

# Watertown Public Schools

## 2021/22 Elementary School Handbook



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## **Message from the Principals**

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students,

For a school community to fulfill its mission, implement its values and achieve its goals, there must be clear expectations and guidelines for all its members to follow. We hope that this handbook will help familiarize you with the practices and procedures of the Cunniff, Hosmer, and Lowell Elementary Schools.

The protocols in this document are ones that are common to all 3 schools. At the beginning of each school year, you will also receive a document from your child's individual school that outlines school-specific protocols that differ between schools due to the uniqueness of each building.

Further information regarding School Committee policies, which comply with federal and state regulations and guide the student handbooks, is available at [www.watertown.k12.ma.us](http://www.watertown.k12.ma.us) under the School Committee top tab or with the following link: Policy Manual. Specific sections of this document are referenced throughout the handbook to assist parents/ guardians in seeking more information.

Please refer to this handbook regularly and review the information presented in it with your child(ren). It is important that students, parents/guardians, staff, and administration work together to achieve the standards we set for our community of learners.

We appreciate your cooperation and look forward to the coming school year.

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## **WPS Mission, Vision and Core Values**

### **MISSION:**

WPS prepares all students for life by engaging them in a challenging and meaningful education within an inclusive, diverse community.

### **VISION:**

*Inspiring Excellence for All*

WPS inspires all to explore and shape the world around them.

### **CORE VALUES:**

#### **Excellence**

- We commit to high expectations for each student.
- We invest in a culture of reflection, collaboration, and commitment to continuous improvement.
- We provide a rigorous and nurturing academic environment.
- We foster creativity, resiliency, and confidence.

#### **Equity**

- We provide all students with a high-quality education.
- We create conditions necessary for all students to engage in powerful, deep learning.
- We provide resources for academic and social/emotional success for all students.
- We ensure access to a welcoming and safe environment for all students, parents, and families.

#### **Community**

- We share accountability for the success of all students.
- We celebrate the contributions of each individual to our inclusive, diverse community.
- We believe partnerships with families and the community are the cornerstone of student success.
- We foster caring and collaborative relationships as the foundation for student engagement.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

The Watertown School Committee establishes goals, policies, and the budget for the Watertown Public Schools. The School Committee hires the Superintendent and works closely with that individual in developing policies and practices to improve the school system. The School Committee also is responsible for conducting collective bargaining with all employee organizations and has other responsibilities as outlined by Massachusetts General Laws.

The School Committee consists of seven members. Six are elected on a town-wide basis for four-year terms. The Town Council President serves as the seventh member and is elected to a two-year term. In January of each year the School Committee elects a chair, vice-chair, and a secretary from among its members. The School Committee also organizes itself into subcommittees to conduct its business.

### **School Committee Members:**

- John Portz, Chairperson
- Kendra Foley, Vice-Chairperson
- Amy Donohue
- Linday Mosca
- Lily Rayman-Read
- Mark Sideris
- David Stokes

## **KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Any child meeting the requirements of the various other policies and agreements of the School Committee concerning the availability of services may enter kindergarten during the academic year in which he/she reaches the age of five (5) before the first (1st) day of September. Children entering Watertown Public Schools who have turned six (6) before September 1 will enter into first grade unless a waiver is granted by the Superintendent or their designee. A birth certificate, record of immunization and proof of residency (e.g. utility bill, tax bill, letter from landlord or real estate agency) are required before a child shall be registered for the kindergarten program.

## **SCHOOL ARRIVAL**

*Each individual school has its own specific school arrival procedures.*

## **SCHOOL HOURS**

All Elementary Schools: Arrival at 8:05 a.m., instruction begins at 8:15, and dismissal at 2:30 p.m.

## **BUS TRANSPORTATION**

Students may take the bus to school only if a parent/guardian has signed up for a bus pass through the Business Office, which can be reached at 617 926 7766. Only those students who have a bus pass will be permitted to board the bus. Families and students are informed of the bus stop and pick-up time when the bus pass is issued. All disciplinary policies apply to the students riding the bus since the bus is an extension of school. If necessary, the administration may suspend a child from the bus either temporarily or permanently. Additional information regarding student conduct on school buses can be found in School Committee Policy [JICC](#).

## **LATE ARRIVALS**

Parents and guardians are responsible for getting children to school on time each day.

Attendance is taken at 8:20 am. Students arriving after 8:20 must obtain a pass to enter class and will be marked tardy. Students arriving at or after 8:30 must be accompanied into the building by a parent/ caretaker. In the case of students who live out of the attendance area, habitual tardiness may be cause for rescinding the out-of-attendance area transfer approval.

## **DISMISSALS**

*Please refer to your individual school's procedures for specific school dismissal procedures.*

## **DISMISSAL PLANS**

To ensure students' safety at dismissal, school personnel need to be aware of the plan for each child at the end of the school day. Children in kindergarten through second grade must be dismissed to a parent/ caregiver or other authorized person. Students in grades three to five may walk home independently if permitted by a parent/ guardian. Each elementary school will provide parents/ caregivers a link to a form that must be filled out for each child indicating their dismissal plan. Any changes to the dismissal plan must be communicated to the school.

## **EARLY DISMISSAL**

If a student needs to be dismissed early from school, the parent guardian must send a note to the classroom teacher or call the school's main office. An authorized adult must report to the office to sign the child out. Children are not allowed to leave the school grounds prior to the regular dismissal time without the authorization of a parent/guardian.

Early release days are scheduled on some Wednesdays during the year for staff professional development. Students are released at 12:15 p.m. Additional full days of staff

Professional development will occur during the school year. Children will not attend school on those days. These dates can be found on the Watertown Public Schools [calendar](#).

## **SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYED OPENINGS**

State law requires 180 days of instruction, and also requires that any snow days be made up before June 30th. Snow days and delayed openings are announced through an automated phone message and listed on the website, [www.watertown.k12.ma.us](http://www.watertown.k12.ma.us).



School closure announcements are also made on the following radio and television stations:

WCVB Television (Channel 5) WHDH Television (Channel 7) WBZ Television (Channel 4) and

Radio (AM 1030) Cable Television Service - If available, check the local community channel

WBUR Web site - part of National Public Broadcasting (Radio - FM 90.9)

Announcements usually begin between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. All parents/guardians and students are urged to refer to the above communication services. *Phone calls should NOT be made to the School Department, Police Department, or Fire Department for school cancellation information.*

These lines must remain open for emergency situations.

### **DELAYED OPENINGS**

When a delayed school opening is announced, school will open up to two hours after the regularly scheduled time. Lunch will be served at the regular time, and school will close at the regularly scheduled time.

*Phone calls should NOT be made to the School Department, Police Department, or Fire Department for delayed school opening information.* These lines must remain open for emergency situations.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Student attendance is a critical component of learning. Research studies show that higher attendance is related to higher achievement. To focus attention on the importance of attendance, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) , which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, specifically focuses on chronic absenteeism as a priority area. Chronic absence differs from truancy in that it tracks both excused and unexcused absences.

Massachusetts state law (M.G.L 76 Sections 2 and 4: School Attendance) requires parents/guardians to have their children attend school. Watertown Public Schools monitors and supports school attendance across all levels - elementary, middle, and high school. Secondary schools attendance practices may differ from those at the elementary level.

If a student has (5) or more unexcused absences (absence is defined as two or more periods in

one day) in a school year, the school principal or their designee makes reasonable efforts to meet with the parent/guardian to develop action steps to improve the student's attendance. These action steps shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the school principal or designee, the student's parent/ guardian and with input from other relevant school personnel.

## **Absences**

After attendance is taken, automated phone calls are made to the parent/guardian of each student who is absent from school to ensure that they are aware of their child's absence. No further action is required if the student is in fact at home. Any parent/guardian receiving an unexpected absence alert should immediately contact the school.

Accurate and current emergency contact information is needed for every child. This is requested at the beginning of each school year, and should be updated during the year if there are any changes.

Additional information regarding school absences can be found in School Committee Policy [JH](#).

## **MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**

School Medical Services are designed to protect the student's health and to enable each student to reach and maintain the highest possible state of well-being for effective learning. A school nurse is assigned to each elementary school.

***School Health Records*** - Physical Examinations, including proof of immunizations, are required for students entering kindergarten, fourth grade, seventh grade, and tenth grade, and new students entering the school. The physical must be dated within six months of entry to the grade or within the six months following entry. More information can be found in School Committee policy [JLCA](#).

***Medication*** - the nurse will administer medications to students as indicated during school hours according to the following procedures:

1. All prescription medication must be delivered to the school nurse by a parent/guardian.
2. Medications must be in the original bottle with a prescription label showing the student's name, medication, doctor's name, and instructions.

3. Written permission from parent/guardian and doctor must be provided in order for the nurse to give the medication to the student.
4. Parent permission is needed for the nurse to administer over the counter medications such as Tylenol, Advil, or Tums.

All orders or permission for medications must be renewed at the beginning of each school year. Additional information regarding the District's medication policy can be found in School Committee Policy [JLCD](#).

***Emergency Illness or Injury protocol*** - In case of an accident or illness during school hours, the parent/ guardian is notified. When indicated, the student will be dismissed to the Parent/guardian or another authorized adult. The school is responsible for providing appropriate care to the student until the student is dismissed.

If emergency medical attention is needed, the school contacts the parent/guardian and an emergency response team.

Accurate and current emergency contact information is needed for every child. This is requested at the beginning of each school year, and should be updated during the year if there are any changes. Additional information about emergency illness or injury can be found in School Committee Policy [JLC](#).

***When children should be kept home from school:***

**Fever** – Fevers are generally signs of infection. Any child with a fever of 100 degrees fahrenheit or above must stay home from school. No child should be sent to school with a fever, including children whose fever was treated by tylenol, ibuprofen, or another fever-reducing medication. Any child who develops a fever of 100 degrees fahrenheit or greater during the school day will need to be picked up by a parent/guardian/authorized adult.

**Cold, Sore Throat, Cough** – Children average 6-8 colds per year. Children with a cold and cough with a fever, or a cold that does not seem to get better, should consult with their doctor. A sore throat, along with a fever and swollen glands, may be signs of strep throat. Children diagnosed with strep throat are still contagious the first 24 hours on antibiotics and must remain home.

**Stomachache, Vomiting, Diarrhea** – A child with vomiting and/or diarrhea should be kept home

until symptoms have resolved for approximately 24 hours and the child is able to keep down liquids and food. The child's doctor should be consulted if fever and stomach pains do not go away or if the child is not eating well and appears dehydrated (dry mouth, no tears, sunken eyes, urinates less than 4 times in 24 hours).

**Pain – Earaches** – The child's doctor should be consulted. If there is no fever with an ear infection, the student may attend school.

**Headache** – A child should be kept at home if a headache is severe and is not relieved with medication. For a headache that continues, the child's doctor should be consulted.

**Red Eyes** – When the white part of the eye looks red and there is a yellow or green discharge, these are signs of conjunctivitis, a common but troublesome condition that may be a contagious infection. Because conjunctivitis may require treatment with an antibiotic eye ointment, the child's doctor should be called. Children are still contagious the first 24 hours on antibiotic ointment and must remain at home.

**Rash** – A rash is usually a sign of an illness. It also may be a reaction to a medication or chemical (plants, detergents). The child's doctor should be consulted regarding any rash, and medical clearance given for the child to attend school.

## **FOOD SERVICES**

**Breakfast Snack:** A breakfast snack will be available to all students free of charge in the morning in school. Students may order their snack during the daily morning meeting.

**Lunch:** For the 2021-2022 School year, all students may receive a full school lunch daily free of charge. Milk and fruit juices are available to supplement a bag lunch. Upon entering the Watertown Public Schools, each student is given a personal identification number (PIN) to use for prepaid purchases in the school cafeteria only. Monthly lunch menus are posted in the local newspaper and online.

Income eligible parents/guardians need to complete a free and reduced meal form yearly. Forms are reviewed by the administration to determine eligibility. This information is utilized

for several reasons beyond school lunch, such as grant opportunities for the district, including Title 1. Even with universal free meals during the 2021-2022 school year, families who are income eligible for free and reduced meals should continue to fill out the eligibility form.

## **VISITORS**

For the safety of all children, the school doors are locked 5 minutes after designated arrival time.

- Visitors may use the intercom at the front door to speak to the main office
- All visitors, including parents/guardians and volunteers, must sign in at the reception desk or main office during school hours.
- All visitors, including parents/guardians and volunteers, must agree not to disclose information they might learn of a confidential nature
- Visitors are given a visitor badge at the sign in location and are asked to wear a visitor badge throughout their visit.
- All visitors are required to sign out when they leave the school building.

The principal or their designee reserves the right to deny any visitors entry to the school buildings when there is reason to believe that such an individual's presence would be detrimental to the operation of the school and its learning environment, and/ or may infringe on the privacy rights of any individual. These procedures are in effect for the safety of the children, staff and visitors. It is imperative that the front office be aware of all persons in the building should an emergency situation arise. Additional information regarding procedures for classroom observations can be found in School Committee Policy [Kl](#).

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework is an integral part of a child's educational program. There are a number of different goals and purposes for assigning homework, including the following:

- Provide a link between home and school
- Help children take personal responsibility for their learning

- Foster confidence and self-discipline
- Promote the understanding that learning continues outside of school
- Expand and enrich classroom work
- Reinforce learning through additional practice
- Help teachers monitor student understanding
- Promote high expectations for students

The Watertown Public Schools recommends that parents/guardians provide an environment conducive to studying and working independently. They may help students organize time, space and materials so children can complete their homework effectively. Parents/guardians are encouraged to help clarify directions and ask questions that may help students to organize their thinking and recall information from class lessons. Because teachers carefully select assignments, parents/guardians should encourage their children to work independently.

Teachers assign homework to support student learning. Assignments reflect ongoing studies and provide a review of previously learned materials. In some cases, assignments may be long term. Homework will vary in intensity and degree at different grade levels. Since homework supports daily classroom instruction, we do not assign specific homework to be completed while a student is absent from school due to a family vacation. Attendance in school is very important, and we always encourage families to schedule vacations in accordance with the district school vacation calendar to avoid missing invaluable instruction and disruption in the educational process.

\*Please refer to individual school and classroom procedure documents for more information regarding homework guidelines.

## **STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

In addition to formative and summative assessments in the classroom, students participate in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) designed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). At the elementary level MCAS assessments are administered in grades three, four and five. Parents/guardians receive

individual results and district wide results are published. The school also gives other diagnostic instruments to students as needed to inform instruction, set goals, and guide curriculum planning.

## **SPECIALIZED SERVICES & PROGRAMMING**

### ***504 Accommodation Plans –***

Students with disabilities affecting one or more major life functions may be eligible for accommodations in order to access their education. Parents of children with disabilities can contact the Evaluation Team Chair at each school building if they believe their child may need a 504 accommodation plan. More information about 504 Accommodation plans can be found in the [Watertown Public Schools Handbook Part II: Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

***Special Education Services*** - The Watertown Public Schools provides special education and related services for eligible students in accordance with state and federal law. Such services may include, but are not limited to, specially designed instruction in reading, writing or math, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy.

Whenever possible, services take place within the students neighborhood school in the general education environment. When services cannot be provided within the general education classroom, services may be provided in separate settings for part or all of the school day. In order to allow almost all Watertown students to remain within the Watertown Public Schools, several high quality specialized programs have been developed, and are briefly described below.

**Connections Program:** Provides a small, highly structured instructional environment using the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) for students who require support in developing social skills and behavioral regulation in addition to functional academic skills.

**Integrated Support Program:** Provides a small, highly structured therapeutic environment for students who require emotional and behavioral support in order to access grade level curriculum.

**Language Based Program:** Designed for students who have language based learning disabilities, including dyslexia. Students access the curriculum at their grade level with accommodations

and support, and are provided intensive instruction in reading decoding and encoding skills through a direct, multi-sensory, sequential approach.

Learning Support Program: Provides a small, highly structured individualized learning environment for students who require instruction in functional academic and social skills.

***Home and Hospital Instruction*** - The Watertown Public Schools provides home and hospital tutoring to students whose physician has determined must remain at home or in the hospital for a period of at least 14 school days in a school year. To access these services, a licensed medical professional must complete a [statement](#) for review and approval by the District. With the exception of those students who have chronic, debilitating diseases or conditions, home or hospital tutoring is considered short-term (no longer than 60 days) and is not a replacement for regular attendance at school.

***English as an Additional Language*** - Watertown Public Schools provides research-based language instructional programs for all identified English learners in grades Kindergarten through 12 in accordance with the requirements of state and federal statutes and Massachusetts Department of Education regulations and guidance. English learner support provides instruction in speaking, reading, and writing as well as course content support. More information

## **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

The Responsive Classroom Program is implemented at the Cunniff, Hosmer and Lowell Elementary schools to promote a school community where everyone is respectful, responsible, fair, and kind.

## **BULLYING AND HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION**

The Watertown Public Schools strives to provide a safe, welcoming environment for all students. Every child has the right to feel a sense of belonging in school, and bullying and harassment are strictly prohibited. Staff members who become aware of behavior that may be bullying or harassment must report it to their building administrator. Parents/guardians who believe their



child has been bullied or harassed are encouraged to report the incident(s) to the school principal. Students may also report instances to any staff member. An anonymous reporting system is available as well. More detailed information about the Watertown Public Schools Bullying and Harassment Prevention and Intervention Plan, policy, and procedures can be found [here](#).

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Students may have the opportunity to attend educational field trips related to the school curriculum during. While participating in a field trip, students are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior just as they do on school grounds. Fees may be charged for participation in field trips. Should a field trip fee pose a financial challenge to the family, parents/ guardians are encouraged to connect with building administration.

All field trips are staffed by school personnel and parent/guardian chaperones who have satisfied school volunteer requirements, including CORI and fingerprint-based CHRI checks as appropriate. Classroom teachers will notify those parents/guardians who will be accompanying the trip as chaperones. For safety reasons, as well as space needs, additional children and adults cannot be accommodated on field trips.

## **DRESS CODE**

Clothing cannot discriminate, demean or be derogatory towards any group or individual. Apparel that contains statements or symbols that make negative statements about race, religion, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, stereotypes or that has sexual connotations or sexual innuendo is not permitted at school. Parent/guardian will be contacted if a change of clothing is needed.

Students are encouraged to wear footwear in which they can safely run and play during physical education classes and during daily recess. Shoes with wheels are not to be worn to school.

## **NON-VIOLENT PHYSICAL CRISIS INTERVENTION/PHYSICAL RESTRAINT:**

All schools and programs within the Watertown Public Schools strive to maintain safe learning

environments for all students and staff. As part of a comprehensive approach to safety, all schools follow the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Regulations (766 Reg. 603 CMR 46.00 et seq.). If a student's behavior poses a threat of imminent harm, they may be restrained until calm in accordance with these regulations. Only qualified, highly trained staff carry out specific procedures and parents/guardians are notified. More information is available in the Watertown Public Schools Handbook Part II: Student Rights and Responsibilities and in School Committee policy [JKAA](#).

### **MOTOR VEHICLE IDLING PROHIBITED**

**No motor vehicle idling shall be allowed on school grounds at any time.**

Watertown Public Schools appreciates your help and cooperation.