

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Chew, Superintendent
FROM: Dan Twomey, Dean of Students
DATE: May 9, 2022
RE: School Committee Approval of Proposed Student Handbook Changes

Please find the proposed changes for next year's Westford Academy Student Handbook. These proposed changes have been approved by our School Council, Handbook Committee, Westford Academy faculty, Westford Academy Administration and our Deans Council.

Proposal #1- Change 1st time violation for tobacco/vape possession/use from in school suspension to successful completion iDecide Program

Handbook Language: First Violation = \$100 Fine, Successful completion of iDecide Program. Program must be completed within 60 days of violation. Parent/Guardian Notified.

Rationale: Nicotine contact/flavors are highly addictive. The goal should be to teach and educate students on the detrimental effects of these products. "iDECIDE (Drug Education Curriculum: Intervention, Diversion, and Empowerment) was developed to provide schools with a science-based intervention for students caught violating school substance use policy (e.g., using at school or at school sanctioned events or reporting to school intoxicated). iDECIDE is an alternative to punitive responses to student substance use.

Proposal #2- Add language and consequences for "taunting" under student conduct.

Handbook Language: Taunting is prohibited during school and all school events. Taunting includes any actions or comments by students which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule, or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included is conduct that berrates, needles, intimidates, or threatens, based on race, gender identity, ethnic origin or background, and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs or personal characteristics. Examples include, but are not limited to "trash talk", "chirping", defined as verbal communication of a personal nature directed at another person by ridiculing skills, efforts, sexual orientation, or lack of success, which is likely to provoke an altercation or response.

Possible consequences include but are not limited to the following; dismissal from events/activity, detentions, restorative practices, and/or suspension.

Rationale: We need to be extremely clear what is unacceptable in regards to taunting others during sporting events, and/or school events.

Proposal #3- Add DEI Statement and connect possible consequences for students related to existing harassment policy and student misconduct.

Proposed Language:

WA DEI STATEMENT- Draft

At Westford Academy, we strive to develop an inclusive and equitable school community where every individual is welcomed, respected, valued, and supported.

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

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

Furthermore, students and staff are essential elements to the success of this statement. However, when this statement may be challenged or violated, Westford Academy will hold individuals accountable for their actions or conduct and seek to repair harm or damage to any individual. See Student Conduct and Harassment sections of this handbook for possible consequences.

Rationale: The committee and especially the students wanted to see language in the handbook about Westford Academy's commitment, beliefs and values as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion at the school. Furthermore, when these values/beliefs are violated what the possible outcomes could be.

Westford Academy Student Handbook


May 2022

Endorsing Recommendations of Student Handbook Committee


2022/2023 School Year

Westford Academy Administrative Team

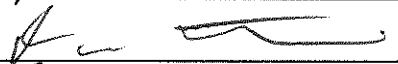
James Antonelli, Principal




Robert Ware, Dean of Students



Dan Twomey, Dean of Students

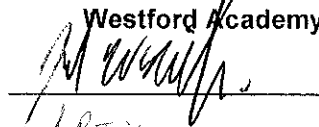


Betsy Murphy, Dean of Students

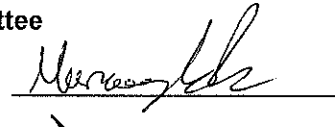


Westford Academy Handbook Committee

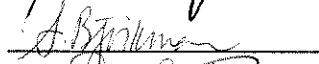
John Nidzgorski



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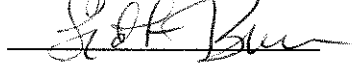
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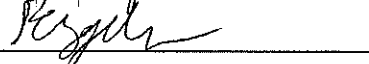
Samrita Murthy



Scott Brown

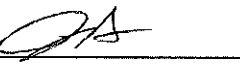


Raj Pola




Westford Academy School Council

Jim Antonelli, Principal



Date: 5/10/2022

Robert Ware, Dean



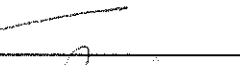
Date: 5/10/22

Lauren Clark, Counseling




Date: 5/10/22

Kristin Morris, Faculty Rep.




Date: 5/10/22

Karen Benway, Community Rep.




Date: 5/10/22

Silas Mark, Parent Rep.



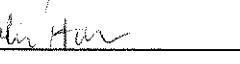
Date: _____

Clare O'Brien, Parent Rep



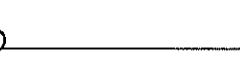
Date: 5/10/22

Colin Hoar, Student Rep.



Date: 5/10/22

Aaditi Padhi, Student Rep.



Date: _____

Westford Academy Honor Code

A healthy academic environment depends on honesty, integrity, and mutual respect, and part of Westford Academy's mission is to instill an understanding of and respect for honorable behavior in its students. For their part, students have a responsibility to understand Westford Academy's expectations for honorable behavior and to ensure that they meet those expectations.

It is expected that all Westford Academy students will abide by the following Honor Code:

"As a member of the Westford Academy community, I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I condone or enable those who do so."

Westford Academy Mission Statement

Westford Academy, in collaboration with home and community, provides a safe environment where high expectations advance academic excellence. We are committed to promoting integrity and critical thinking, while fostering acceptance and life-long learning in an ever-changing global society.

Westford Academy Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement

At Westford Academy, we strive to develop an inclusive and equitable school community where every individual is welcomed, respected, valued, and supported.

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

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

Furthermore, students and staff are essential elements to the success of this statement. However, when this statement may be challenged or violated, Westford Academy will hold individuals accountable for their actions or conduct and seek to repair harm or damage to any individual. See Student Conduct and Harassment sections of this handbook for possible consequences.

Guidelines for Parent/School Communication

If a problem occurs:

1. Start with the staff member most directly involved. If possible, have your student approach the person to try and resolve the issue on their own.

1. Any act which disrupts a class or interferes with the proper activities of the teacher and other members of the class.
2. Insubordination. It is expected that the directions and orders of teachers and administrators will be obeyed immediately.
3. Profanity or obscenity cannot be tolerated in a safe and peaceable school environment and will be punishable.
4. Continuous (two or more) violations of Dress Code guidelines.
5. Disrespect to teachers, secretaries, custodial staff, cafeteria personnel, administrators or other students during any school and co-curricular activity.
6. Card-playing, gambling, or other activities which are not appropriate in school or on the school grounds. Repeated instances of this problem will result in suspension. This includes computer games.
7. Littering.
8. Damage to school property or the property of any other person, i.e., vandalism.
9. Loitering in the halls or lavatories.
10. Harassment (refer to specific Harassment Policy)
11. Any occasion of a serious breach of school policy and / or school rules by a senior during the last quarter of their senior year may result in non-participation in the graduation ceremonies.
12. Excessive tardies. (See Attendance Policy)
13. Taunting- Taunting is prohibited during school and all school events. Taunting includes any actions or comments by students which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule, or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included is conduct that berrates, needles, intimidates, or threatens, based on race, gender identity, ethnic origin or background, and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs or personal characteristics. Examples include, but are not limited to "trash talk", "chirping", defined as verbal communication of a personal nature directed at another person by ridiculing skills, efforts, sexual orientation, or lack of success, which is likely to provoke an altercation or response.
13. Any violation of school rules, policies, regulations or other provisions of the student handbook

STUDENT SUSPENSIONS/EXPULSIONS

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

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

1. **Truancy and leaving the school building/grounds without permission.** Truancy will result in an in-school suspension and four (4) Office Detentions on the first offense. Subsequent offenses will result in at least a three (3)-day suspension from school for each subsequent offense. The make-up policy for work missed is the same as that for unexcused absences. Work missed on date or period of truancy may not be made up.
2. Use, possession or distribution to other student(s) of CBD oil, controlled substances, drugs or alcohol, or possession of drug paraphernalia is strictly prohibited. In addition, those students suspended for drug and/or alcohol use may be required to get a doctor's physical examination report before returning to school. Possession of items that are considered to be drug paraphernalia is a suspendable offense. A student suspended for drug/alcohol use may be required to enter an approved substance abuse program that may also include parental involvement. The distribution of tobacco/vape products is also a suspendable offense.
3. Offenses involving assault of a student/teacher, or possession of drugs or weapons may result in expulsion by the Principal. Refer to this manual for Mass General Law (MGL) c. 71 Sect. 37H regarding potential expulsion for assault, drugs, or weapons.
4. Felony charge or conviction; see M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2.

5. Disrespectful speech or actions toward teachers, secretaries, custodial staff, cafeteria personnel, administrators or other students.
6. Possession of dangerous weapons.
7. Hazing (M.G. L. Chapter 269)

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

- (a) Repeated or multiple cutting of classes.
- (b) Theft; including but not limited to schoolstore, cafeterias, & locker rooms.
- (c) Defacing or willfully damaging school property.
- (d) Fighting/harassment/bullying and or other forms of violence directed at another person. Such actions may include police involvement. A counseling session/conflict mediation session should precede reinstatement to the class of the suspended student.
- (e) Forgery
- (f) Snowballing - snowballs are not to be thrown on school property. Making snowballs is interpreted as throwing them.
- (g) Setting off false alarms (such students will also be referred to the police and fire chief).
- (h) Serious acts of insubordination
- (i) Cutting office detention
- (j) Other extreme acts which infringe on the rights of others or detract from the learning atmosphere.
- (k) Violation of the Computer Environment Policy.
- (l) Present in an "unauthorized area"- Students are expected to follow their schedule and be in their appropriate classes during scheduled times. (Stairwells, unsupervised locker rooms / classrooms or offices are examples of unauthorized areas.)
- (m) Violation of the Honor Code
- (n) Continuous violation of school rules
- (o) Inappropriate behavior
- (p) Possession of prescription medicine without authorization from school nurse
- (q) Taunting

In every case of student misconduct for which suspension or detention may be imposed, a principal(or designee) shall exercise discretion in deciding the consequence for the offense; consider ways to re-engage the student in learning; and avoid using long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried.

DISCIPLINARY DUE PROCESS

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

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

Definitions:

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

In-School Suspension: the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises, for no more than (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple

1. The student's parents/guardians will be notified of the concern.
2. The parents/guardians will be asked to pick up their son/daughter from school.
3. The student will not be readmitted to school until the Principal has received a written statement from an outside licensed mental health professional indicating that they have evaluated the student and find that the student is safe to return to school.
4. Upon their return, school personnel will continue to monitor and work with the student.

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

TOBACCO USE/POSSESSION POLICY

State law has created a Smoke-Free Environment for all schools. The use of tobacco products and/or electronic cigarettes is prohibited at all times by student, staff, and visitors in all school buildings and grounds and at all school-sponsored activities. Penalties for student violation of this policy are spelled out below in accordance with the Tobacco Regulations as noted below.

In accordance with The Westford Public Schools Policy #5306, According to Federal Regulation, Massachusetts General Laws, and Town of Westford By-Laws, the **use/possession of any** tobacco, electronic cigarettes (juuls/vapes) products within the school buildings, the school facilities, on school grounds or school buses, or on school-sponsored field trips, by any individual, including school personnel, is strictly prohibited. Violations are cumulative and enforced by the Westford Board of Health. Tobacco products will be confiscated.

Discipline Procedures for Violation of Tobacco Policy:

First Violation = Fined \$100. successful completion of iDecide Program. Program must be completed within 60 days of violation. Parent / guardian notification.

Second Violation = Fined \$200, Two (2) Days-In-school suspension, parent / guardian notification.

Third Violation = Fined \$300, and for any subsequent violation. Two (2) days out-of-school suspension, parent /guardian notification. Re-entry meeting required with parent / guardian and administrator.

POLICE QUESTIONING AND APPREHENSION

In accordance with The Westford Public Schools Policy #1401:

CUSTODY

A duly authorized police officer may require that a student be released to their custody provided a written notice from the local police department is presented to the school official in charge. The notice for custody should be made only when one (1) or more of the following conditions exist:

- There are clear indications that the student to be questioned is directly involved in a violation of a local ordinance, state or federal statute.
- The individual involved is a known fugitive from either their parents/legal guardians or justice.
- It appears in the best interest of the student that they are taken into protective custody.

The notice must be signed by the local police chief or official representative. Both the police and school officials have a responsibility to notify the parent/legal guardian of the student regarding the action taken.

When circumstances dictate the immediate questioning of a student, the officer will take the student into custody in accordance with the provisions of the above statement. It is clear that a police officer has the right to take a student into custody; however, it is important for law enforcement agencies and school authorities to recognize the parent/legal guardian-student-school relationship.