at the building level. All employees are to meet with the Human Resource Coordinator prior to beginning work.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P4105 – Staff Orientation

Student Teachers

All student teacher assignments must be approved by the building Principal.

Personnel Files

Confidential personnel files are maintained at Central Office by Human Resources under the auspices of the Superintendent of Schools.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 4:7- Public Records; Definitions

M.G.L. 66:10 – Inspection of Public Records

M.G.L. 71:42C – Records of Teacher; Inspection

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P4112 – Personnel Records

Change of Name or Address

Any change of name, address or telephone number must be sent to the Human Resources Office on an Employee Information Form in order to change and/or correct records. Any name change requires a copy of the new social security card. No records will be changed until documentation is received.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - Employee Information Form

Required Forms

Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI)

Westford Public Schools shall have access to and shall obtain all available criminal offender record information annually from the criminal history systems board of any current or prospective employee or volunteer of the school department, who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children, including any individual who regularly provides school related transportation to children.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

105 CMR 950.000

71:38R

Website: www.mass.gov or www.mass.gov/dph/topics/cori2/reg105cmr950.htm

W-4

The W-4 form is used so that your employer can withhold the correct Federal Income Tax from your pay. Because your tax situation may change, you may want to refigure your withholding each year and complete a new form as needed.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - W-4

M-4

The M-4 form is used so that your employer can withhold Massachusetts Income Tax from your wages. If you claim the same number of exemptions for Massachusetts and Federal Income Taxes, only the W-4 needs to be completed.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - M-4

I-9

The Immigration Reform and Control Act legally mandates that U.S. employers verify employment eligibility status of newly hired employees and makes it unlawful for employers to knowingly hire or continue to employ unauthorized workers.

Direct Deposit

Direct deposit saves time, eliminates lost, stolen, or forged checks, and your money is deposited even if you are away on payday. Direct Deposit allows the town to credit your net pay to your account and to correct any over or under deposit to your account. The initiation of Direct Deposit takes two payroll cycles after receipt of the authorization form. You will receive a Direct Deposit Statement verifying the amount of the deposit on each payday. To change banks or accounts, you will need to fill out a new authorization form.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - Direct Deposit

Payroll Calendar

All school employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis. The number of payroll periods is subject to contractual language. Payroll checks are sent to the employees' corresponding buildings when school is in session. All checks will be mailed when school buildings are closed for vacations, holidays, and inclement weather.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - Payroll Calendar

Significant Dates

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - Significant Dates

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Benefits

Permanent employees are eligible for benefits through the Town of Westford if employed at 50% or more. Employee benefits commence the first day of the month of hire and terminate on the last day of the month.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - Benefits

Tax Sheltered Annuity (403B)

Presently the Town of Westford has set up deduction options for Tax Sheltered Annuity Plans (403b). School employees may enroll or make changes in a tax sheltered annuity program anytime during the year. Accounts must be arranged by the employee and his/her financial planner prior to submitting a request to Human Resources.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - Salary Reduction Form

Deferred Compensation

The Town of Westford offers a 457 Deferred Compensation Plan that allows participants to save for retirement with pre-tax dollars through salary deductions.

457 Deferred Compensation Plan
ING Life Insurance & Annuity Co.
1601 Trapelo Road
Waltham, MA 02451
781-768-4840
Website: www.ingretirementplans.com

Insurance

The Town of Westford provides eligible employees and their dependents the opportunity to participate in a variety of voluntary and contributory insurance plans which may change from time to time. Employees have 30 days from date of hire to enroll in the Health, Dental, Life and/or Disability Plans. Otherwise, the employee will have to wait until the next open enrollment period (October). At the time of a

qualifying event such as marriage, divorce, birth/adoption of a child, loss of coverage through a spouse, or death of a family member the employee may elect a plan at that time.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - Insurance

Health Insurance

The Town of Westford provides employees and their eligible dependents the opportunity to participate in various Health Insurance Plans (HMO & PPO).

Voluntary Dental Insurance

The Town of Westford provides employees and their eligible dependents the opportunity to participate in a voluntary Dental Insurance Plan. Dental must be in place when you retire to continue coverage and may not be reinstated once coverage is cancelled.

Voluntary Life Insurance

The Town of Westford provides employees and their eligible dependents the opportunity to participate in a voluntary Life Insurance Plan. Where as, only benefit eligible employees can participate in a Town sponsored life insurance plan.

Voluntary Short & Long Term Disability Plan

The Town of Westford provides employees the opportunity to participate in voluntary Short & Long Term Disability Insurance Plans.

Leave of Absence/Retirement (Benefit Eligibility)

Anyone granted a leave of absence should contact Human Resources to ensure continuous insurance coverage for the period of his/her absence. Employees who go on an unpaid leave of absence must assume responsibility for payment of any health, life, LTD, STD, or dental insurance coverage. As a retiree of the Town of Westford, you are eligible to continue with your current insurance benefits with the exception of LTD and STD.

Termination of Insurance

Upon leaving employment of the Town of Westford, benefits will terminate on the first day of the following month after termination of employment. During this period, the employee will be notified and given an opportunity to continue benefits under COBRA.

COBRA

Under the federal law entitled the "Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985, known as COBRA, employees and their covered dependents may have certain rights to continued group health insurance coverage, for 18 months, if they lose their eligibility due to: termination of employment; or reduction in work hours.

Enrolled dependents may also have the right under COBRA to continued coverage for 36 months if their eligibility is terminated due to: loss of status as a dependent, the employee's eligibility for Medicare; divorce or legal separation from the employee; or death of the employee.

The cost of COBRA coverage is 100% of the total premium, and is to be paid in full by the eligible employee, spouse or dependent.

Flexible Spending Accounts

Flexible Spending Accounts allow you to set aside a portion of “pre tax” dollars to cover certain health and dependent care expenses. These contributions are deducted from your paycheck prior to federal and state taxes.

Flexible Spending Accounts
Cafeteria Plan Advisors, Inc
1250 Hancock Street, Suite 803N
Quincy, MA 02169
800-544-2340
Website: www.cpal25.com

Employee Assistance Program

It is the responsibility of each employee to seek help before a condition has an adverse impact on his/her employment. The Town of Westford provides a no-cost Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through the Wellness Corporation. The EAP entitles you and your household members to confidential counseling and assistance on personal or work-related issues such as family & marital problems, drug & alcohol abuse, stress management, financial difficulties, health problems and emotional stress.

The Wellness Corporation
512 West Main Street
Shrewsbury, MA 01545
800-828-6025

Website: <http://www.wellnessworklife.com>
Click on NEW MEMBERS REGISTER HERE
Company: Westford, Town of
Complete the remaining fields with your information

Employee Arrest

In the event of an arrest of an employee of the Westford Public Schools on criminal charges, the Superintendent will evaluate the case on an individual basis and determine the appropriate action to be taken under the guidelines stated in the policy.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P4117 – Employee Arrest

Dismissal or Demotion of Staff

Please refer to the following:

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:42 – Dismissal or Demotion of Employees by Principals and Superintendent; Review and Arbitration of Dismissal

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P4106 – Dismissal or Demotion of Staff

Refer to your negotiated contract

Evaluation of Staff

Please refer to the following:

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P2108 - Instructional Program

P4403 – Evaluation of Staff

Refer to your negotiated contract

Resignation

The Superintendent is authorized to accept resignations from employees of the schools on behalf of the School Committee, and shall report said resignations to the School Committee at its next regular meeting. Employees are encouraged to notify the building administrator and the Human Resource department of such intent at as early a date as possible and in accordance with the appropriate negotiated agreement.

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P4107 – Resignation

Refer to your negotiated contract

Retirement

Staff members who intend to retire are encouraged to indicate their plans to the Superintendent at as early a date as possible and/or in accordance with the appropriate negotiated agreement.

The retirement benefit selection determines if either you or your survivors will receive all or a portion of your contributions and interest in the form of a refund, retirement allowance or survivor benefit.

Employees will be enrolled in one of the following retirement plans based on your job classification.

Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System

You are eligible to join the MTRS if you are employed as a teacher or administrator in a Massachusetts public school outside the City of Boston or in any charter school in Massachusetts and:

- you are covered by a contractual agreement regarding your employment;
- you are employed on at least a half-time basis;
- you are certified by the Department of Education; and,

- your contractual agreement requires that you be certified by the Department of Education as a condition of your employment.

Contribution rate is determined by the date when the member first enrolls in the public retirement system.

Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System
One Charles Park, 2nd Floor
Cambridge, MA 02142-1206
617-679-6877
Website : www.mass.gov/mtrb

Middlesex Retirement System

Membership in the Middlesex Retirement System is required by law for all employees who are employed in a permanent position and who work fifty percent or more in an eligible position. The amount each employee is required to contribute to the Middlesex Retirement System each year is set by statute.

Middlesex Retirement System
25 Linnell Circle, Box 160
Billerica, MA 01865
800-258-3805
Website: www.middlesexretirement.org

OBRA

As a part-time, seasonal or temporary employee of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or a Massachusetts local government employer, you are required to participate in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Deferred Compensation Plan. The Plan is an alternative to Social Security coverage as permitted by the federal Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. As an OBRA employee, you must contribute at least 7.5% of your gross compensation per pay period to the Plan.

OBRA
ING Life Insurance & Annuity Co.
151 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06156
800-584-6001
Website: www.ingretirementplans.com

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 32:16 – Involuntary Retirement; Right to Hearing and Appeal
M.G.L. 32:90F – Relating to the Continued Employment of Certain Employees after Mandatory Retirement Age
M.G.L. 32:90G – Relating to Certain Veterans Who Have Reached the Age for Mandatory Retirement

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P4108 – Retirement

Exit Interviews

Exit interviews are encouraged when employees leave Westford Public Schools as the system may benefit from your honest and candid impressions and suggestions. Formal exit interviews with Human Resources and/or Superintendent are available upon request. Keys, educational materials, and equipment shall be returned to the building Principal.

Professional Development Plan

The Westford Public Schools shall adopt and implement a Professional Development Plan for all Principals, teachers, and other professional staff. The Professional Development Plan shall be updated annually. The Westford Public Schools budget shall include funds for the Professional Development Plan.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:38G – Definitions; Provisional Educator, Provisional Educator with Advanced Standing and Standard Educator Certificates

M.G.L. 71:38Q – Professional Development Plan for Professional Staff

M.G.L. 71:59C – School Councils

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P4502 - Professional Development Plan

Educational Workshops

Any staff member requesting to attend a conference or workshop should initiate such a request with their immediate supervisor. The goals of such workshops and conferences should relate to the vision of Westford Public Schools.

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P4119 – Educational Workshops

Reimbursement of Expenses

Building supplies are purchased at the beginning of each year. Should you need additional supplies please contact your immediate supervisor. Prior approval and supporting receipts are required for any reimbursement for job related expenses (excluding taxes) as outlined in the School Committee policy. All receipts should be submitted in a timely fashion.

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P3506– Expense Reimbursements

SECTION III – RULES AND REGULATIONS

Professional Dress & Grooming

All employees are expected to come to school clean and to wear clothing that meets or exceeds their high regard for education and presents an image consistent with their job responsibilities.

Work Related Illness/Injury

Any employee who is injured while on the job, should report immediately to an administrator/school nurse. All incidents need to be reported by completing a *First Report of Injury*.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P4113 – Worker’s Compensation Insurance

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - First Report of Injury

Personal Telephone Calls

Use of school telephones for personal business is prohibited except in emergencies.

Errands Outside of School Buildings

To ensure both student and staff safety, an employee needing to leave the building during school hours is required to seek prior approval from the building Principal or his/her designee. Furthermore, students are not to be sent on errands outside the building.

Transportation of Pupils by Private Means

In order to best protect you and your student(s) involved in a field trip, faculty must follow field trip regulations and have signed permission slips from parents delineating who the driver is and include the year, make and model of vehicle. Faculty transporting students to the field trip must follow the set itinerary. Non-school personnel are required to show a valid drivers license and a current vehicle registration; the faculty member running the field trip is required to keep copies of drivers’ information. All employees are discouraged from providing transportation to students before, during, and after school hours.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P5404 – Student Field Trips
P5405 – Student Travel
P6120 – Field Trips

Fire Drill Procedures

Every school has a fire drill procedure. All employees will familiarize themselves and students with the fire drill procedure for their school or area.

School Stage Procedures – Inspection by Fire Department

The Westford Fire Department has established a policy that prior to the performance of any stage productions in Westford Public Schools, persons responsible will contact the Westford Fire Department for a safety inspection of the site. No performance will be allowed without the issuance of a permit for that purpose. A permit will be issued, only after inspection, and will be valid **ONLY** for the production at hand.

Faculty/Staff Internet Acceptable Use Policy

Please refer to the following:

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P6302 – District Acceptable Internet Use

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/tech/aup.html>

Acceptance & Use of Gifts, Grants and Donations

Gifts from Students

Students and their parents/legal guardians are discouraged from the routine presentation of gifts to school employees on occasions such as holidays and/or the end of the school year. Students and their parents/legal guardians may make contributions to the school in honor of a school employee. The School Committee considers it appropriate to write letters to staff members expressing gratitude or appreciation.

It is not appropriate for a single student to give a gift that has a value over \$50. Students may pool funds at times to purchase a gift that is over \$50. Those are appropriate when the total value divided by the number of student's tallies out to each student giving less than \$50.

Reference: Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 268A - Conduct of Public Officials, Employees

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P4115 – Gifts to School Personnel

Student Handbook

Conflict of Interest

No employee of the Westford Public Schools will engage in or have a financial interest in, directly or indirectly, any activity that conflicts or raises a reasonable question of conflict with his/her duties and responsibilities in the school system; nor will any staff member engage in any type of private business during school time or on school property.

Employees will not engage in work of any type where information concerning customer, client, or employer originates from any information available to them through school sources.

In cases where the situation results after initial employment, no employee shall be placed in any position where the direct administration or supervisory authority over the position is exercised by a spouse or relative of that employee.

Employees with questions about how Chapter 268A applies to them may contact the State Ethics Commission's legal Division.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:
M.G.L. 268A-Conduct of Public Officials, Employees

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P4109 –Conflict of Interest

Substance Abuse

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance in the workplace is prohibited. Violations of this prohibition will result in discharge or other appropriate action consistent with the Westford Public School System's disciplinary processes that may require such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.

Reporting to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol is strictly prohibited by the Westford Public School System and will result in immediate corrective action up to and including termination. The Westford Public School System has the responsibility to protect its employees and students from the serious risks of substance abuse. The use of drugs or alcohol affects job performance and creates an unsafe environment for employees.

The term "drug" includes alcohol, illegal substances, over-the-counter medications, and controlled substances that may alter an employee's behavior or judgment.

Violation of the substance abuse policy includes reporting to work under the influence, or the use, possession, manufacture, purchase, transfer, or sale of a controlled or illegal substance on work/school premises. Upon suspicion that an employee may be abusing a substance, an investigation will be conducted and corrective action will follow, if deemed appropriate.

Website: <http://www.wellnessworklife.com>
Click on NEW MEMBERS REGISTER HERE
Company: Westford, Town of
Complete the remaining fields with your information

Drug Free Workplace

The Westford Public Schools will maintain a drug-free and alcohol-free workplace. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or use of controlled substances or alcohol is prohibited while on duty or on school department property. Any violations of this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including immediate suspension or dismissal. Federal law, known as the Drug-Free Workplace Act, requires the Westford Public Schools to certify that it maintains a drug-free workplace as a condition of receiving federal grants and contracts.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P4201 – Drug Free Workplace

Drug Free School Zones

Massachusetts General Law Reference:
M.G.L. Chapter 94C – Drug Free School Zones

Tobacco/Smoke Free Environment

The Westford Public Schools are dedicated to providing a healthy, comfortable, and productive environment for staff, students, and citizens. The School Committee believes that education has a central role in establishing patterns of behavior related to good health and shall take measures to help its students to resist tobacco use. Therefore, the School Committee has established the following policy:

Smoking and the use of tobacco products shall be prohibited on school district property. This shall include school buildings and school owned/contracted/leased vehicles. The fine for smoking is \$100.00. An employee can be cited for smoking on school property or in school vehicles by a Board of Health official or an agent of the Board of Health.

Any violation of this policy by staff shall be referred to the appropriate supervisor. First-time violators shall receive a verbal warning with a written notation being kept by the appropriate supervisor. A second violation will receive a written warning with a copy being placed in the personnel file. Further violations shall be considered insubordination and shall be dealt with accordingly and be based upon established policies and procedures for suspension and dismissal of staff. Employees may voluntarily attend approved "Stop Smoking Programs" which may be funded at School Committee expense.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Website: <http://www.wellnessworklife.com>

Click on NEW MEMBERS REGISTER HERE

Company: Westford, Town of

Complete the remaining fields with your information

Any violation of this policy by students shall be reported by the staff to the building Principal at the elementary/middle school level and the Assistant Principal/Deans at the high school level.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:37H-Publication of School Committee Rules and Regulations Relative to the Conduct of Teachers and Students

Town of Westford Tobacco Regulations Reference:

Regulations affecting smoking and the sale, vending and distribution of tobacco in Westford

Relationships With Students

Teachers and school staff working with students have a responsibility to maintain respectful and appropriate relationships with colleagues, students, parents, and members of the community. In order to maintain the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of members of the community, staff members should strive for the highest possible degree of professional conduct at all times. Whenever there is doubt about the intentions of a staff member in his or her relationships with a student(s), concerns should be brought to the attention of the Principal. Failure to do so may put students and the staff member at risk.

Tutoring for Pay

Tutoring is defined as giving private instruction or help to an individual or group for which the tutor receives remuneration other than through the School Committee. The Principal may give the parents/legal guardians a list of persons who are willing to tutor. This list may include teachers, but not

the student's teacher of the subject in which he/she is to be tutored. Public school buildings may not be used for private teaching for which tuition charge is made, either by staff members employed by the school department, or by any other outside agencies or person, except as approved by the Superintendent or designee.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P4303 –Tutoring for Pay

Confidentiality

Effective and appropriate communication between administrators, staff, parents and students is vital to the success of the educational process. In order to ensure that such communication can take place in confidence, it is necessary to protect the right to privacy of students and staff.

Individuals associated with students in any capacity shall:

- (1) Not disclose confidential information about students obtained in the course of professional services unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.
- (2) Not accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity that will require the disclosure of confidential information that has been gained by reason of official position.
- (3) Not knowingly make disparaging, false, or malicious statements about staff or students.
- (4) Not withhold pertinent information that is not confidential.

Any violation of this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including immediate suspension or dismissal.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:
Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations 603 CMR 23.00: Student Records

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P5507 – HIV/AIDS
P6111 – Student Records
P6301 – District Computing Environment
P7109 – New Member Orientation

Religious Expressions

Official Neutrality Regarding Religious Activity

Teachers and school administrators, when acting in those capacities, are representatives of the state and are prohibited by the establishment clause from soliciting or encouraging religious activity, and from participating in such activity with students. Teachers and administrators also are prohibited from discouraging activity because of its religious content, and from soliciting or encouraging antireligious activity.

Teaching about Religion

Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion, including the Bible or other scripture: the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other

countries all are permissible public school subjects. Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature, and social studies. Although public schools may teach about religious holidays, including their religious aspects, and may celebrate the secular aspects of holidays, schools may not observe holidays as religious events or promote such observances by students.

Teaching Values

Though schools must be neutral with respect to religion, they may play an active role with respect to teaching civic values and virtue, and the moral code that holds us together as a community. The fact that some of these values are held also by religions does not make it unlawful to teach them in school.

SECTION IV – ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Salaries – Salary Schedule Provisions

Initial salaries are established at the time of hiring, consistent with any contractual scales or salary guidelines that exist for the position.

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Seniority

Seniority for the purpose of this handbook is the length of continuous employment as an employee in the Westford Public Schools measured from the date that the employee entered said bargaining unit or agreement. Please refer to negotiated agreement for conditions of seniority.

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Agency Fee

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Grievance Procedure

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Personal Days

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Holidays

Teachers and certain other salaried staff who work on a school calendar basis do not receive separate paid holidays. Full time (12 month) employees are eligible for paid holidays as specified in the various union contracts and agreements. Westford Public Schools recognizes the following holidays.

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Columbus Day
Presidents' Day	Veterans' Day*
Patriots' Day	Thanksgiving
Good Friday *	Day after Thanksgiving
Memorial Day	Christmas
Independence Day	

**Based on school calendar*

Vacation Days

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Leave Request Procedures

Any leave request should be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools and copied to the building Principal or Supervisor using the appropriate leave request form. Extended leaves, greater than 3 days, require a formal letter. This formal letter should include: type of leave request, pertinent dates, intent to apply eligible sick days or not, article and section in your negotiated contract.

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/hrm/index.html> - Leave Request Form

Sick Leave

Regular full-time employees and part-time employees are eligible to accrue sick leave. Sick leave is to be used in the event of personal illness or eligible family leave, non-job related injury or disability. Sick leave may be used for doctor's visits that cannot be scheduled outside of normal work hours. Refer to your negotiated agreement regarding the provisions of sick leave.

Sick Leave Bank

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Bereavement Leave

Employees should consult their respective collective bargaining contracts and agreements to ascertain the amount of bereavement leave to which they are entitled.

Extended Leave of Absence

Unpaid leaves of absence may be requested as specified in union contracts/agreements and are subject to approval of the Superintendent of Schools. A leave of up to one year without pay may be granted to professional status employees. If such leave is granted, the employee shall notify the Superintendent in writing of the intention to return and the date of return by April 15 of the leave year.

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Administrative Leave

Refer to your negotiated contract.

After School Assistance to Pupils

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Meetings

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Inspection of Records

A personnel folder for each present and former employee will be accurately maintained in the Central Administrative Office. In addition to application for employment and references, the folders will contain records and information relative to compensation, payroll deductions, evaluations, and any other pertinent information. The Superintendent/designee will be the official custodian for personnel files and will have overall responsibility for maintaining and preserving the confidentiality of the files within the provisions of the law. Each employee will have the right, upon written request, to review the contents of his/her own personnel file. Records cannot be removed from the department, however, employees who wish to obtain copies of documents contained in their personnel file must first submit a written request with Human Resources.

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Tuition Reimbursement

Westford Public Schools encourages all employees to participate in professional development activities to pursue higher educational programs leading to advanced degrees or certificates. To this end, tuition reimbursement benefits have been negotiated for certain employee groups and information is outlined in your respective union contract and employee agreement.

Website: <http://www.westford.mec.edu/pipelines/courseapprove.html> - Course Approval

Course Vouchers

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Educator Licensure

Refer to MA DOE site http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/e_license.html

SECTION V – SOME STATE & FEDERAL LAWS APPLYING TO ALL PERSONNEL

Maternity Leave/Adoption Leave

Massachusetts Maternity Leave Act (MMLA):

The MMLA requires that an employee on leave be restored to her previous or a similar position upon her return to employment following leave. That position must have the same status, pay, length of service credit and seniority as the position the employee held prior to the leave. If an employee's job was changed temporarily because of her pregnancy prior to leave (e.g., her hours were reduced or her duties were changed as an accommodation) she should be restored to the same or similar position held prior to such temporary change.

Website: <http://www.mass.gov/mcad/maternity1.html>

Family and Medical Leave Act

The Westford Public Schools follow the federal guidelines under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). FMLA requires employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to “eligible” employees for certain family and medical reasons. Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, and for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if there are at least 50 employees within 75 miles.

Other Provisions:

Special rules apply to employees of local education agencies. Generally, these rules provide for FMLA leave to be taken in blocks of time when intermittent leave is needed or the leave is required near the end of a school term.

U.S. Department of Labor Websites:

<http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/>

<http://www.dol.gov> under section Special Rules concerning Employees of Local Educational Agencies: Title 29 Chapter 28 Subchapter 2618

<http://www.westfordma.gov> under Human Resources/FMLA Fact Sheet

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P4118 – Family & Medical Leave

Military Leave

When an employee is called to military service, the employee must give advance written notice to the school district of the military leave. Written notice of service may include copies of orders or other written documentation with respect to being called to service.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

Website: <http://www.mass.gov> under Chapter 33: Section 59.

Jury Duty

Employees are granted time off with pay to serve Jury Duty. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the Human Resources Department for submittal to the Payroll Department. Any compensation received by the Court must also be submitted to the Human Resources Department for submittal to the Director of School Finance.

Non-Discrimination/Affirmative Action Policy

The Westford Public School System is an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of the Westford Public School System to prohibit discrimination of any type and to afford equal employment opportunities to employees and applicants, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status. Any employee, volunteer, or pupil shall not demonstrate any discrimination in any activity associated with the Westford Public Schools.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:39 Restriction on Information Required from Applicants for Positions

Professional Teacher Status/School Nurse Status

As cited in Massachusetts General law, a teacher, school librarian, school adjustment counselor, school social worker, or school psychologist who has served in Westford Public Schools for the three previous consecutive school years shall be considered a teacher, and shall be entitled to professional teacher status.

The Superintendent, upon the recommendation of the Principal, may award professional teacher status to any teacher who has served in the Principal's school for not less than one year, or to a teacher who has attained professional status in any other public school district in the commonwealth. A teacher without professional teacher status shall be notified in writing on or before May 15th whenever such person is not to be employed for the following school year. Unless such notice is given, a teacher without professional status shall be deemed to be appointed for the following school year.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 71:41 – Professional Status for Teachers, Contracts, Good Cause Protection for Principals; Dismissals of Principals by Superintendent

M.G.L. 71:42 – Dismissal or Demotion of Employees by Principal and Superintendent; Review and Arbitration of Dismissal

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P4501 – Professional Teacher Status

Refer to your negotiated contract.

Harassment (Under Revision)

The School Committee is committed to maintaining a work and educational environment free from all forms of harassing conduct. Harassment including, but not limited to, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sex, creed, martial status, sexual orientation or disability will not be tolerated in the

Westford Public Schools. All employees, students, contracted vendors, and other members of the school community will conduct themselves in an appropriate manner with respect, dignity, courtesy, and fair treatment for all individuals while on school grounds, school property, or property within the jurisdiction of the school district, school buses, or attending or engaging in school activities.

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

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

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

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

General Harassment (sexual harassment) includes unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors and other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature as listed below:

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

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

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

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

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. 151B:3A – Policy on Sexual Harassment

Website: www.eeoc.gov

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P5303 – Harassment

Convicted of a Crime

Refer to 603 CMR 7.14 (8a)

Memorandum of Understanding

The Westford School Systems and the Westford Police Department agree to coordinate their efforts to prevent substance abuse (defined as illegal drugs and alcohol) by the students of Westford and to prevent violence-involving students of Westford.

Furthermore, we agree to respond effectively and cooperatively for everyone's protection from incidents of school delinquency and criminal behavior. The joint effort of cooperative response will focus on incidents, which take place on school grounds, within school property or at school sponsored events.

Procedure for Reporting of Child Abuse & Neglect

The Mandated Reporter Statute: C.119 51-A

**All guidance counselors are mandated reporters.*

Massachusetts Law defines the following professionals as mandated reporters:

- Psychologists, emergency medical technicians, dentists, nurses, chiropractors, podiatrists, optometrists, osteopaths;
- Public or private schoolteachers, educational administrators, guidance or family counselors;
- Day care and child care workers, including any person paid to care for, or work with, a child in any public or private facility, or home or program funded or licensed by the Commonwealth, which provides day care or residential services. This includes child care resource and referral agencies, as well as voucher management agencies, family day care and child care food programs;
- Social workers, foster parents, probation officers, clerks magistrate of the district courts, and parole officers;
- School attendance officers; allied mental health and licensed human services professionals;
- Psychiatrists, and clinical social workers; drug an alcoholism counselors;

Mandated reporters who are staff members of schools, medical facilities, or other public or private institutions, may notify the Department of Social Services directly or notify the person in charge of the facility (or their designee) who is then responsible for contacting the Department of Social Services.

Mandated reporters must make an oral report by immediately telephoning the local Department of Social Services area office or the hotline after business hours. In addition, a written report must be submitted within 48 hours.

These reports should contain (when available) the child's name, date of birth, address, information on the child's parents or person in charge of his/her care, the nature and extent of the neglect, abuse, and/or injuries, the manner in which this information was learned of, and any other pertinent information.

Mandated reporters are also required to submit their name, contact information, and relationship with the child.

Massachusetts law states that any mandated reporter who fails to file required oral and written reports may be punished by a fine of up to \$1000.00.

Under the law, mandated reporters who file a report in good faith are protected from liability in any civil or criminal action filed in connection to the report.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

M.G.L. Chapter 119, Section 51A – Public Welfare

SECTION VI – ITEMS PERTAINING TO PUPILS & OTHERS

Attendance

Refer to the following:

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P5409 – Attendance

Medication Policy

Refer to the following:

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P5503 – Administration of Prescription Medications

Health & Emergency Information Sheets

A nurse in each school building will be responsible for the collection and maintenance of all staff and student health and emergency information sheets. This information should be disseminated to appropriate staff.

Field Trips

Pupils participating in field trips, sponsored by the public schools, shall submit parental approval in writing prior to the event. School Committee policies detail the procedures for all field trips. It shall be the policy of Westford Public Schools to obtain all available Criminal Offender Record Information (C.O.R.I.) from the Criminal History Systems Board for employee(s) or volunteer(s) who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children over the course of the field trip. Staff members are reminded that field trips should relate to the appropriate curriculum and enhance the learning experience.

“The Department of Public Health grants registration to the Westford Public Schools for the limited purpose of permitting the delegation of prescription medications to unlicensed, properly trained responsible adult(s) for students on field trips and short term school events, when a school nurse (RN) is not available...”

(Adapted from the Westford Public Schools Medication Administration Protocol and www.mass.gov/dph/regs/reg105cmr210.pdf).

Teachers should consult their building administrator(s) and the school nurse for Field Trip Protocol regarding medication of students.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P5404 - Student Field Trips
P5405 - Student Travel
P6120 - Field Trips
P4120 - Criminal Offender Record Information

Student Records

State and federal laws governing school records allow parents and legal guardians to inspect and amend the school records of their children in accordance with 603CMR, Section 23.08 of the Massachusetts Department of Education student regulations. Students may also inspect their own records upon reaching the age of 14 or Grade 9. A professionally qualified school staff person shall be available, upon request, to interpret any of the contents. No information in a student record shall be given to a third party without the specific written consent of the student and/or his or her parents. A student's temporary record is destroyed after notification after five years. A student's permanent record is retained for 60 years.

Access to student records is available through the schools Guidance Department.

Teachers, nurses, guidance counselors, and administrators are obligated to be current on the Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504, Title 1 Reports, and any other correspondence relating to the academic, emotional, and/or medical concerns of each student in their school or class.

Massachusetts General Law Reference:

Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations 603CMR, Section 23.08: Student Records

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P6111 - Student Records

P4111 – Review of Student Files

Sales through Schools

Students shall not sell materials or products for private gain in school buildings or on school property. However, they may sell tickets and materials for school-sponsored events with approval of the Principal or designee. Students will not solicit staff (either in or out of school) to purchase tickets or merchandise of any sort, including those for school-sponsored activities.

Students/staff/vendors are prohibited from selling competitive food during school lunch hours.

Research Studies Involving Students

If school personnel or students are the subjects of a research study conducted within a school building, then approval for such a study must be given by the School Committee which will evaluate the ethical procedures involved.

Home Instruction (Prolonged Illness or Accident)

When homebound instruction is under way, the program design for each student is determined by his or her educational plan and consists primarily of academic tasks which are coordinated by the regular/special education teacher(s) and the home instruction teacher.

Westford Public Schools Policy:

P6201 – Homebound Instruction

Emergency Response Manual

All employees should be familiar with their individual school plan on Crisis Response Management.

Homework Policy

The School Committee recommends the appropriate assignment of homework. Homework should be a useful adjunct to in-school learning. It should be an application or adaptation of a classroom experience; it should not be assigned for disciplinary purposes. Teachers should use discretion in the assignment of homework prior to weekends, vacations, and holidays. Homework and projects should not be assigned so that the due dates will conflict with the celebration of religious holidays.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P6112 – Homework

Scheduling of Tests on Religious Holidays

Teachers shall reference the Westford Public Schools Calendar when scheduling homework and tests.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P6113 – Scheduling of Tests

Dismissal of Student by School Personnel

In the event a student should be sent home during the school day due to illness or disciplinary reasons, he or she must be accompanied home by a parent/legal guardian or a designated person. He or she must be kept in school until the end of the session if a parent/legal guardian cannot be reached.

A student of legal age may transport him/herself home.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P5110 – Dismissal of Student by School Personnel

Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers shall adhere to the educational philosophy of the Westford Public Schools.

Curriculum and Instruction shall be designed as detailed per Westford Public Schools Policy.

Westford Public Schools sanctions the use of audio-visual material for curriculum-related purposes only. Instructional AV material should be viewed with advanced planning and pre and post-viewing activities and/or study guides. This information will be available for administrator's review at the beginning of the unit of study.

Westford Public Schools Policy:
P6101 – Educational Philosophy
P6103 – Curriculum & Instruction

Discipline

The primary goal of our disciplinary policies and procedures is to ensure that the student develops a sense of responsibility for his/her own actions. If we accept the premise that we are preparing students to take their own place in adult life, then we must also prepare them for the reality that the adult world does not excuse irresponsibility, forgetfulness, or poor judgment; nor does it look with favor on the individual who does not acknowledge the rights of others. Disciplinary policy should be viewed as a vehicle through which self-discipline is developed. Sending students to the office for disciplinary purposes should be held to an absolute minimum. However, staff members will report to building administrators any student behavior that they feel may be drug or alcohol induced. The use of drugs or the consumption of any alcoholic beverage on school property or at school functions is prohibited. Under no condition is a student to be stationed in the corridor for disciplinary reasons.

Westford Public Schools Policy:

- P5301 - Student Conduct
- P5312 - Corporal Punishment
- P5302 - Student Handbooks
- P6301 - District Computing Environment
- P6302 - District Acceptable Internet use
- And individual school handbooks