

Westerly Middle School



10 Sandy Hill Road
Westerly, RI 02891
401-315-1601 *phone*
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Dear WMS Students and Families,

I love to read and I am increasingly inspired by the writing of others. When I came across the message below, a message that perfectly matched my expectations for you, I wanted to share it. So, as we begin this school year of learning and growing together, know that my expectations are for you to:

- 1) Have a vision (Hope and dream!)
- 2) Be a learner, not a finisher (Growth over grades)
- 3) Lean into struggle (Do hard things.)
- 4) Feed your passion (Do fun things!)
- 5) Own your education (Invest in yourself.)
- 6) Own our culture (Help others grow.)

(J. Canfield)

I hope that these words stick with you for this school year and beyond!

This handbook has been created to provide you with information about Westerly Middle School and includes information about our school and our expectations. Remember that no handbook or code of conduct can replace common sense and that you are quite capable of exercising good judgment. While this handbook may identify specific aspects of school life, know that sound decision making and compassion will allow you to focus on learning and opportunity while at WMS.

Enjoy your school year and remember to make good choices.

Sincerely,
Mary Caporelli
Westerly Middle School Principal
mcaporelli@westerly.k12.ri.us



Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year! This handbook is designed to communicate information about WMS and to identify the expectations that we have for each other and for our work together. It clarifies expectations, routines, policies, and consequences and should answer many of the commonly asked questions that you and your parents may have during the school year. We hope that students and families will take the time to go through the information in this handbook to ensure that every student progresses successfully. Please feel free to call your child's teacher or us if you have any questions. Go Bulldogs!

We do our most important work together when we are guided by the same values. We thank you for entrusting your children to us. We look forward to working with you, to fully enjoying your children's unique talents, and to jointly celebrating their experience as middle schoolers.

Our Guiding Values are the core principles that guide and direct our school and its culture. At Westerly Middle School these guiding values serve as a moral compass, impacting our actions and our words.

Respect At WMS respect is non-negotiable. Respect guides our every action and interaction, and allows us and others to do and be our best. All decisions at WMS are vetted through a lens of respect to boost teacher effectiveness and encourage active and appropriate participation in classroom activities. Positive, supportive, and respectful relationships increase students' odds of long-term academic and social success. At WMS respect is not just a word it is a way of being.

Accountability: At WMS accountability is non-negotiable. We accept responsibility for honest and ethical conduct towards others. We accept responsibility for our own actions and demonstrate a willingness to be transparent. We are open to feedback and allow others to observe and evaluate our performance.

Perseverance: At WMS perseverance is non-negotiable. We believe that perseverance relates to students' intellectual engagement and is closely connected to optimism, academic self-concept, and academic buoyancy. Perseverance demonstrates our ability to keep doing something in spite of obstacles. We persevere to show steadfastness in doing something despite how hard it is or how long it takes us to reach the goal.

The Westerly Middle School Leadership Team



ACADEMICS

Academic Teams

“Effective interdisciplinary teams lead to improved student achievement, increased parental contacts, and enhanced school climate, and positive attitudes.” AMLE *This We Believe* (2010)

The team approach to instruction in middle school is considered the preferred organizational structure and one that truly responds to the unique physical, intellectual, social-emotional, and moral developmental needs of young adolescents. At WMS each team is composed of a core group of teachers that work and plan together to get to know and provide instruction to a common group of students.

All WMS students share their English/Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science Teachers with their team and access a wide variety of specialist classes (Tech, Allied Arts, PE/Health, etc.) that rotate throughout the year.

Assessments

WMS believes that letter grades are beneficial as they give students a clear way to measure their progress and a clear goal that they can measure and see. Used well, letter grades can give every student the motivation to succeed. To document progress A, B, C, D, and F are used. Plus (+) and minus (-) designations may be given. Teachers also record effort and select appropriate comments for each area of instruction. Our report card is designed to supply parents and guardians with essential information in a clear and concise format. You may refer to the district calendar for end of grading period dates. Progress reports and report cards are issued quarterly in Skyward Family Access.

The numeral equivalents for the letter grades are as follows:

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D = 65-69 (no + or -)
A = 93-96	B = 83-86	C = 73-76	F = 50-64 failure
A- = 90-92	B- = 80-82	C- = 70-72	I = Incomplete* M = Medical excuse

WMS Honor Roll distinction is for students who achieve A’s and B’s.

***“I” for Incomplete** is used only in rare situations of illness or other serious reasons that impede a student from fulfilling school expectations by the end of the marking period. When a grade of incomplete is given, the student has the responsibility for making arrangements with the teacher who assigned the incomplete to fulfill all the requirements for a grade. Once the work is completed the appropriate letter grade will be assigned by the next marking period. Failing to complete the requirements will result in an F at the next marking period.



ATTENDANCE

All students are expected to arrive on time, everyday, ready to learn!

Arrival & Dismissal

Our school day is **8:00AM - 2:30PM**. The school opens at 7:40 with breakfast available in the cafeteria. All students are able to be transported by bus to and from school daily. Parents/guardians transporting students are asked to drop students off no earlier than 7:40 AM and to pick up students at dismissal using the designated parent/guardian drop-off area in a safe and orderly manner.

Students are expected to report directly to their pod upon arrival and will be supervised by a staff member until their 8:00AM entry to homeroom. Morning announcements will start the day at 8:00AM and all instruction begins at 8:05AM with the first period of the day.

Staff members do their best to supervise students as they board buses after school. However, it is not possible to monitor students entering private vehicles. Please instruct your child to be safe and not to leave with anyone not listed on his/her emergency card.

Absence

Parents/Guardians are requested to call the school at 401-315-1601 before 8:00AM when a student will be absent from school. Should a call not be received, office staff will attempt to contact parent/guardian to verify absences. In cases where an adult cannot be reached, the attendance officer may be dispatched to the home. **An absence is only "excused" by a note from a physician or a school nurse. A student absent from school on a regular school day may not attend or participate in any after school activity that day.**

Chronic tardiness and absenteeism negatively impact any student's academic performance and require that home and school work together to ensure success. In the event of serious unexcused absences (10 consecutive days or more) parents will be contacted and must provide appropriate medical documentation to prevent referral to Rhode Island Family Court.

As missed class time inevitably creates additional stress in attempting to make up class work, family vacations should be scheduled during school vacations. Students' absences for vacation on scheduled school days will be documented as unexcused absences. Teachers will not be expected to provide make-up work and tutorial help for a family trip taken while school is in session. A copy of the 2023-2024 school year calendar is linked on the school website.

Early dismissals

Parents/Guardians are requested to schedule medical and dental appointments after school hours. In cases where this is not possible, the procedure for early dismissal is as follows:

- The student must present a written early dismissal request to the main office upon entering school that morning.
- Parents/Guardians must present themselves in the main office prior to the release of the student for sign-out and dismissal. Due to concerns for students' safety, students will not be released to anyone other than those persons indicated on their emergency contacts. The school requests current information on custodial decisions which could impact student release. Identification will be required before release.
- A student returning to school from an early dismissal must report to the main office for re-entry.

Tardy

Good school attendance often starts with small steps, such as arriving and leaving on time. At WMS we know that many of the most important learning opportunities for students occur in the morning when they prepare for their day, hear morning announcements, and develop relationships with their peers. Our goal is to support all students in managing their time appropriately. A student is tardy if he/she arrives to homeroom after 8:00AM. Tardy students must report directly to the main office to receive a tardy pass. Parents/Guardians will be informed of chronic tardiness so that school and home can work together in addressing the situation. Chronic tardiness may result in a parent/guardian conference or office detention. For serious cases of tardiness, referral may be made to the Rhode Island Family Court.

Truancy

Truancy is defined as any unauthorized absence from school. Leaving school without permission is considered truancy. Truancy may result in disciplinary action and may be referred to the Rhode Island Family Court. Parent/Guardian notification will be made and a conference will be required in all instances of truancy.

Making Up Work

Parents/Guardians may call the team or school counselor to request assignments when students are ill for 3 consecutive days or more. Such requests will be filled within 24 hours or one school day. It is the student's responsibility to obtain make-up work and due dates upon return to school.

School Closings, School Delay, School Early Dismissal

When school is canceled or delayed due to inclement weather or other emergencies, an announcement is made over local radio and television stations. In addition, cancellation information is available by logging on to the WPS website or the Rhode Island Broadcasters Association website, www.ribroadcasters.com, to sign up for notifications. Local media includes television stations WLNE-6, WJAR-10, and WPRI-12 and radio stations WVVE-102.3 FM, WHJJ-920 AM, WPRO-105 FM, WBLQ-88.1 FM, WRX-103.7 FM, and WSNE-93.3 FM.

When school is **dismissed early** due to inclement weather or other emergencies, an announcement is made through the BLACKBOARD CONNECT system & over local radio and television stations as early as possible. If early dismissal requires a change of the normal transportation routine, parents/guardians must inform the school of the change in advance, without such a plan, the normal dismissal routine to the buses will be followed by school personnel.

The BLACKBOARD CONNECT system may also be utilized to announce delayed openings and early dismissals.



BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS ~ CODE OF CONDUCT

Westerly Middle School believes in the importance of setting forth high expectations for all community members. This code of conduct is designed to support our guiding values; respect, accountability, and perseverance, and to provide a safe, productive, and positive learning environment for all students and staff. Please note that this code of conduct is a living document and will be amended and adapted as we learn and grow as a school community.

Behavior and Safety

Westerly Public Schools is proud to provide an exemplary educational environment and positive school atmosphere in all of its schools. To foster a commitment to high performance standards, Westerly Public

Schools recognizes that each student has the right to a public education in a welcoming and respectful school and in a classroom environment that is inclusive and conducive to learning. All students share the responsibility to ensure that actions do not interfere or disrupt the classroom, school activities, or the right of any person to a public education. Expectations for student behavior are based on a shared attitude of mutual respect and common courtesy. Our actions and words emphasize the importance of positive relationships in building a strong school community and they involve processes that restore relationships when harm has occurred. We commit to turning discipline and behavior management into learning opportunities for students to create a school climate centered around accountability, respect, integrity, and engagement with one another. The goal is to teach students to understand where they have caused harm, how it affects our school climate, and ultimately gives them the opportunity to repair the harm and learn stronger personal self management skills.

Caring for School and Personal Property

Respect for your property and the property of others is non-negotiable at WMS. Every member of the Westerly Middle School community is expected to respect and help maintain the condition of the building and all items within it. All school textbooks and chromebooks are the property of Westerly Public Schools. Students who damage or lose property or equipment may be required to pay for repair or replacement.

Cell Phones

The unrestricted and obsessive use of electronic communication devices (ECD), including but not limited to cellular phones, are a distraction in school and may be an avenue for student conflicts. Therefore, a student may possess electronic communication devices in school provided that the device remains off and is secured in their locker during school hours. **There are no exceptions.** Not meeting the expectations of this practice may result in consequences such as: confiscation of the electronic communication device, disciplinary action, and/or the device only released/returned to the parent/guardian.

Please refer to: [Westerly Public Schools Policy No. 7500 Electronic Communication Devices](#)

Cafeteria

All students are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior in the cafeteria. Cafeteria expectations are based on concerns for health, safety and the need to maintain an orderly environment. Students may be assigned to specific seats. Expectations and routines include but are not limited to:

- learning and keeping confidential their assigned I. D. number;
- acceptable table manners;
- remaining seated during lunch;
- speaking in a reasonable tone of voice;
- asking permission before leaving the cafeteria and before leaving seat;
- removing and discarding of trash;
- eating/drinking is confined to the cafeteria;
- respectfully following adult directions;
- Students who are directed or have permission to eat lunch in a classroom must present a written pass to the cafeteria monitor at the beginning of the lunch period.

Dress Code

We are proud of the students of WMS and welcome their individuality and sense of style but, in an effort to maintain a professional working environment for all members of the WMS school community, members are expected to dress in a manner that is appropriate for a school setting. We believe that middle school students can demonstrate personal choice and individuality while maintaining a reasonable standard of conduct, appropriateness, and appearance.

Students Must Wear:

- Clothing that is considered a top, clothing that is considered a bottom and footwear.
- Clothing that is opaque and covers areas of the body that would be deemed private in nature.
- A top that covers an individual's entire front and back, shoulders, and sides from waist to underarms.
- A bottom that is pants, sweatpants, leggings, skirts, shorts or a dress.
- Footwear that is comfortable and suitable for specific learning environments (ie, sneakers for PE).

Students Cannot Wear:

- Any clothing or items with messaging that is hurtful or disrespectful to others, obscene, drug/alcohol-related or violent are prohibited. Students wearing such apparel will not be allowed to attend classes until such time as the clothing in question is changed, a parent/guardian will be notified.
- Sunglasses, hoods or hats.
- Visible undergarments, pajamas, short-shorts, slippers, or bathing suits are not acceptable school attire.

Interpretation of the WMS Dress Code is left to the discretion of school staff members. Not meeting the expectations above could result in consequences such as: a request to change or cover clothing, parent/guardian phone call, parents/guardians asked to bring in clothing, or exclusion from school related activities.

Lockers

Every WMS student will be assigned a specific locker and must provide a combination lock or equivalent lock to secure their belongings. The combination will be recorded by the homeroom teacher on the first day of school. This will be a year-long assignment and students may not independently change these assignments. Team teachers will establish clear and appropriate routines for student locker use. No right or expectation of privacy exists for any student as to the use of any locker issued or assigned by the school and they may be subject to search if reasonable grounds exist. Students should bring another combination lock or equivalent lock to secure items in the PE locker room. A student in the band may need an additional lock for the instrument locker.

Valuables, electronics, and large sums of money should be left at home.

Lost or Damaged Chromebooks, Texts, or Materials

Textbooks, Chromebooks, and study materials are issued on a loan basis. Care and protection of such equipment becomes the sole responsibility of the student to whom it is issued. All Chromebooks should be protected upon issuance by suitable covers. Each student is responsible for other books and materials and will be requested to pay for any that are lost, damaged, or defaced.

Interventions for Not Meeting Behavioral Expectations

While the Westerly Schools are committed to a proactive approach, whenever concerns about student conduct arise, school administrators will aim to respond restoratively. When further action is warranted, school administrators will respond as outlined in the following section and within the allowable boundaries of the Westerly Public School behavioral framework.

- Teacher/Team Detention – Teachers may assign detention held for a specified amount of time after school. Students will be given 24 hours' notice and parent/guardian(s) may be responsible for providing transportation.
- Office Detention – Office Detention is held for a specified amount of time after school under supervision by a faculty/staff member. Students will be given 24 hours' notice and parent/guardian(s) may be responsible for providing transportation.
- Social Suspension- Restriction will be set for a fixed period of time or until

certain specified requirements have been met. This corrective measure applies to all school-sponsored activities.

- In-School Suspension – ISS is designed to maintain educational services and to provide an additional response to inappropriate behavior prior to out-of-school suspension. ISS may last for half a school day or a full school day based on the discretion of the administration team.
- Out of School Suspension - OSS may be given to any student who engages in behavior that disrupts the normal operation of any activity occurring on property under the control and/or direction of the Westerly Public Schools.
- Expulsion-At the discretion of the Superintendent, Building Principal and the Director of Pupil Services, expulsion may be necessary when a student presents as unsafe to the learning environment

WMS employs a progressive discipline model for minor, but habitual behaviors based on severity, frequency, and duration. The following infractions are some examples that will be met with identified interventions. Infractions include (according to RIDE State Specifications):

- Academic Dishonesty-Cheating or Plagiarism
- Alcohol-Possession or Under the Influence of
 - See WPS [Substance Abuse Policy 5040](#)
- Arson
- Assault/Battery of Student-See WPS [Violence Prevention Policy 2032](#)
- Assault/Battery of Teacher (verbal or physical)
- Attendance-Cut/Skipped Class
- Attendance- Cut/Skipped Detention
- Attendance-Left School Grounds
- Attendance-Cut/Skipped In-School Suspension
- Attendance-Tardy/Late
- Attendance-Truant
- Bomb Threat
- Communication/Electronic Devices
 - See WPS [Bring Your Own Device Policy 2302](#);
 - See WPS [Social Networking and Text Messaging Policy 2321](#);
 - See WPS [Electronic Communications Devices Policy 7500](#)
- Controlled Substances-Sale of/Possession with Intent to Sell
 - See WPS [Substance Abuse Policy 5040](#)
- Controlled Substances-Possession or Under Influence
 - See WPS [Substance Abuse Policy 5040](#)
- Disorderly Conduct
- Fighting/Physical Altercation
- Fire Regulations Violation
- Forgery
- Gambling
- Gang Activity-Non violent Incident
- Harassment-Stalking
- Harassment- Sexual
 - See WPS [Sexual Harassment Policy 2050/4146](#)
- Harassment- Prejudice/Hate Crimes
- Hazing
- Insubordination/Disrespect
- Kidnapping/Abduction
- Larceny/Theft

- Obscene/Abusive Language Toward Student
- Obscene/Abusive Language Toward Teacher
- Robbery
- Sexual Assault/Battery
- Sexual Misconduct
- Technology-Unauthorized Use of Computers/Other Tech
 - See WPS [Responsible Use and Internet Safety Policy 2300](#)
- Threat/Intimidation (verbal, cyber or physical)
 - See WPS [Threats of Violence or Harm Policy 2033](#)
- Tobacco
- Trespassing/Restricted Area
- Vandalism
- Weapon Possession
 - See WPS [Violence Prevention Policy 2032](#)

*Any disruptive behavior deemed inappropriate by administration are also considered breaches of behavior expectations.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Family & Visitor Parking

Family & Visitor parking is located in the first lot closest to the school. Please do not park in numbered spots; numbered spots are assigned to staff. Please do not drop off or pick up in any bus lanes or in the loading dock area.

Field Trips

As we promote learning outside of the classroom, our community works together to create learning opportunities that may take students off campus. Only written permission forms will be accepted to allow students to attend any off-site activities.

National Junior Honor Society

Westerly Middle School is a member of the National Junior Honor Society. 8th graders who are interested in consideration should contact the school counselor's office or the advisor as early as possible in the fall. For more information and requirements, check the NJHS website.

Physical Education requirements

All students are scheduled for PE/Health classes. Students in grades 6, 7 & 8 are required to bring a complete change of clothing for their PE class including shorts, T-shirt, socks and sneakers. No exchanging or borrowing of PE clothing is permitted and all clothing should be cleaned weekly. Students in grade 5 are required to wear sneakers..

PE grades are based largely on participation. Missed classes adversely affect a student's grade.

Events

WMS is committed to providing an enjoyable Middle School experience to include a wide variety of events and opportunities that may fall outside of a typical school day. Attendance at school events is a privilege earned by meeting our behavioral expectations. Except for school dances, students attending evening events must be accompanied by a supervising adult.

Refer to School Committee Policy for Middle School Events and Activities (7210), adopted 2005.

Home/School Communication

WMS recognizes how crucial school/home communication is to a child's success in school and works diligently to keep parents informed of a student's academic and behavioral status. Skyward, our Student Information System, allows for parents and students to view daily attendance, discipline, grades, progress reports and report cards. Report Cards and Progress Reports will be available at the midpoint and end of each quarter through Skyward.

Skyward Family Access Accounts are created for every student's legal guardian(s). If you have a student enrolled in Westerly Public Schools you have a Family Access account. If you are new to the district it may take several days after registration for your account to be created. The Skyward Family Access Portal will get you access to:

- Grades, Report Cards, and Progress Reports
- Attendance
- Schedules

To obtain your login information submit a helpdesk ticket on the Westerly Public Schools Technology Department webpage. Be sure to include your name, phone number, email address, and each child's name & school. Only biological parents and/or legal guardians will be allowed to access Skyward and obtain their child/children's information.



SAFETY

School safety is the responsibility of all students, faculty, administration, and staff. All should be familiar with emergency procedures such as evacuation procedures, lockdowns, and fire and safety drills. As all members of our community must not just be safe but must feel safe, no words, gestures, or acts that make another member of our community feel unsafe will be tolerated. To promote the safety of all members of our community we will be reminding all students of our expectations, reaching out when concerned, and practicing our emergency procedures throughout the year.

Emergency Evacuations

Teachers will review and post emergency evacuation procedures in all classes. Students are required to respond to every evacuation as an emergency.

- Students should move swiftly, quietly, and in an orderly fashion during an evacuation.
- Students should be familiar with the evacuation route from each room on their schedule.
- Students will assemble at designated locations for attendance once outside.
- Students should be ready to respond appropriately if an exit is obstructed.

Lockdown Procedures

WMS will conduct state mandated lockdown drills. Students should carefully follow the directions of the adults and classroom teachers during these special drills.



TRANSPORTATION

School Bus Transportation is a privilege provided by the Westerly Public Schools. Students must assume responsibility for their actions and behavior while at the bus stop and riding on the bus. To ensure safety, all students have the responsibility to follow the rules and regulations on the

bus and at the bus stop. Because conduct on buses is directly related to the driver's control of the vehicle and to the safety of all students, the school department considers bus misconduct to be a serious offense and subject to disciplinary action. Bus drivers have the authority to enforce all bus rules and regulations and will report any infractions to school administrators. Student department is monitored electronically. Please refer to Westerly Public Schools Bus Transportation Policy between Home and School No. [8100](#).

Bus and Bus Stop Rules and Regulations

Expectations for behavior while at school are extended to school bus stops and while riding on the bus. Additionally, students are expected to observe the following rules and regulations for safety and courtesy on the bus and at the bus stop. Due to the community nature of the bus stop, problems of a criminal nature happening at a bus stop will be referred to the Westerly Police Department for resolution. Students are not allowed to ride any school bus other than the one assigned to them.

At the Bus Stop:

- Arrive at stop five minutes before bus pickup
- Stand on the sidewalk
- Stay off private property
- Do not stand on the traveled part of the road
- Be respectful and watchful of traffic
- Wait in a quiet and orderly manner

When Bus Arrives:

- Allow the bus to come to a complete stop
- Cross in front of the bus
- Stay at least 10 feet away from the bus on all sides
- Board bus in a quiet, orderly manner

On the Bus:

- Remain seated at all times; driver has the right to assign seats
- Practice orderly conduct
- No profanity, excessive noise
- No eating, drinking or gum chewing
- No vandalism (students are responsible for any damage to the bus that they cause)
- No body parts or personal belongings outside the bus
- No unsafe objects or weapons
- No throwing items from the bus or on the bus including litter on the floor
- Large items that cannot be stored safely will not be allowed on the bus

Exiting the Bus:

- Remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop
- Leave in an orderly manner
- Leave only at your assigned bus stop
- Stay at least 10 feet away from the bus on all sides
- Cross in front of the bus

Late buses

A late bus will be available on Mondays through Wednesdays throughout the school year for the students who remain after school for an approved and supervised purpose. Students must sign up in the main office by 12:30 if they intend to take a late bus that day.

Please refer to the Westerly Public Schools (www.westerly.k12.ri.us) website for the following policies which are not all inclusive of the Westerly Public Schools policies.

- Student Attendance Policy No. 2030
- Violence Prevention Policy No. 2032
- Physical Threat Policy No. 2033
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy No. 2300
- Social Networking and Texting Messaging No. 2321
- Residency Policy No. 2510
- Student Nutrition and Physical Activity No. 5010
- Administering Medication to Children No. 5020
- Substance Abuse No. 5040
- Prevention of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Violence No. 7300
- Electronic Communication Devices No. 7500
- Bus Transportation Between Home and School No. 8100
- Bring Your Own Device Policy 2302

Rhode Island and The United States Department of Education Laws

- Compulsory Attendance – RI General Law Chapter 16-19-1
- RI State Health Education General Law – 16-22-4
- Education of Students with Disabilities /Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Public Law 93-112